

# THEOLOGY:

## Providence, Decrees, Creation

## Predestination or the Decrees of God: God's Eternal Plan for the Heavens and the Earth (I)

### Introduction

Let us begin this most difficult section where W. G. T. Shedd, one of the most skilled and devout exponents of Augustinian theology, ended: with a caution against exposure to the doctrine of predestination, or the decrees of God.<sup>1</sup> As every theologian ought to know, after Jesus Himself Paul made the strongest statements on the subject of predestination in the New Testament. Hence, we understand Peter's remarks:

Our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given him, wrote to you [think here of Romans 9–11], as also in all his letters, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which the untaught and unstable distort, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures, to their own destruction (2 Peter 3:15, 16 NASB).

Nothing among the 'things hard to understand' of Paul's letters presents more difficulty to the 'untaught and unstable' than his remarks about God's sovereign government of people, plans and things in Romans 9–11 and Ephesians 1–3. The same spiritually untutored folk of rural Palestine had similar difficulties with Jesus' parables (Matt. 13:14, 15), as he explained: 'To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given' (Matt. 13:11).

Nothing in the scheme of Christian doctrine is so offensive to the secular spirit or so preposterous to the unbelieving mind as to propose that God has a plan for the whole universe down to such minute details as the hairs on one's head or the death of a sparrow (Matt. 10:29, 30) and is unfailingly executing the same.

Yet the fact that God 'worketh all things according to the counsel of his will' is an important article of 'the whole counsel of God' and of great consolation and satisfaction ... to believers ... properly understood ... Hence we think that this doctrine should be neither suppressed from a

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<sup>1</sup> W. G. T. Shedd, *Dogmatic Theology I* (Grand Rapids: Zonderdan, 1969), pp. 459–461.

preposterous modesty nor curiously pried into by rash presumption.<sup>2</sup> It was Albrecht Bengel, no less, who cautioned, ‘Man must not attempt to look at God behind the scenes.’<sup>3</sup>

As this study develops it will become clear that God’s government of the world is controlled by a plan. God’s government of His creation is what theologians call *providence* and the plan that providence executes is called *predestination*, or the doctrine of the *decrees* of God.

These doctrines are the first and last elements of ‘the Christian View of God and the World’, to borrow the title of an important book.<sup>4</sup> Simply put: (1) God *planned* the world, (2) God *created* the world, (3) God *sustains* the world and (4) God *governs* the world. These four propositions constitute the primary elements of the biblical world-view, or *Weltanschauung* of German academic idiom.

Theologians have long wished they could dispense with the words ‘decrees’ and ‘predestination’ in connection with the divine plan because of their offence to the post-enlightenment outlook that thinks the world runs (whether well or badly) quite without God. As for origin (or first cause) in an intelligent design, though obvious to many, is quite unacceptable to the academic elite of today; it is certainly very controversial. However, controversy seems forever to have been the seedbed of progress in Christian thought and no generation where Christian zeal flourishes has ever been without it.<sup>5</sup> Controversy need not be vituperative. Among believing scholars it can be both genial and vigorous.

Further, as we shall see, nothing is more assuring for believers, in a dangerous world where earthly hope is sure to run out, than certainty God’s determinate will is being done. In the natural order ‘seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night’ will not be interrupted ‘While the earth remains’ (Gen. 8:22). ‘You [God] rule the raging of the sea’ (Ps. 89:9). God ‘shut in the sea ... and said, “Thus far shall you come, and no farther”’ (Job 38:8–11). As for ‘the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune’—Hamlet spoke as a suicidal weakling, not with the calm assurance of Moses ‘the man of God’ (Josh. 14:6). ‘The eternal God is your dwelling place, and underneath are the everlasting arms’ (Deut. 33:27).

The biblical-theological basis of the *Weltanschauung* (world-view) we are introducing has been neglected, hence not fully understood by the mass of believers in our time. People in the grip of the *Zeitgeist* (spirit of the age, to employ another useful term of German academics) do not know about the doctrine and would reject it if they did. How can the moguls of the media, the wiseacres of the university chairs and the denizens of our courts, get this matter straight if we ourselves do not know of ‘the decrees of God’, meaning ‘that eternal plan by which God has rendered certain all the events of the universe, past, present and future’?<sup>6</sup> Every person on this planet should know about God’s purpose and plan.

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<sup>2</sup> Francis Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology I*, trans. G. M. Geger (Phillipsburg, NJ: PR Publ., reprint 1992), p. 329.

<sup>3</sup> Cited by Shedd, *op. cit.*, p. 461.

<sup>4</sup> James Orr, *The Christian View of God and the World*.

<sup>5</sup> See the article ‘Controversy’ in *Baker’s Dictionary of Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1960).

<sup>6</sup> A. H. Strong, *Systematic Theology* (Old Tappan, NJ: Revell, 1907), p. 353.

## Refinements and Limitations

Still preliminary to development of God's decrees, creation, preservation and providence, several refinements and limitations of relevance must enter the record.

1. 'The sovereignty of God' may be said to include both decrees and providence, for it is 'the biblical teaching that God is king, supreme ruler, and lawgiver of the entire universe'.<sup>7</sup> 'The LORD has established his throne in the heavens, and his kingdom rules over all' (Ps. 103:19). Some of God's names considered earlier express that sovereign rule—God Almighty, LORD God Almighty, *et al.*

2. Several of God's attributes of immensity, viz., omnipotence, omnipresence, and, especially, omniscience, imply that God planned the heavens and earth which He then created and now sustains and will guide to their predestined goal. As omniscient, God is fully aware of all that goes on, precisely because He is present everywhere in creation (omnipresence) and has potency (omnipotence) to direct it all to the consummation.

3. Though the decrees of God are matters internal to the Godhead, they have reference to things *external* to God, in no wise emerging or emanating from His essence (being). *Internally*, as we have already seen, theologians say the Father is distinct in the sense of *paternity*; the Son in the sense of *filiation* (being a son); the Spirit in the sense of *spiration*. These terms are names theology has used for mysteries no one really understands. The ideas of the Son as being begotten (eternally), and the Spirit as proceeding (eternally) from the Father and the Son, have the benefit of scriptural phraseology, but probably apply not to inner (immanent), Trinitarian relations but to *economic* (i.e. *ad extra*, outside the being of God) relations to the world of creation and redemption. The creedal phrase 'very God of [*ek*, out of] very God', was employed by the Fathers of Nicea and Constantinople (AD 325, 381) to mean an eternal begetting of the Son by the Father; it was to stem the challenge of Sabellianism—that the Trinity is only three modes of acting by the one divine person.<sup>8</sup>

4. After reading again many treatments of the subject in revising the manuscript for this chapter, it became apparent that theologians of Arminian persuasion speak approvingly of providence, God's control and government of the world, but refer to His plan only obliquely. Thomas Oden, a Methodist scholar, plainly believes God planned the world He created, though he furnishes no category such as predestination or decrees. He is aware of the vast body of Old Testament Scripture that grounds 'the Reformed Doctrine of Predestination' (the title of L. Boettner's book). Yet Oden writes extensively of Providence as executing such a plan. I furnish some quotations from his book, *The Living God*. Throughout this whole historical process is God's own guiding directing activity. Each of billions of events has its own *telos*, or 'purpose', at any given moment. *Seen in the light of the scriptural revelation of God's providential activity* [emphasis added], all of this is moving toward a plausible, trustable end: the fulfilment of God's purpose in creation'.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> 'Sovereignty of God' *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, ed. Walter Elwell (Grand Rapids: Baker books, 1984), p. 1038.

<sup>8</sup> Robert L. Reymond, *A New Systematic Theology of the Christian Faith* (Nashville: Thos. Nelson, 1998), pp. 321–341.

<sup>9</sup> Thomas Oden, *The Living God* (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1992), p. 287.

The great value of Oden's work is the introduction he lavishly provides to theology of the past. He aims, however, at a 'consensus' theology, which perhaps explains why the best supporting writings for a detailed divine plan for the universe (decrees) never appear.

On those particular points on which otherwise highly respected patristic writers tend to diverge from the more central ancient ecumenical consensus (e.g. Origenist views that the power of God is limited or that the stars have souls, or Novatian's view of the exclusion of the lapsed, or Gregory of Nyssa's universalism, or some of Augustine's views of election and reprobation), I will be less prone to quote them, but I will quote freely from their writings that have been widely received.<sup>10</sup>

As one reads Oden at length it is clear that he believes God has a detailed plan, much as Calvin explained it, but cannot bring himself to say so plainly, preferring rather for the reader to infer it from the doctrine of providence. In elaborating the truth that God as Creator 'remains the one source and end of time' he comes close to articulating a doctrine of 'the decrees of God' worthy of any Calvinist. Oden goes on:

One might say that something 'occurred' in the mind of God before creation—namely, God chose to love the world and *decreed that a world should be* [emphasis added]. God had eternity in which many different creations would have been conceived.<sup>11</sup>

Richard Watson, first systematic theological interpreter of Wesley's form of Arminian theology, published his massive *Theological Institutes* 'neither Calvinistic on the one hand, nor Pelagian on the other' (from the 'Advertisement to the London Edition' of 1823). A sympathetic assessment would describe Watson's position as semi-Augustinian rather than (as unfortunately some say) 'semi-Pelagian'. While specifically rejecting the doctrine of decrees and the reigning Calvinistic scheme of his day, Watson made a strong affirmation of 'total inability' but also held that God had *graciously*, through Christ's universally effective atonement, restored to every human being both the ability and the obligation to believe unto salvation.<sup>12</sup> Watson does not seem to distinguish between the doctrine of decrees and the doctrine of election, which is a *soteriological* doctrine not to be confused with God's decrees concerning the whole creation.

5. Discussion of predestination usually tends quickly to the topic of divine election, a subject related to the redeemed alone. For reasons that shall appear later, let us not mix *soteriology* (the topic of salvation) with the doctrine of God, theology proper. At present, our focus is on God, not mankind. Election deals with mankind as fallen, not as created (Sublapsarian not Supralapsarian). In the decrees, our thoughts are directed to God's created, sustained and governed universe wherein nothing is strange to God's eternal plan and purpose. A. H. Strong is almost alone among American theologians in seeing the pedagogical importance of the order of treatment.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> *ibid.*, p. xii.

<sup>11</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 261, 262.

<sup>12</sup> Richard Watson, *Theological Institutes vol. ii* (New York: G. Lane & P. B. Sanford, 1843) pp. 381–448.

<sup>13</sup> A. H. Strong, *op. cit.*, pp. 355, 779–790.

As predestination relates to salvation of individuals the problems discussed have ever been the same. In periods when the arguments are discussed controversially by *genuine evangelicals* they usually have led through the following steps.

All agree that in the fall of Adam human nature had lost its normal spiritual powers and could regain them only by grace. To Augustinians it seems incongruous therefore ‘at one and the same time to assert that grace was necessary because of original sin and yet to reject the corollary doctrine of predestination’—i.e. that we have no power to choose Christ until imparted sufficient spiritual power to do so (1 Cor. 2:14).<sup>14</sup> The evangelical opponents of Augustinian thought, while acknowledging inability, might propose a sufficient remnant of ability to co-operate or at least not resist, or sufficient power of reason and will remaining to turn to God. Others posit, as a matter of divine justice, a *universal restoration* of power to believe if one wills to do so. Arminius did that. Wesley and his followers derive from Arminius the doctrine of universal restoration of power to repent and believe, but say it is by God’s grace (not as with Arminius a matter of justice) effected by Christ’s atonement, He being ‘the true light ... coming into the world ... which enlightens everyone’.<sup>15</sup>

6. No personality of Scripture narrative and authorship is more decisively articulate on the subject than Paul. I think we may assign two causes as to why. The first is the manner of his conversion. He had execrated the very name of Jesus while vigorously persecuting, even murdering, those who dared to believe on His name. However, God stopped him abruptly in his tracks, instantly changing the hardened heart of the grand inquisitor to the suppliant believer. This his friend Luke faithfully, and in detail, reported. The initiative to save Paul’s soul and make an apostle of him did not originate in Saul of Tarsus. If ever there was a clear case of *predestination*, divine choosing, it was his, and Paul never tired of testifying to that fact and applying the principle of predestination onward from the personal to everything else under the highest heaven.

The second reason was vividly set forth by Francis Davidson, a Scottish professor in a lecture to the InterVarsity Fellowship:

The doctrine of predestination is Pauline only in the sense that it fell to the lot of the great apostle to the Gentiles to develop it to its height. It is a mistake to think that Paul originated the doctrine, or wandered into a bypath of revelation as he matured its truth. The Rabbi of Tarsus inherited the very spirit of the doctrine from the teaching of his race. The Old Testament Scriptures are infused with the breath of the sovereignty of almighty God, who is so exalted as first cause in his own universe, that second causes are of immaterial account. God is in intimate contact with all events, and nothing lies outside His holy and wise control. Every happening is the expression of the divine will. The voice of the Lord is heard on land and sea and in the sky, ‘the Lord sitteth king forever’ (Ps. 29). The prophet, like the psalmist, is equally God-conscious and even dares to postulate the emergence of evil to the all-embracing and absolute will of God. ‘Shall there be evil in a city, and the Lord hath not done it?’ (Amos 3:6). It is so in the warp and

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<sup>14</sup> Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition, i* (Chicago: Univ. Of Chicago Press, 1971), p. 319 also pp. 297, 298, 302, 303, 215–218, 327–330.

<sup>15</sup> This matter will be given fuller treatment in ‘Part 5: Soteriology: Salvation Applied’.

woof of the Old Testament writings, all of which were in the heritage of the apostle Paul.<sup>16</sup>

When this study takes up election as an aspect of soteriology (the doctrine of salvation) we shall devote further attention to Paul's theology of predestination.

7. Our procedure at this point might trace the notion of divine predestination through the two Testaments and conclude with summaries in the inductive manner of some 'biblical theology'. In order, however, to be as brief as possible within bounds of adequacy of treatment, I shall bring the fruits of inductive biblical studies to a structural form of statement. The subject of predestination had already been widely discussed by Christian teachers before Augustine gave the subject extended statement—both as positive doctrine and in polemical writings against Pelagius and his disciples.

8. As handled by skilful advocates, providence is the companion of predestination. It is addressed *first to believers* as supreme comfort in and among the unavoidable difficulties of life and, *secondly to others*, simply as a wonderful fact of existence. John Flavel, a Puritan preacher who survived the Stuart 'Restoration' of 1660, published *The Mystery of Providence* in 1678 as a sort of manual of Christian discipline in holiness and comfort in tribulation. He lived on until 'the Glorious Revolution' of 1688 bestowed the crown on William and Mary, February 13, 1688 (in time to have a college in Virginia named for them). Preaching at the national celebration of this victory over the papal forces of Europe and Britain, John Flavel (one of the few surviving Puritan preachers) observed what he called, 'a remarkable coincidence'.

He said that in 1588 England had experienced a signal deliverance from Roman Catholicism.

The mighty armada of Spain, sent to dethrone the Protestant Elizabeth and restore her people to the 'old faith', had been blasted by the winds and waves. A hundred years had passed, Flavel reminded his hearers, 'Yet behold another Eighty-eight [1688] crowned and enriched with mercies, no less admirable and glorious than the former.' Another attempt to subjugate England to the yoke of Rome had been thwarted by the Providence of God.<sup>17</sup>

It is important to note that decrees and providence must be present in any thinking about ultimate questions by orthodox theologians. As noted earlier, Thomas Oden, a Methodist theologian, makes no formal place for 'decrees' or 'predestination' in his construal of 'the Works of God'.<sup>18</sup> Yet he felt compelled several times almost subliminally to introduce the subject of decrees. I quote the first.

If theology is to speak of the God of history, there must be a stage on which history is played out. There is redemptive *intent* from the beginning in creation, so there is a subtle sense in which God's redemptive *purpose* is prior to God's creative *purpose* [emphasis added] (1 Cor. 2:7; 2 Tim. 1:9; Titus 1:2; Rev. 13:8; John 1:1–20; Eph. 1:5–11; Barth,

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<sup>16</sup> Francis Davidson, *Pauline Predestination* (London: The Tyndale Press, 1946, 1964), p. 3.

<sup>17</sup> Michael Boland in 'Publisher's Introduction' to John Flavel's, *The Mystery of Providence* (London: Banner of Truth Trust, republished 1963), p. 7.

<sup>18</sup> Oden, *op. cit.*, pp. 223–315.

Barth Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, 13 volumes

CD 2/2). But there is a less subtle sense in which creation is prior to redemption, for how could one have something to redeem if something does not exist.<sup>19</sup>

Though as a presumed Wesleyan he carefully avoids the traditional terms ‘predestination’ and ‘decrees’, he employs the terms *intent* and *purpose*, thus introducing the ideas of predestination and decrees and even the question of the order of the decrees—whether Supralapsarian or Infralapsarian. Further he makes reference to Barth’s volume (*Church Dogmatics 2/2*) wherein ‘Barth emphasizes the freedom, mystery and righteousness of God’s predestinating will’, etc.—showing that Dr Oden is fully aware of the subtlety.<sup>20</sup>

## The Biblical Doctrine of Predestination

In this and the next chapter, let us try to subsume the biblical teaching of divine decrees, or predestination, under a series of propositions.

### The Bible Teaches that God Planned the World

The word ‘plan’ presents a better face to the reader because the singular number (decree, not decrees) excludes the implication of possible alternate courses for the world in God’s mind and it neither suggests nor implies arbitrariness or hesitancy on God’s part. God was and is in charge and knows exactly what course the cosmos He made should and will take. Let us observe several realities.

### The Bible Employs Many Direct Statements about God’s Plan

The Bible furnishes many direct statements that *in context* as well as form of statement teach that God has a fixed plan for all creation. The notion that assumes ‘the serious intentions of God may in some cases be defeated, and that man, who is not only a creature but a sinful creature, can exercise veto power over the plans of Almighty God’ contrasts starkly with all these texts, which I shall now enter as they appeared in the first book I ever read on the subject of systematic theology.<sup>21</sup>

[H]e does according to his will among the host of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can stay his hand or say to him, ‘What have you done?’ (Dan. 4:35).

Ah, Lord GOD! It is you who has made the heavens and the earth by your great power and by your outstretched arm! Nothing is too hard for you (Jer. 32:17).

All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me [Christ] (Matt. 28:18).

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<sup>19</sup> Oden, *op. cit.*, p. 229.

<sup>20</sup> Oden, *op. cit.*, p. vii.

<sup>21</sup> Lorraine Boettner, *The Reformed Doctrine of Predestination* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1932 and continuously through many printings), pp. 33, 34; pp. 26–29 quotes and cites dozens of other specifically relevant passages.

And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church (Eph. 1:22).

In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will (Eph. 1:11).

The LORD of hosts has sworn: saying, 'As I have planned, so shall it be ...' For the LORD of hosts has purposed, and who will annul it? His hand is stretched out, and who will turn it back? (Isa. 14:24, 27).

Remember the former things of old; for I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me, declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times things not yet done, saying, 'My counsel shall stand, and I will accomplish all my purpose' ... I have spoken, and I will bring it to pass; I have purposed, and

I will do it (Isa. 46:9, 10, 11).

Is anything too hard for the LORD? (Gen. 18:14).

I know that you can do all things, and that no purpose of yours can be thwarted (Job 42:2).

God is in the heavens; he does all that he pleases (Ps. 115:3).

Whatever the LORD pleases, he does, in heaven and on earth, in the seas and all deeps (Ps. 135:6).

So shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it (Isa. 55:11).

But who are you, O man, to answer back to God? Will what is moulded say to its moulder, 'Why have you made me like this?' Has the potter no right over the clay, to make out of the same lump one vessel for honoured use and another for dishonourable use? (Rom. 9:20, 21).

Many further plain texts and narrative incidents will be added to these uncontested biblical declarations that there is indeed an 'eternal plan by which God has rendered certain all the events of the universe, past, present, and future'.<sup>22</sup>

The universe is the largest conceivable project. It seems preposterous to suppose a project including the galaxies in their motion and orbits, as well as the life processes of a microbe; including objects as complicated as the solar system and as mysterious as light and human consciousness; including processes as closely harmonized as the electrical hook-up between the human brain and hands playing a violin could simply have occurred without an intelligent design formed by an intelligent designer. The larger the enterprise the more important is the plan. If the Sears Tower of Chicago or the Metro system of Paris required detailed blueprints before construction could begin how much more the cosmos of which even man himself is a very complicated part? Darwinism of the sort that excludes intelligent design from its dogma has recently been challenged by some of its own evolutionary thinkers. How much less can a strong

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<sup>22</sup> A. H. Strong, *op. cit.*, p. 353.

doctrine of divine planning, or predestination, be expunged from a sound theology of the Christian religion.

### **The Bible uses a Variety of Terms to teach Predestination**

The Bible employs a vocabulary of semi-technical terms to teach the doctrine of predestination. We shall enter some of the Hebrew and Greek terms in due time but the terms employed in standard translation are clear enough. As, historically, the discussion has been framed in the idiom of the Authorized Version (KJV) we shall employ the same and quote here from that Version. Let us see some of these words in contexts that both illustrate the doctrine and give a sense of the meaning of these English words. Some are groups of related words.

1. *Know* in various verbal tenses and *knowledge*. ‘Before I formed thee in the belly I *knew* thee’ (Jer. 1:5) ‘You only have I *known* of all the families of the earth’ (Amos 3:2). ‘[S]eeing I *know* not a man’ (Luke 1:34). ‘And Adam *knew* Eve his wife; and she conceived’ (Gen. 4:1). ‘[B]eing delivered by the ... *foreknowledge* of God’ (Acts 2:23; 1 Peter 1:2). ‘[W]hom he did *foreknow*, he also did predestinate’ (Rom. 8:29 [emphasis added]).

These words in context show that God, in the case of two men (Jeremiah and Paul, cf. also David, Ps. 139) were ‘known’ by God in a special way before they were even conceived and had their lives planned out for them. In each case *to know* designates a relationship with God, with the individual person and, in the case of Amos 3:2, with a whole nation. These words usually apply to ‘God’s elect’ in some specific sense.

2. *Choose, chosen*. ‘The LORD did not ... choose you, because ye were more in number than any people’, etc. (Deut. 7:7). ‘I know whom I have chosen’ (John 13:18; cf. 15:16, 19).

These words are very frequently used in connection with sovereign divine choice of persons or nations for reasons God is not obligated to give; nor does He give reasons. ‘Jacob have I loved, Esau have I hated’ before either had been born (Rom. 11:10–13). In a theological sense, the Bible uses these words usually only of God’s relation to ‘the elect’.

3. *Elect, elected, election*. These words are never used in the Bible except in relation to Christ (Isa. 42:1), good angels (1 Tim. 5:21), God’s chosen people (Isa. 65:9, 22) and those whom divine grace has brought from death to life, from the power of sin into the liberty of full salvation. They appear twenty-seven times, sixteen of them in New Testament Epistles. The terms are never used of the unsaved as such.

4. Other expressions such as refer to God’s *counsel, determinate counsel* and *will* are used in Scripture to express not only God’s control of the universe He created but also that it exists as He planned it.

Already questions and problems arise in the reader’s mind. While these ought to be recognized in such a treatment as this. C. A. Hodge cautions:

It must be remembered that theology is not philosophy. It does not assume to discover truth, or to reconcile what it teaches as true with all other truths. Its province is simply to state what God has revealed in his Word, and to vindicate those statements as far as possible from misconceptions and objections.<sup>23</sup>

Hence, when we write about the eternal counsels and purposes of the Almighty we must stand in awe and speak with reserve for ‘no one comprehends [knows KJV] the thoughts of God except

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<sup>23</sup> Charles A. Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, Vol. I (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1970), p. 535.

the Spirit of God' (1 Cor. 2:11) and that which the Spirit has made known in the Scriptures. That which Scripture says, we must state as clearly as we can, without reserve, and leave it to the reader to ponder and receive if he will.

### **The Place of Predictive Prophecy**

There is still another way in which the Creator of the world has made known that he created it according to a plan and is directing it toward a certain consummation—by predictive prophecy. The reader should not form an opinion of biblical prediction based on some distortions advertized in sensational preaching and imaginative movies and books of fiction. Rather let the LORD God speak for Himself.

Beginning at Isaiah 40:25 and on through 42:9 the prophet presents 'God', 'the LORD', 'the Spirit of the LORD', 'the Holy One' (Isa. 40:13, 18, 25, 27) in verbal discourse with His contrite people and idolaters, they who challenge the existence of the invisible 'Spirit in whom all things have their source, support and end' (Strong). It is partly in the form of challenge to debate. After representing God as the incomparable Planner, Creator, Sustainer and Governor of the world (40:12–24), the Incomparable (40:18, 22) Himself enters a challenge: 'To whom then will you compare me, that I should be like him?' (40:25). Onward through the seven remaining verses of chapter 40 and 41:1–20, God, the LORD, displays His creative omnipotence, sovereignty and grace, finally issuing a challenge to any detractors from His creative power and sovereign control of history as it unfolds:

Set forth your case, says the LORD;  
bring your proofs, says the King of Jacob.  
Let them bring them, and tell us what is to happen.  
Tell us the former things, what they are,  
that we may consider them,  
that we may know their outcome;  
or declare to us the things to come.  
Tell us what is to come hereafter,  
that we may know that you are gods;  
do good, or do harm,  
that we may be dismayed and terrified.  
Behold, you are nothing,  
and your work is less than nothing;  
an abomination is he who chooses you.<sup>24</sup>

So much for the impotence of heathen gods to control ongoing history. God goes on to speak of the far-future rise of one known already to God and revealed to Isaiah in the eighth century BC and his God as 'his anointed ... Cyrus' (Isa. 45:1) who did not appear on the plane of history until the sixth century BC, as follows:

I stirred up one from the north, and he has come,  
from the rising of the sun, and he shall call upon my name;  
he shall trample on rulers as on mortar,  
as the potter treads clay.

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<sup>24</sup> Isa. 41:21–24.

Who declared it from the beginning, that we might know,  
and beforehand, that we might say, ‘He is right’? (Isa. 41:25, 26. See on to v. 29.)

Soon God, the LORD, sums up his argument based on His planned knowledge of the future and control of it:

I am the LORD; that is my name;  
my glory will I give to no other,  
nor my praise to carved idols.  
Behold, the former things have come to pass,  
and new things I now declare;  
before they spring forth  
I tell you of them. (Isa. 42:8, 9).

The strongest statement, in the book of Isaiah, by God Himself of His power to predict the future, to tell it to His prophets, and to guarantee the future by His own ‘counsel’ and ‘pleasure’, has just been quoted. However, Isaiah’s prophecy goes on to say the future will unfold as determined by God. Everything in God’s world proceeds according to plan—no emergencies, no surprises. Hear Isaiah again [all emphasis added]:

[R]emember the former things of old;  
for I am God, and there is no other;  
I am God, and there is none like me,  
declaring the end from the beginning  
and from ancient times things not yet done,  
saying, ‘My counsel shall stand,  
and I will accomplish all *my purpose*’,  
calling a bird of prey from the east,  
the man of *my counsel* [Cyrus] from a far country.  
I have spoken, and I will bring it to pass;  
I have purposed, and I will do it.<sup>25</sup>

Perhaps the single greatest scriptural witness to divine predestination is in the widespread predictive prophecies of the Bible. Christ and the apostles certainly thought fulfilled prophecy to be the greatest scriptural witness to their own authenticity as divine spokesmen. The prophets told of coming events in Jewish history long before they came to pass. One, for example, was that the Jews would be made servants to the king of Babylon and after seventy years would be made free to return to their native land from the place where that king had transported them. Part of this is in Jeremiah’s prophecy: ‘behold, I will send for all the tribes of the north, declares the LORD, and for Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, my servant, and I will bring them against this land... This whole land shall become a ruin and a waste, and these nations shall serve the

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<sup>25</sup> Isa 46:9–11, emphasis added. Those who believe not only what the Bible says, but what the Bible claims to be—in this case Isaiah 40–66, a composition by a prophet who wrote near the hinge between the 700s and the 600s BC and prophesied of Cyrus, whose career as king of Medes and Persians was in the middle third of the 500s—will defend the genuineness of this part of Isaiah. Otherwise the claims of God to control the future and thereby to know it and predict it through His servants the prophets are false.

king of Babylon seventy years. Then after seventy years are completed, I will punish the king of Babylon ...' (Jer. 25:9, 11, 12).

About seventy years later (Jeremiah spoke at the beginning of the seventy years) another prophet, in Babylon, read Jeremiah and waited expectantly to see what the older prophet had announced come to pass. And it did.<sup>26</sup>

Now some might suppose God merely noted what 'natural laws' or some such thing would bring to pass and by this 'foreknowledge' told Isaiah, Jeremiah and Daniel about it. However, the Governor of the world is no such second guesser as that. Rather, after a lengthy oracle on the future of two ancient kingdoms, Babylon and Assyria, Isaiah writes:

The LORD of hosts has sworn:  
'As I have planned,  
so shall it be,  
and as I have purposed,  
so shall it stand,  
that I will break the Assyrian in my land ...'<sup>27</sup>  
This is the purpose that is purposed  
concerning the whole earth,  
and this is the hand that is stretched out  
over all the nations.  
For the LORD of hosts has purposed,  
and who will annul it?  
His hand is stretched out,  
and who will turn it back?<sup>28</sup>

Consider also Isaiah 46:9, 10: 'I am God, and there is none like me, declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times things not yet done, saying, ' "My counsel shall stand, and I will accomplish all my purpose" '.

People 'whose God is not in their thinking' usually do not realize they are carrying out God's plan. As they do their wicked deeds they think like W. E. Henley, in his well-known poem, *Invictus*: I am the master of my fate;/I am the captain of my soul!

The wicked Assyrian king, furious against the kingdom of Israel, had no awareness that he was a simple instrument of God's fury—'Ah, Assyria, the rod of my anger.... I send him ... against the people of my wrath.... But he does not so intend, and his heart does not so think; but it is in his heart to destroy ...' (Isa. 10:5–7).

These passages are only a fraction of the biblical evidence that there is an 'eternal plan by which God has rendered certain all the events of the universe, past, present, and future'.<sup>29</sup> Some of the specific aspects of this plan will be noticed in the next paragraphs, but still with regard to the general proposition that there is such an all-inclusive plan, attention is called to the following: 'Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world' (Acts 15:18 KJV,

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<sup>26</sup> See Dan. 9:1–3; Isa. 44:21–45; 2 Chron. 36:19–23; and Ezra, chapter 1.

<sup>27</sup> See Isaiah 36 and 37 for the fulfilment.

<sup>28</sup> Isa. 14:24–27.

<sup>29</sup> A. H. Strong, *op. cit.*, p. 353.

note the context of world evangelism); ‘having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will’ (Eph. 1:11).

The previous chapter introduced the biblical teaching that God made a plan for the world before He created it. This feature of divine sovereignty includes everything that should come to pass. The first proposition was ‘The Bible Teaches that God Planned the World.’ We proceed with a second.

## 16

### Predestination or the Decrees of God: God’s Eternal Plan for the Heavens and the Earth (II)

#### The Bible Teaches that all of God’s Purposes and Decrees for the World are Parts of a Comprehensive Single Plan

Paul referred to the plan in this way, speaking of God’s ‘eternal purpose’ (Eph. 3:11) and ‘the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will’ (Eph. 1:11). Notice the singular number of purpose, counsel and will in these texts. The same is true of Romans 8:28, which begins with ‘all things’ but ends with ‘according to his purpose’.

Among the many attempts to explain ‘the one and the many’ in simple language, A. A. Hodge may have produced the best:

The cause of one event is the effect of another and every event in the universe is more immediately or remotely the condition of every other so that an eternal purpose on the part of God must be one all-comprehensive act.<sup>1</sup>

Later he says:

All the speculative errors ... on this subject [either toward fatalism and determinism on the one hand or to tychism, i.e. chance, luck, absolute free-will of mankind on the other], spring from the tendency of the human mind to confine attention to one fragment of God, eternal purpose, and to regard it as isolated from the rest.<sup>2</sup>

He goes on to say that though we must separate the many works of God in thought, they are all connected just as all of nature is connected. Innumerable inseparable parts of a great painting are in the mind of a major painter before he applies brush and paint to a surface. In the artist’s mind, the work is totally present at once even though all of it may come to conscious awareness and visibility only as he paints one tiny detail after another. Alternatively, consider a great sculptural piece like the Pieta at the Vatican, all contained at once in the great sculptor’s mind as he attacks

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<sup>1</sup> A. A. Hodge, *Outlines of Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1957), p. 204.

<sup>2</sup> *ibid.*, p. 204.

the great chunk of marble, hammer and chisel in his hands. He, however, focuses on one chip at a time as the work comes forth and finally dazzles its viewers by its perfection while redounding to the reputation of its creator.

The Christian thinker must be careful at this point lest he himself fall into a serious error, the error that denies to us the freedom (albeit not absolute) which the Bible and our own consciousness tell us we have. He must also be prepared to refute the learned deterministic errors proposed by modern philosophy without assimilating them.

G. W. F. Hegel (1770–1831) is in a class by himself. His metaphysics has affected about everything written in philosophy since his times. He thought ‘we must conceive of all facts as *necessary*. Given all the possibilities, the fact *must* emerge. *What is, must be*, because the conditions which enable it to exist *could not* produce any other fact’ (emphasis added).<sup>3</sup> The academic spectrum furnishes (or has until recently) many leaders in every field who assume some sort of cause-effect determinism derived from the interconnectedness of all things.

### **Bible Names for God’s Plan**

God’s plan goes by several biblical names and designations. Each of the technical and semi-technical terms emphasizes some aspect of the doctrine and is therefore helpful in understanding it. The industrious reader will do well to read from the Bible itself the context of each of the passages about to be quoted here and to ponder the words emphasized. Each passage presents a different, but obvious, designation of God’s plan for His creation: ‘My *counsel* shall stand, and I will do all my *pleasure*’ (Isa. 46:10 KJV); those he has ‘*called* according to his *purpose*’ (Rom. 8:28); He ‘works all things according to the *counsel* of his *will*’ (Eph. 1:11; cf. Dan. 4:35); God ‘having *determined allotted* periods’ (Acts 17:26); Christ was ‘*foreordained*’ (1 Peter 1:20 KJV); we ‘having been *predestined*’ (Eph. 1:11; cf. Rom. 8:30) (emphasis added)).

### **A Single, Comprehensive Plan**

There are about three varieties of determinism advocated in the world. This is to say, those who think we have no freedom at all, propose one or all of three causes for this lack of freedom. One is a sort of impersonal, materialistic fate thought to be built into the very fabric of the universe. This is the *moira*, *aisa* or *fatum* (fate or the fates) of Greek and Roman antiquity. The gods were ‘born’ into a world already existing, a world sometimes thought of as directed by fate, rather naively considered. As the ancients became scientific, a second form of determinism—cause-effect in an eternal chain—arose and is still with us as ‘scientific or naturalistic determinism’, either environmental or hereditary or both. Astrology, which assumes the stars of the sky determine destiny (‘your lucky stars’) arose very early in human history. It was drawn upon to support the first form of determinism, that is, fate. Both have had revivals in modern times and together reign on most university campuses today. A third form is religious determinism, a major feature of Islam, a non-Trinitarian monotheism. Any strongly held monotheism that has no Savior-God, no wise, loving, holy Father, quickly becomes a hard fatalism, as in the whole Muslim world. The same views develop in forms of Christianity where awareness of God’s sovereignty is not matched with awareness of His love, mercy and holiness and does not give

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<sup>3</sup> B. A. G. Fuller, *History of Philosophy*, II, rev. ed. (New York: Henry Holt & Co. 1945), p. 315.

sufficient emphasis to that freedom *under* God that all human beings have as being, by creation, God's image.

## God's Plan Is Eternal and Therefore Changeless

The Bible teaches this single, comprehensive plan of God is an eternal plan and therefore unchangeable. This declaration rests on many plain statements of simple, but profound, facts.

### God's Purposes Are Formed in Eternity

Paul grandly proclaims his duty to 'bring to light for everyone what is the *plan* of the mystery hidden for ages in God *who created all things*' and that 'This was according to the *eternal purpose*', etc. (Eph. 3:9–11 (emphasis added)). In context, God's plan for the church is the centre of interest, but Paul—in declaring divine purpose in unmatched, exalted language—informs the church that it is part of an eternal purpose, along with 'all things' He has 'created'. As Peter says, Christ the Lamb of God 'was *foreordained* before the foundation of the world, but was *manifest* in these last times', etc. (1 Peter 1:20 KJV).

The divine decree is formed in eternity, but executed in time. There are sequences in the execution, but not in the formation of God's purpose ... There were thirty-three years between the actual incarnation and the crucifixion, but not between the decree that the Logos should be incarnate and the decree that he should be crucified ... 'The Lamb was slain from the foundation of the world' (Rev. 14:8).<sup>4</sup>

### God Is Changeless

God is immutable; there are no sequences or changes in him. As the Psalmist declares, though all else change, 'you are the same' (Ps. 102:27), and the prophet, 'I the LORD do not change' (Mal. 3:6), and the LORD's brother, about 'the Father of lights with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change' (James 1:17). He can neither decrease nor increase (as 'process theology' asserts), improve nor deteriorate, nor does He change plans in case of emergencies—because there are no unforeseen emergencies for Him who not only forecast the end from the beginning but decreed it so.

Recent advocates of a theory self-designated as 'the openness of God' argue that God cannot know contingent future events and think they find support in certain passages of Scripture, especially those which speak of God as repenting. Orthodox theology replies as follows.

1. Some passages (such as Abraham's wheedling God to make concessions in His plans to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah) illustrate only how God deals with us creatures, meeting us where we are, taking events where He plans for them to go by stages of experience and of discipline. Parents do the same with their children.

2. Some passages are 'anthropomorphic representations of the revelation of God's unchanging attributes in the changing circumstances and varying moral conditions of creatures'.<sup>5</sup> We should interpret Genesis 6:6 in the light of Numbers 23:19 ('the LORD was sorry that he had

<sup>4</sup> W. G. T. Shedd, *Dogmatic Theology I* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1969), p. 394.

<sup>5</sup> A. H. Strong, *Systematic Theology* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 1907), p. 258.

made man', 'God is not man, that he should lie, or a son of man, that he should change his mind') and 1 Samuel 15:11 with verse 29 ('I regret that I have made Saul king', 'the Glory of Israel will not lie or have regret, for he is not a man, that he should have regret'). If we do so we can understand that from a human standpoint God seems to change His mind about people and things, but really He is represented to us that way. His treatment of us was and is always the same—a holy response to our good or evil actions and intent. Divine predictions Jonah made of Nineveh's destruction were conditional upon the city's response to the threats (of resistance or repentance). The mass and composition of a column of mercury in a thermometer remains exactly the same twenty-four hours of the day yet rises every time temperatures outside rise and falls every time temperatures fall.

### **The Decrees of the Unchanging God Determine Actions Set in Time**

Though there is no change in God or even temporal succession His decrees made in eternity terminate on works set in time. The Scriptures report His past immediate work of creation (now finished), His present works of preservation and providence mainly through second causes, and immediate works such as miracles and regeneration of sinners and acts such as justifying believers by faith. 'My Father is working until now, and I am working' (John 5:17). Immutability is not immobility in God any more than God's impassibility, or perfect blessedness, is to be confused with impassivity. God does not suffer (impassibility) though, in His human nature, the Theanthropos [Gr. for God-man] did both suffer and die. Nevertheless, God is as immutable and impassible as He is also immortal ('who alone has immortality'). Some immense mystery is present in these truths. Immutability (in God) is fully consistent with unrelenting activity (even 'work') and perfect freedom, for 'he does according to his will among the host of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth' (Dan. 4:35).

### **God's Decrees Are Certain of Fulfillment**

Predestination is certain of fulfillment. Human programmes, schedules and budgets are prone to failure in execution, but not God's decrees made in eternity.

If Christ is the Lamb slain from before the foundation of the world, the creation of mankind, mankind's fall and need for the atoning blood were in the plan too. There were no glitches in execution of the parts of the plan. The first church prayerfully responding to the jailing of their pastor acknowledged that all Herod, Pilate, the soldiers and 'the people of Israel' (Acts. 2:27 KJV) had conspired to do was only 'whatever your hand and your plan had predestined to take place' (Acts 4:28). Peter's rescue from jail by an angel (Acts 12:7, 8) and Paul's deliverance from shipwreck were not improvised 'in the nick of time'—*ad hoc* or as an expedient. God's manoeuvres sometimes surprise *us*, but He is never surprised by anything. His eternal plan, according to several passages, is one which cannot be changed (eg. Eph. 3:11; James 1:17). True, 'The LORD brings the counsel of the nations to nothing; he frustrates the plans of the peoples', but not so His own plan, for 'The counsel of the LORD stands forever, the plans of his heart to all generations' (Ps. 33:10, 11; cf. 89:1). And what a marvellous thing it is to be one of the Lord's people, knowing about His purpose: 'Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD, the people whom he has chosen as his heritage!' (Ps. 33:10–13).

This single, eternal, all-inclusive plan becomes precious and meaningful to believers as they consider the detail with which it is described in Scripture. Most of these details accompany some message of duty, of comfort or of further enlightenment.

God's plan is never presented in the Bible in such a way as to relieve believers either of hope or responsibility, or to discourage effort, in the slightest way. We should not be dismayed by objections and questions. Some people will say, 'I don't see how you can believe this doctrine and still believe that moral effort will get you anywhere.' Others will ask, 'If God has everything planned out how can He hold us responsible for either good or evil actions?' These questions arise out of incomplete understanding, that is, seeing only part of the Scripture teaching on the subject. Sometimes some detail of revelation, which seems to present a problem, keeps one from believing the whole of what the Scriptures plainly say. In addition, sometimes people reject the teaching because they do not like it. This teaching is either comfort or warning, depending on which one needs.

## Details of God's Single Plan

Some of the many details of the plan the Bible associates together in His 'eternal purpose' follow.

### **1. God's Plan includes the Permanence and Stability of the Material Universe**

God's plan includes the permanence and stability of the material universe, what scientists call the uniformity of nature. 'Your faithfulness endures to all generations; you have established the earth, and it stands fast. By your appointment they stand this day, for all things are your servants' (Ps. 119:90, 91).

It is this guaranteed uniformity of nature—the same in every corner of the world—that caused science to arise first in Christian lands and to surpass all peoples outside Christendom in material culture. There could be no scientific research if nature were not uniform everywhere.

About AD 72, Pliny the Elder compiled his *Historia Naturalis* (Natural History) from some 327 Greek and 146 Latin authors. Though popular until the rise of modern science, Pliny's uncritical and credulous outlook prevents anyone today from finding any important information about the origins of metallurgy, chemistry, weather-forecasting and the like in his work. Reflection on the origins of science have come relatively late but many have sought to explain how and when science arose. There is a tradition among some writers opposing Christianity to the origin and progress of science. One famous book calls it a 'warfare'.<sup>6</sup>

R. Hooykaas' book, *Religion and the Rise of Modern Science*, has shown how in late Renaissance and Reformation times it was Christian thinkers with their roots in biblical revelation who gave science its theoretical support.<sup>7</sup>

Perhaps the person who has done the most to give the Christian doctrine of God and His providence its fair place in the rise of science is the realist philosopher and Roman Catholic priest, Stanley L. Jaki. Bernard Ramm's book, *The Christian View of Science and Scripture* came to my aid when I was teaching about this subject at Wheaton College (in Apologetics)<sup>8</sup> but Jaki

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<sup>6</sup> A. D. White, *A History of the Warfare of Science with Theology In Christendom* (London: 1896).

<sup>7</sup> R. Hooykaas, *Religion and the Rise of Modern Science* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972). See especially his chapter 'Science and the Reformation', pp. 98–144, about one-third of his book.

<sup>8</sup> Bernard L. Ramm, *The Christian View of Science and Scripture* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1954).

has covered the field of science and Christianity in a whole series of books, most specifically on the modern origins of science in *The Origin of Science and the Science of Origins*. An excerpt explains why science never took hold in any civilization except Christendom.

That in all those cultures—Chinese, Hindu, Maya, Egyptian, Babylonian, to mention only the most significant ones—science suffered a still birth, can be traced to that mesmerizing impact which the notion of eternal returns exercised on them. It was a mesmerism fomented by the lack of a firm foothold, which in turn could only be provided by the perspective of absolute origin, an origin inconceivable without belief in creation out of nothing, implying a Creator.<sup>9</sup>

Jaki shows how the linear view of history found in the Christian doctrine of redemption also supported the rise of science. He goes on to say:

[I]t was the Gospel that turned into a widely shared conviction, the belief in the Father, maker of all things visible and invisible who ... disposed everything in measure, number and weight, that is, with rigorous consistency and rationality.<sup>10</sup>

This is to say God created the world and set it operating according to regular laws which He Himself sustains and is governing it to attain the goals He set (His decrees) before the beginning.

In agreement with this is Jaroslav Pelikan, who says the early Christian apologists were compelled to attack the Greek interpretation of history as ‘recurring cycles’. He adds: ‘In declaring loyalty of the Christians to the [Roman] empire [and emperor] while repudiating the deification of the emperor, apologetic theologians were compelled to clarify their reasons for differing from [Greek-Roman] theories of history.’<sup>11</sup>

God’s certain and settled decree is such a sure matter that the Bible compares the certainty of God’s promises to His people to the certain regularity and permanence of God’s ways in nature. God’s invisible gracious plan in redemption is parallel with His inescapably apparent works in nature. The two paradigms are graphically displayed in Jeremiah 31:35–37: ‘Thus says the LORD, who gives the sun for a light by day and the fixed order of the moon and the stars for light by night, who stirs up the sea so that its waves roar—the LORD of hosts is his name: “If this fixed order departs from before me, declares the LORD, then shall the offspring of Israel cease from being a nation before me for ever.” Thus says the LORD: “If the heavens above can be measured, and the foundations of the earth below can be explored, then I will cast off all the offspring of Israel for all that they have done, declares the LORD.”’ In this case it should be noticed that human failures and sins do not obstruct the certain fulfillment of divine plans and purpose. A current comprehensive and convincing development of this theme is found in H. L. Poe and I. H. Davis, *Science and Faith: An Evangelical Dialogue*, Nashville, TN, 2000, 259 pages.

## **2. The Plan of God Specifically Relates to the Nations of Earth**

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<sup>9</sup> Stanley L. Jaki, *The Origin of Science and the Science of Origins* (South Bend, IN: Regnery Gateway by arrangement with Scottish Academic Press, 1979), p. 93.

<sup>10</sup> *ibid.*, p. 93.

<sup>11</sup> Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition I, ‘The Emergence of the Christian Tradition’* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1971), p. 37.

The plan of God also specifically relates to the nations of earth—their boundaries, governments, resources, history and condition. We accept this rather easily of Israel, well known to have been an object of special divine attention. However, according to Scripture, God gives every nation its territory. The Horites and the Edomites (‘children of Esau’) were given their land as God gave Israel theirs (Deut. 2:12). Furthermore, ‘When the Most High gave to the nations their inheritance, when he divided mankind [cf. Gen 10:32], he fixed the borders of the peoples’ (Deut. 32:8). Paul is direct to the point, saying to a Gentile audience, ‘The God who made the world ... made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place’ (Acts 17:24, 26). Therefore, though both Kaiser Wilhelm and Adolph Hitler thought the German people needed more *Lebensraum* (room to live), God saw to it that, for a time at least, they were not to get it. These passages invite further study of the decrees of God regarding the history of nations.

### **3. God has no Known Preference for Any Particular Kind of Government or Sovereignty**

It may come as a shock to learn that God has no known preference for any particular kind of government or ‘theory’ of sovereignty for rulers. Scripture favours no particular doctrine of the human authority by which magistrates rule—whether dictatorship, empire, monarchy, aristocracy, plutocracy, military, pure democracy, party dictatorship or republic. The Bible is equally for and against them all. ‘The sentence is by the decree of the watchers, the decision by the word of the holy ones, to the end that the living may know that the Most High rules the kingdom of men and gives it to whom he will and sets over it the lowliest of men’ (Dan. 4:17). ‘[T]here is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God’ (Rom. 13:1). On every occasion the Bible raises the subject it emphatically declares that God reigns over the nations, that events express His sovereign decree. If the reader has any doubt of this, do read Psalms 93–99. A summary of sorts is Psalm 96:10, ‘Say among the nations, “The LORD reigns! Yes, the world is established; it shall never be moved; he will judge the peoples with equity.” ’ This is not to say that some systems of government are not more friendly to the Christian ideals of society than others. I have dealt at length with the subject of this paragraph in *Civil Government, A Biblical View*.<sup>12</sup>

### **4. God’s Plan includes the Precise Length of Each Person’s Life**

Also included in God’s plan is the precise length of each person’s life. This is not a philosophy of ‘when your number is up’—far from it. Rather it is a truth designed to inculcate an attitude of peaceful confidence among God’s children, delivering them from bondage to fear of death all their lifetime (see Heb. 2:15). Job was aware of this, declaring a person’s ‘days are determined, and the number of his months is with you [God], and you have appointed his limits that he cannot pass’ (Job 14:5). This implies certain responsibilities at the opposite pole from what is popularly called fatalism. Moses said that since God has numbered our days in His wisdom (Ps. 90:3–12) we also should ‘number’ them. ‘So teach us’, he prays, ‘to number our days that we may get a heart of wisdom’ (Ps. 90:12).

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<sup>12</sup> Robert Culver, *Civil Government, A Biblical View* (Edmonton, Alberta: Canadian Institute for Law, Theology and Public Policy, 1999), 308 pages.

I once heard a Free Methodist evangelist say in a sermon, ‘Every man is immortal until his work is done’, and he was undoubtedly correct. This, in part, accounts for the cheerful, good hope of the apostle Paul throughout the New Testament reports of his ministry, even when in prison, for alleged capital crimes (Philippians). It accounts also for his quiet resignation to the rigours of imprisonment and the end of life, soon to come, knowing he had finished his divinely charted course and kept the faith (2 Tim. 4:6–8). This outlook lies behind the many scriptural spurs to effective effort in accomplishing goals of life in a systematic and timely manner. Of the ‘blessed man’ Scripture says: ‘He is like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither. All he does, he *brings to completion*’ (Ps. 1:3, words in italics my translation of the last clause; compare also Jesus’ own dying exclamation, ‘It is finished!’).

## 5. God’s Plan includes the Circumstances Under Which We Live

God’s sovereign plan includes the circumstances under which we live—poverty or riches, labor or leisure, sickness or health, bad times or good, and the circumstances in which we die. So it is right for believers to learn to say, from the heart, ‘If the Lord wills’ about all plans for their future (see James 4:13–15). As great a man as the apostle Paul found it right to submit his missionary plans to God, even when he might have planned otherwise (Rom. 1:10–13).

Modern people with their ideas about equality are frequently out of patience with any God who sanctions social and economic classes. Other generations have not felt this way. John Calvin, for example, already in middle age when he accepted his counsellors’ advice to take a wife, disapproved of their first candidate, owing to her higher social standing than his. In any case no aspect of this subject is sketched more sharply than that God designs some to be rich and others poor, some to lead and others to follow, some to command and others to obey, some to be prominent celebrities, others to live out energetic constructive, but plain lives in obscurity (Ps. 73). It is also apparent that if one’s efforts to break out of such categories do fail, God is not to be charged with cruelty or unfairness (Rom. 9:19–21).

It is also hard for us to accept either ill health or poverty as the will of God for anybody. Let those who think this way read what Paul had to say about slaves (1 Cor. 7:20–24), unmarried people (vv. 25–26), the married who might wish not to be (v. 27), the divorced (v. 27, see also verses 28–31). Even certain preachers can be heard to say that it is not God’s will for any one to be sick. If you think this way read Paul’s words about sickness as sometimes God’s will (2 Tim. 4:20; 2 Cor. 12:7–10). Poverty can be God’s will for us too. Other generations have understood this also better than ours. The young prophet, Jeremiah, for example, though he found it painful, accepted the LORD’s command not to take a wife, establish a home and beget children owing to the rigours of his office in a time when genuine prophets were unwelcome in court and out of favour with the Jewish population. The young prophet bewailed his limitation in this regard but like Job ‘in all this’ he ‘did not sin or charge God with wrong’ (see Jer. 16:1–9). This was in order to carry out God’s plans for Jeremiah’s life work as a rejected prophet, to be crowned with a martyr’s death; and his part to play in the last, steeply declining days of his country’s slide to doom and judgment.

There are several specific examples of how God had predetermined how and when certain men, at least, would die (Abraham, Gen. 15:15; Jesus, John 2:19). We cannot doubt that the same is true of us all. One Psalm says, apparently of all, both beasts and people, ‘These all look to you... When you give it to them, they gather it up ... When you hide your face, they are dismayed; when you take away their breath, they die and return to their dust’ (Ps. 104:27–29).

This is the theology, both theoretical and practical, of the ‘Prayer of Moses, the Man of God’ (Ps. 90).

## **6. God’s Plan includes People’s Evil Acts as well as Good Ones**

God’s plan includes evil acts of people as well as their good ones. The Bible specifically says of the wicked deeds of Joseph’s brothers, in selling Joseph to travelling merchants (Gen. 37:23–28), that though they did intend evil ‘God meant it for good’ (Gen. 50:20; cf. Ps. 105:17; and Gen. 45:4–8). Similar interpretations are given by the Bible to the hardening of Pharaoh’s heart and even to the betrayal and shameful execution of Jesus. As the Apostle Peter explained under the difficult circumstances of his second Christian sermon: ‘And now, brothers [the crowd who demanded Jesus be crucified], I know that you acted in ignorance, as did also your rulers. But what God foretold by the mouth of all the prophets, that his Christ would suffer, he thus fulfilled’ (Acts 3:17, 18). Judas had a part in God’s plan (see Jesus’ comments, John 17:12; Mark 14:18–21). Christ’s suffering was even prophesied in the Old Testament.

The jealous Jewish leaders, who were responsible, played a part in God’s plan too. Peter told them this plainly: ‘Men of Israel ... Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God ... delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men’ (Acts 2:22, 23). The fact that the wicked deeds of these parties to crime were all in God’s plan, some even predicted in Scripture, in no wise relieved the men who did those things from guilt and punishment for them. This is plain in each case, especially Judas’—‘It would have been better for that man if he had never been born’ (Mark 14:21). We saw in connection with God’s omniscience that He even foresees events which are conditional upon future acts of free beings (we cited 1 Sam. 23:11–14). If He foreknows such things, it is because He has predestined them as well.

## **7. Both the Judgment of the Impenitent and the Salvation of the Believing are in the Plan of God**

We must understand then that, though the decrees are different, some causative and gracious, others permissive and just, both the judgment of the impenitent and the salvation of the believing are in the plan of God. ‘[F]or those who do not believe, “The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone”, and “A stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence.” They stumble because they disobey the word, as they were destined to do’ (1 Peter 2:7, 8).

## **Questions and Problems**

Now, granting that the biblical teaching has been fairly presented, some questions and problems arise which should, if possible, be answered. This does not mean that merely because a question can be asked, it ought to be asked. Mere men cannot answer all the possible questions that the mind can raise. God’s ways are not our ways or His thoughts ours. Our part is to believe what God says to be true is true. Only after that do we attack the problems.

The most serious question relates to freedom. How can there be freedom of choice if God has decreed all that shall happen, from the fall of raindrops and sparrows to the rise of stars and empires? The following comments may be helpful to honestly perplexed readers. The problems are not insuperable.

1. The Bible speakers and writers are usually conscious of no difficulty. Although Jesus, in speaking of Judas to the Father, called him ‘son of perdition’, it was only after Jesus had made the most touching appeal imaginable that He not go through with his appalling plot with the Sanhedrin (John 13:21–30). A few days later, Peter and assembled believers, in prayer to the same Father, and knowing that Judas’ defection had been prophesied in the Old Testament, observed that Judas by his own transgression fell ‘that he might go to his own place’ (Acts 1:25 KJV). A person can be as free as the Bible says he is (not an absolute freedom by any means), and yet acting out God’s decree, without introducing a conflict in the mind of a Jesus or a Peter. Who is he who supposes himself more rational or insightful or just than they?

2. Making a distinction between the decrees and their execution alleviates the seeming conflict with freedom. God made the decrees and in no wise externally compels anybody to do either right or wrong. In the cases being questioned, responsible people carry out the decrees, yet without coercion by God. They do so wholly voluntarily. If they are slaves to sin, as Jesus said, that is hardly God’s fault. One thinks of the sons of Eli—‘worthless men. They did not know the LORD’ (1 Sam. 2:12). They were rebuked by their father for their gross sins. But, says the Scripture, most significantly, ‘But they would not listen to the voice of their father, for it was the will of the LORD to put them to death’ (1 Sam. 2:25). Thus the doctrine is confirmed and it is clear that without any compulsion from God or men (quite to the contrary, the whole nation was opposed to what the two young men were doing) they freely chose to do the evil which destroyed them (see 1 Sam. 4:17).

3. The idea of freedom must be clarified. Though ‘freedom’, ‘freedom of choice’ and ‘freedom of the will’ appear often in discussion of this subject there is considerable difference of opinion as to what ‘freedom’ is. There are different kinds and degrees of freedom. As we shall see later in the doctrines of grace and of sin, there is no absolute freedom. Discussion of predestination and how it relates to freedom did not originate in jam sessions at a theological seminary students’ dormitory. Argument over the subject is recognized in Romans 9:11–29. In the early church, division arose to a peak in fifth-century controversy. Pelagius, a British monk, sought to deny divine sovereignty and predestination and, along with that, the biblical teaching of original sin and of depravity. Augustine defended predestination and the corollaries—depravity and atonement. Gottschalk, a learned Benedictine monk (died AD 867), read Augustine, was convinced, and got in trouble with his bishop, who imprisoned him for speaking against the prevailing crypto-Pelagianism. Deprived of last rites and Christian burial, he died in his Augustinian evangelical faith, 30 October 867, disgraced but admired and defended by many supportive clergymen. Over 600 years later, the same set of doctrines revived the church in what we now call the Protestant Reformation.

### **Party Strife Over Freedom**

Discussions of this subject have been fruitful, though not all of the party strife. I am indebted to *Our Daily Bread*, published by Radio Bible Class, for a very helpful tale in this regard.

The story is told about the members of a congregation who got into a squabble one day over the issue of predestination and free will. While the controversy raged, the people separated, going to opposite sides of the auditorium. One man, not knowing which group to join, slipped into the predestination crowd. But he didn’t stay long. Someone asked him, ‘Who sent you here?’ He replied, ‘No one, I came of my own free will.’ This brought the angry response, ‘What? You can’t be one of us and talk that way.’ Quickly he

was shoved across the aisle. But now he was questioned about his reasons for joining the free-will group. When he said, 'I was forced over here,' they indignantly shouted, 'Get out! You can't join us unless you choose to do so.' This poor believer was shut out from his brothers and sisters because they were fighting over a problem that's beyond the full grasp of man's puny little mind.

### **Contradictions, Disputes: Decrees and Foreknowledge**

The reader interested in further discussion of the alleged contradictions and problems is referred to the classical theological works. Lutheran, Reformed, Baptist and many other theologians, including Thomas Aquinas, generally define and defend the teaching as set forth here. Some orthodox Methodist, Episcopalian and other writers, including dispensationalist H. C. Thiessen, while not rejecting the teaching of the decrees in the Bible, seek to modify the doctrine by asserting that God decreed only what His omniscience (knowledge of future events) informed Him would happen anyway. H. C. Thiessen asserts 'God foreknew what men would be in response to common grace; and He elected those whom He foresaw would respond positively.'<sup>13</sup>

This really is not to modify the biblical doctrine (decrees, counsel, plan of God, predestination) but to subvert it. It seems like common sense, the same as works-righteousness does. Yet it is denial of clear biblical truth, in my judgment.

That God's foreknowledge in the sense of foresight may have a place in our understanding of the decrees cannot be doubted. Yet if foresight is made dependent on God's knowledge of the forces prevailing among 'men and things' (as it sometimes is thought to be) let us remember that God made the laws, thus insuring the results. Moreover, there is something else very important to understanding God's 'foreknowledge'. 'Foreknew' and 'foreknow' appear only once each in the KJV (Rom. 8:28 and 11:2), Gr. *proginoskō* in the second aorist tense each time; in each case the people of God is the object of God's foreknowledge. The meaning in each case, in context, and indicated even by the *Lexicon* of Bauer, Arndt, Gingrich, is to 'Choose beforehand ... someone'. 'Foreknowledge' in KJV appears only twice. In the former case, Peter addressing the Pentecost crowd said Jesus was 'delivered by the determined purpose and *foreknowledge* of God' (Acts 2:23 NKJV). Foreknowledge here is the Greek word *prognosis*, the noun corresponding to *proginoskō*. Peter is saying that God delivered Jesus over to judicial execution. It was something God *determined* in His own *counsel* and *foreknowledge*. In such case foreknowledge is not mere previous information of what would happen but actual direction (if not implementation) of the future event. The certainty of the future event was decreed by God, and in this case not by any entirely *secret* counsel, for Psalm 22 and Isaiah 52:13–53:12 predicted the event and attending circumstances in detail. Further, knowledge in Scripture frequently has reference to establishment of a relationship rather than information possessed, as in 'Now Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived' (Gen. 4:1 NKJV). Here 'to know' is to establish the most intimate of all human relationships. So when Peter used the word again (1 Peter 1:1, 2) he was thinking not that some certain people in time to come would be saved, but that they had always been 'elect ... according to the foreknowledge', i.e. according to an eternally established relationship.

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<sup>13</sup> H. C. Thiessen, *Introductory Lectures in Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1949, 1966), p. 157.

Bauer, Arndt, Gingrich Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, translation and adaptation from the 5th edition by W. F. Arndt & F. W. Gingrich.

## Is God the Author of Sin and of Evil?

Someone wants to know if this understanding of predestination does not make God the author of sin. By no means. Sinners are the authors of sin. They are not coerced to sin, but do so voluntarily. God even preserves them in life while they commit their sins of disposition, thought and deed. They follow self-chosen paths. God overrules evil for good, as we have seen. It is also true that He holds the evil-doers guilty. A distinction may be made between efficient decrees of God and permissive ones. If this be allowed, then the divine decree of sin is not *efficient*; it is only *permissive*. Though some Supralapsarians and other followers of scholastic hyper Calvinism reject these distinctions, some of the best theologians, Roman Catholic, Calvinist and Arminian find them both biblical and helpful. Why God permitted Satan to tempt Eve, why He allowed evil at all is, of course, never explained in the Bible, though the plain fact is that God not only did not prevent it, He put it in His plan. To allow sin *now* is only an extension of the decree to allow sin in the first place. With all its mystery, the biblical narrative still provides the best answer ever propounded.<sup>14</sup>

W. G. T. Shedd wrestled the problem to the ground as well as any modern writer. I cite some of his lines on the ‘principal practical value of the doctrine that God decreed [planned in] sin’.

It establishes the Divine sovereignty over the entire universe. By reason of his permissive decrees, God has absolute control over moral evil, while yet he is not the author of it, and forbids it. Unless he permitted sin, it could not come to pass. [Let the reader think of the situation in Gen. 2.]... Sin is preventable by almighty God, and therefore he is sovereign over sin and hell as well as over holiness and heaven. This is the truth he taught to Cyrus, to contradict the Persian dualism [God and evil are equally powerful and real]: ‘I form the light, and create darkness; I make peace and create evil. [Let the reader ponder!] I, the LORD, do all these things,’ Isa. 45:7. Compare Amos 3:6, ‘Shall there be evil in a city, and the LORD hath not done it?’ Gen. 20:6, ‘I withheld thee [Abimelech] from sinning against me.’ To deny this truth, logically leads to the doctrine of the independence of evil and the doctrine of independence of evil is dualism, and irreconcilable with monotheism.<sup>15</sup>

Shedd goes on to say, God purposes ultimately to overrule evil for good and cites Psalm 76:10 and other texts I have cited in this chapter.

Anselm of Canterbury (1033–1109), the first ‘great’ of the medieval scholastics, illustrated the truth of God’s providential control of sin this way:

If those things which are encircled by the heavens wished not to continue to exist beneath the heavens, or wished to get away from the heavens, they would nonetheless be able to exist only beneath the heavens and able to go away from the heavens only by coming toward them. For no matter from what place or to what place they would go they will still be circumscribed by the heavens. And the farther they would get from any one part of the heavens, the closer they would get to the opposite part. Similarly, even though men and evil angels do not want to submit to the divine will and ordinance, they are unable to

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<sup>14</sup> See my essay, Robert D. Culver, ‘The Nature and Origin of Evil’ in *Vital Apologetical Issues*, ed. Roy B. Zuck (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publ., 1995), pp. 10–18.

<sup>15</sup> W.G. T. Shedd, *Dogmatic Theology I* (New York: Chas. Scribners Sons, 1888; Zondervan reprint 1953 and more recently, 1969), pp. 405–412.

escape from it. For if they want to get out from under God's directive will, they run beneath His punitive will. And—if you ask about the route they will traverse—they make their way only under His permissive will. And that which they perversely will or do is redirected by Supreme Wisdom towards the order and beauty of the aforementioned universe.<sup>16</sup>

Alternatives to the biblical doctrine are manifestly unacceptable, all without exception leading to theological errors. Of these the chief are denial of original sin and the consequent universally corrupt human nature (depravity) on the one hand and the doctrine of a limited God on the other.

### **Practical Reconciliation of Views**

Most orthodox Christian authors who support a 'free will' outlook readily—as opposed to 'depraved will'—acknowledge that God knows all future events before they happen, even those events contingent on decisions and acts of free beings. Hence, a practical reconciliation between parties in the strife over predestination has been possible. There has been sufficient agreement to secure mutual effort in evangelism, at a minimum.

### **Values**

This doctrine, rightly expounded, has had great influence for good in Christian communities which accept it.

1. As observed at the beginning of this chapter, the teaching of providence promotes a solemn but joyful confidence that with the future in God's hands, the story of the human race will indeed 'come out right' in the end. Romans 8:28 is truth, not just overheated enthusiasm. People who deeply believe this tend to be steady, productive citizens of the community. They know that 'in the Lord your labour is not in vain'.

2. Awareness of God's comprehensive plan inculcates humility in the face of God's complete sovereignty over the past, the present and future.

3. It should cause the unbelieving and impenitent to be aware that their sins too are in God's calculations. They will never 'get away with' a thing. He will bring every deed to judgment and thereby,

4. Through this awareness of judgment the sinner is pointed to the means of God's grace that he might learn of Him, believe and be among those whom God counts as His people—the redeemed of all the ages.

If God has decreed the course of our lives He will take charge of them too—call it 'providence'. A lovely parody of Henley's *Invictus*, entitled *My Captain*, by Dorothea Day, celebrates God's decrees and providence.

Out of the light that dazzles me,  
Bright as the sun from pole to pole,  
I thank the God I know to be  
For Christ the conqueror of my soul.  
Since His the sway of circumstance

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<sup>16</sup> Anselm, *Cur Deus Homo* i, 15. in *Anselm of Canterbury vol. III*, ed. & trans. by J. Hopkins & H. Richardson (Toronto & New York: The Edwin Mullen Press, 1976), p. 73.

I would not wince nor cry aloud.  
Under the rule which men call chance  
My head with joy is humbly bowed.  
Beyond this place of sin and tears—  
That life with Him! and His the aid,  
That spite the menace of the years,  
Keeps, and shall keep, me unafraid.  
I shall not fear, though straight the gate;  
He cleared from punishments the scroll.  
Christ is the Master of my fate;  
Christ is the Captain of my soul.

## 17

### God's Work of Creation (I)

#### Sources for a Theology of Origins

'In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.' There were no human observers about when God created the world. Our only source of authentic, first-hand information, then, is the creator-God, Himself. If He does not tell us about creation we shall never know about it—tenuous inferences derived from geology, astronomy, physics and biology notwithstanding. Inferences based on 'science', as to how and when the 'universe' came to be, have always changed with the times and the changing theories of science. Revelation, however, has not changed since God last spoke 'through a Son'. Christian interpretation of enscriptured revelation has made few changes as regards the main features of the doctrine of creation since earliest times. From the standpoint of eternity (*sub specie aeternitatis*) the changes have not been very important. Christians have believed from the beginning that in the early chapters of Genesis they have a God-given and therefore truthful account of the creation of the world. Such affirmations as 'All Scripture is breathed out by God' (2 Tim. 3:16) was Paul's conviction. Jesus said, 'Scripture cannot be broken' (John 10:35).

That Jesus meant to include the Genesis creation account is evident. At every point in His ministry He plainly employed Scripture as God's Word—factual and true. At several critical junctures of His ministry, He quoted Scripture in support of His own perseverance in the task God gave Him. This is seen especially at the temptation.<sup>1</sup> He also made several comprehensive statements about the Old Testament Scriptures.<sup>2</sup>

Our Lord never argued that the Bible, including the creation story, is true. Nor do we find such words as inerrant and synonyms in His estimate of Scripture. He did say that 'Scriptures cannot be broken'. He simply used the Scriptures as God's true Word. Two basic human

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<sup>1</sup> See Matt. 4:4, 7, 10; cf. Deut. 8:3; 6:13, 16; and 10:20.

<sup>2</sup> See Matt. 5:17, 19; John 10:35; Luke 24:25–27, 44–47 for example.

institutions are marriage and the Sabbath. He traced the origin of both back to the Genesis creation story.<sup>3</sup> Followers of Jesus will therefore follow the Lord in trusting the Genesis account of creation as true. This, of course, is not to deny the same breadth of interpretation in the first chapters of the Bible which all claim for the last chapters of the Bible. No one I have heard or read has declared his group's understanding (whether literal or figurative) of Revelation 21, 22 as the only possible orthodox, believing view possible. At present, however, we are afflicted by some writers and promoters who seem to think their view of the Creative week (of twenty-four hour days) and the Flood (that it created geological history) is the only view consistent with orthodoxy and possible to an honest reading of the text of the first nine chapters of Genesis.

The creation itself witnesses to its creation by God. Francis Pieper affirms: 'All creatures bear the divine stamp.... But our knowledge of the particular circumstances of the creation ... is derived solely from God's revelation in Scripture. Men who presume to correct God's record of the creation through conclusions drawn from the present condition of the world are playing the role of scientific wisecracks, a procedure unworthy of Christians.'<sup>4</sup> It is not wrong, however, for geologists, physicists, astronomers and other scientists reverently to seek better to understand the biblical revelation and to increase their knowledge of creation by their researches, provided always they do not put nature in a class with Scripture as revelation.

As noted elsewhere in this book, strictly speaking, nature gives information but is not revelation, even though for some time writers have been speaking of nature as a part of 'general revelation'. We are not quite ready to classify scientific orthodoxy and the geologic table with the first chapter of Genesis in degree of authority on earthly origins, even though some recent writers seem inclined to do so. Moreover, interpreting the fossil record is not quite parallel to interpreting the Bible as regards creation. The Bible is designed primarily as a *message* from God, while the earth was designed as a *habitation* for mankind, not a guide to the subject of its own origin. [Current writers on 'intelligent design' discuss this principle in nature as the 'anthropic principle'.]

All parties to the present debate over creation—theories of 'young earth', 'creation science' and 'progressive creation'—should acknowledge this. The Bible is a book intended to be an interpretation of our world from the standpoint of the divine mind for religious purposes, while the earth is a creation, designed by the same mind as a habitation for mankind. Information about origins is scanty and obscure in the creation. It is apparently not spiritually necessary for us to know anything at all about the physics and chemistry of creation. It is mixing things that are essentially different to speak of Scripture and earth as both revelations of God requiring interpretation. There is just enough truth in the statement to make it dangerous in the hands of some people.

References to God's acts in creation are made in many parts of the Bible, often with interpretation of the spiritual meaning thereof. In addition to Genesis 1 and 2, mention should be made of Psalms 8, 33 and 148; Job 38; Proverbs 8 and John 1:1–5. The texts outside of Genesis that interpret Genesis take on an importance for doctrine as great as the Genesis creation accounts and will be quoted and cited throughout the discussion now to follow.

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<sup>3</sup> See Matt. 19:3–6 and compare Gen. 1:27 and 2:24; also see Mark 2:27 and compare Gen. 2:1–4.

<sup>4</sup> Francis Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics I* (St. Louis: Concordia Publ., 1950, 1957), p. 467.

## The World's Beginning

There was a time when there was no world. It did not exist. The Psalm of Moses puts it this way, 'Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever you had formed the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God' (Ps. 90:2). Passages speak of time 'before the world existed' (John 17:5) and 'before the foundation of the world' (John 17:24).

That the world had a beginning is assumed in all the Scriptures teach concerning such doctrines as decrees (predestination) and preservation. It is a patent fact so obvious in the biblical world-and-life view that Bible-reading-and-loving people can scarcely think in any other way about the world. They know the world is not without beginning and not self-generated.

Simple observation teaches us that though the processes of regeneration and restoration are at work in nature, they do not quite restore nature. Most of the mountains are a little lower each year. The energy given off by the sun is never returned to it. The more sophisticated observations of science report that the universe is spreading out and running down. This, too, points to a beginning in finite time.

Wiseacres of our secularist age have nothing to say as to what the cause of beginning was. A few, contrary to the material evidences, speak vaguely of an eternally existing, uncaused world.

Followers of existentialist theology are told that God is *Being*, not another being, and that 'How did the world begin?' and 'Who made it?' are improper questions.<sup>5</sup> We must rather look at mankind 'in order to learn what the Creator-creature relationship is'.<sup>6</sup> God does not create, He only 'lets be' in this theology.

In Process Theology it is unimportant to ask how the world began. Rather we must seek to understand how God who is in the world (pantheism) is growing with it and we along with Him. There is no affirmation of God's omnipotence or omniscience in a traditional sense in either of these approaches to theology.

There have always been religious people who opposed the idea of a beginning of the world. This opposition has usually taken one of two forms. One is *emanation*. The world is identical in substance with God. It has been produced by successive emanations out of Him. The things we see are little pieces of God. Folk who identify God with what they see in nature, rather than seeing nature as His work, are taking this view of things whether they know it or not. There are many anti-biblical affirmations and implications involved. The doctrine of emanation virtually denies God's transcendence; it compromises God's holiness by making all that is evil a part of Him. Ancient Gnosticism, a system which sought to interpret Christianity in the forms of Eastern theosophy (such as Hinduism), taught emanationism. Emanationism has always been a temptation to the mystically inclined, that is, to people who seek direct routes to God through meditation and ascetic practices apart from the historical Christ and a written revelation. Contemplate almost anything about yourself and you have a bit of God. Follow it back through prescribed exercises and you may get a clear vision or feeling of God. This is a simplified description of the mystical approach.

Another form of denial of a beginning (and of creation) is *dualism*. Dualism teaches that God (thought of as idea) and matter, though distinct from one another, have always existed and

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<sup>5</sup> John Macquarrie, *Principles of Christian Theology* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1966), p. 212.

<sup>6</sup> *ibid.*, p. 213, citing Rahner.

always shall. It is essentially an effort to explain the presence of evil by attaching it to material things.

### **Absolute Beginning**

The world was brought into existence by the one, true, eternal God out of no materials at all. There was an absolute beginning of things.

‘In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth’ (Gen. 1:1). These words must be understood as taking the reader back to the time when, in the presence of nothing outside the Godhead, God brought the heaven and earth into existence. ‘By faith we understand that the universe was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things that are visible’ (Heb. 11:3).

Sometimes this act or series of acts has been further defined as creation ‘out of nothing’ (*ex nihilo*). This is correct as long as a certain error is avoided. ‘Nothing’ must not be regarded as a ‘something’. It is not a designation for primeval chaos. This error is found in classical Greek philosophy, frequently as formlessness, a source of evil, and in modern existentialism as the principle opposing authenticity. It might be better to say God created into nothing, that is, where nothing (non-existence) was, God created something. This involves ambiguities also, owing to the fact that we cannot conceive of nothingness apart from a mental image of a ‘nothing’, thereby confusing the idea. We are apt to end up being dualists.

Genesis 1:1 does not say that God used no materials in the creative work of that verse. But if it is absolute beginning to which Moses refers, then the situation requires it. The nature of the idea and its context must decide for us.

Very early, Christian theologians had to deal with the views of the origin of the world held by pagan authors and schools as well as heretical views among Christian teachers who were affected by the pagans. The Greek ‘Apologists’ of the second century and other early writers felt particularly obliged to clarify and to defend the absolute beginning of the world by an uncreated eternal divine being who brought the world into being by speaking it into existence. Of these Christian scholars (Marcianus, Aristides, Justin Martyr, Tatian, Athenagoras, Theophilus), and others shortly after them (Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian), Jaroslav Pelikan says:

Apologists ... recognized that the coeternity of God and matter was inconsistent with the sovereignty and freedom of God. In spite of the difficulties raised by the doctrine of creation *ex nihilo* for any attempt to cope with the problem of evil, the alternatives to this doctrine appeared to be a pantheism ... or a dualism.<sup>7</sup>

Theophilus of Antioch found explicit Christian creationism in direct conflict with six philosophical theories among the Greeks.<sup>8</sup>

These theories Thomas Oden has parsed out as: (1) there is no God; (2) God cares for none but himself; (3) the world is uncreated and nature is eternal; (4) God exists only in each person’s conscience; (5) God is a spirit which pervades all things; and (6) both God and matter are

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<sup>7</sup> Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Emergence of the Christian Tradition* vol. I of *The Christian Tradition* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1971), p. 36.

<sup>8</sup> To *Antolycus*, 4, *ANF*. 15 (London: publisher not provided).

uncreated, i.e. coeval. Oden's grasp of both theology and modern philosophy led to this comment:

All these views were late to appear and grow into major challenges to the Christian teaching of Creation and remain as modern challenges in the voices of 1) Nietzsche, 2) Freud, 3) Hume, 4) Kant, Schleiermacher, Feuerbach, 5) Wieman and 6) Schelling.<sup>9</sup>

## Further Statements of Method and Scope of Treatment

1. Though seldom first in any general treatment of Christian doctrine, and even found in a special development of the doctrine of God, 'God the creator of heaven and earth' is fundamental and primary to all Christian teaching and a Christian world-view. E. P. Siegfried, a Roman Catholic scholar, rightly said:

[B]elief 'in God the Creator of heaven and earth' is the theoretical basis of all religious and theological truth, the real foundation underlying all other truths concerning God, and the objective principle whence all other truths proceed.<sup>10</sup>

2. The topic of this chapter is God as the originating cause of all that exists except God Himself. It is apparent that this title, the text (Gen. 1:1) and the opening sentences commit this study to classical, Christian theism, to a biblical theology of existence, and to a particular tradition of translation of the opening verse of the Bible, as shall appear as the discussion develops.

3. In previous chapters our discussion has not at every point related directly to science and philosophy. If, however, we claim that all that human perception experiences, or can imagine as existing in the universe of which we occupy a part, was brought into existence by the God of the Old and New Testaments, then we are already in territory claimed by every branch of science and philosophy. The treatment will necessarily respond to that fact.

4. The treatment to follow presupposes the God of Christian theism of the previous chapters, for whom 'the maker of heaven and earth' of the Creed is an appropriate title. Many have followed this route before and done so admirably well. Alternate explanations, both religious and philosophical, of the origin of the world in which we live were proposed at least as early as the Genesis account. In recent times science has been heard from in this regard also. Within limits of a chapter or two—not a whole book—I shall respond to these proposals. The creationist paradigm has undergone very serious attacks from many quarters. Problems, especially the presence of evil in a world created by an almighty, benevolent God, must be recognized and responded to.

5. What St Paul called 'the whole creation' or 'all things' (Gr. *ta panta*), Genesis 1:1<sup>11</sup> designates simply as 'the heavens and the earth', and the Prayer of Moses portrays as 'the earth and the world' (Ps. 90:2) teach no form of cosmology. Neither the Ptolemaic geocentric universe is propounded, nor the Copernican solar-centric systems, nor any other. '[T]he heavens and earth' to Moses and his first readers meant simply everything above our heads and everything

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<sup>9</sup> Thomas Oden. *The Living God* (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1992), p. 251.

<sup>10</sup> E. P. Siegfried, art. 'Creation'. In *The Catholic Encyclopedia iv* (New York: 1908), p. 475.

<sup>11</sup> Also 2:1; 14:19, 22 *et al.*

beneath our feet as far as they extend in any direction. The world they meant was the one they saw, felt, heard, smelled and tasted, however constituted. But the modern term, universe, ‘the world of existing things as constituting a systematic whole’ (*Oxford English Dictionary*) is an interpretive term implying both variety and unity in a system—though not any particular sort of system. The one thing all these expressions share is reference to all created existences—whether a system or chaos. Whether God be the Creator or exists in some other relation to ‘the world of existing things’ is a major consideration of this chapter.

Our discussion will be arranged under a series of propositions to be understood as what ‘The Bible teaches’. It might please lovers of the inductive method to cite all the supporting passages, in context, first, and then generalize in some conclusions, but that is inversion of the declarative, didactic approach the present task calls for.

## I. The World, including Heaven and Earth, all that exists, was Created by God

Says Langdon Gilkey.

Were one to ask ‘What is the first thing Christians say when they begin to state their beliefs?’, he might reasonably conclude this primary role was filled by the idea of creation. For when he opened the Scriptures, he would find the first line stating this belief: ‘In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.’ And if he listened to the most universally repeated Christian creed, he would hear the opening words: ‘I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth.’<sup>12</sup>

The Bible states this unequivocally from beginning to end, usually in support of or accompanying some related truth, derived benefit or duty. The first reference is connected with the privilege and duty of a weekly Sabbath rest (Gen. 1:1; 2:1–3 cf. Exod. 20:9–11) while among the last is the correlate duty and privilege of worship: ‘Worthy are you, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honour and power, for you created all things, and by your will they existed and were created’ (Rev. 4:11). In between, other biblical passages connect God the Creator with renewal of strength for those who wait on Him (Isa. 40:28–31; 43:1–13), and with assurance of the restoration of Jerusalem and the cities of Judah (Isa. 44:24–26). In the Psalms there is frequent conjunction of God’s redemption, salvation, mercy and government with His being the universal ‘Maker’.<sup>13</sup> In the New Testament, the Word made flesh is also the eternal ‘God,’ the ‘life’ and ‘light of men’ (John 1:1–12).

Indeed the fact that God created a world planned by Him, preserved and governed by Him, is the most fundamental affirmation of a Christian world-view, distinguishing biblical religion from all others as false. It separates biblical religion from every form of polytheistic worship, because ‘the LORD is the true God; he is the living God ... “The gods who did not make the heavens and the earth shall perish from the earth’ (Jer. 10:10, 11, cf. whole context). The identity of the

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*Oxford English Dictionary The Compact Edition of the Oxford English Dictionary*

<sup>12</sup> Langdon Gilkey, *Maker of Heaven and Earth: The Christian Doctrine of Creation in the Light of Modern Knowledge* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Co., 1965), p. 1.

<sup>13</sup> Ps. 89:11–15; 90:1, 2; 146:5, 6; and all of Pss. 90, 104, 136, 139, 147, 148.

Maker of heaven and earth with ‘God manifest in the flesh’ distinguishes the New Testament faith from every other faith (see Rom. 11:25–36 and Eph. 3:9).

## II. The World had Absolute Beginning when God created the Heavens and the Earth

The world had absolute beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, at which moment (or epoch) both time and space came into existence. These are matters which have puzzled both philosophers and theologians as well as scientists since antiquity. Perhaps more than one complementary perspective appears in Scripture about time and space, but I think there are definitive statements and necessary inferences.

1. The world had a beginning. It has not always existed. There is a ‘before the world began’ (2 Tim. 1:9; Titus 1:2 KJV) ‘before time began’ (NKJV). Jesus spoke to His Father about ‘the glory that I had [was having; *eichon*, first person imperfect] with you before the world existed’ (John 17:5) and that ‘you [the Father] loved me before the foundation of the world [*kosmos*’]’ (John 17:24). Before the world ‘to be’ or its ‘foundation’ the Son was loved by the Father and He had a glory with the Father. Paul says that the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ ‘chose us in him before the foundation of the world’ (Eph. 1:4) and Moses in praise to God rhapsodizes that ‘you are God ... Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever you had formed the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting’ (Ps. 90:2).

2. It is noteworthy that in these passages no mention is made of a ‘time’ as such before creation; nor does any other passage, unless it be Romans 16:25. (There are similar statements at 2 Timothy 1:9 and Titus 1:2.) Paul speaks of a mystery kept silent *chronois aiōniois*, in or through times eternal. *Chronos* signifies the durative not the seasonal aspect of time. Commentators are divided as to whether reference is to ages before or after creation, probably because of opinions brought to interpretation. Whether there was time before creation or not, however, there are two reasons for the judgment that the *chronoi* (times) are post-creation. The first is scriptural, the second rational. (1) The author of this statement (Rom. 16:25) put time in this *ktisis hetera* (any other created thing) a few columns earlier in the same autograph (Rom. 8:39). The times are ‘*enestōta ... mellontai*’ (things present or things to come). Scholastic theology may rightly speak of God’s ‘uncreated glory’ but not of His ‘uncreated time’. (2) Both time and space have to do with things, objects. Before creation there were no ‘things’, God alone is self-existent and all things outside of Him are neither contemporaneous with His ‘origin’ (if we may so speak), nor with Him when He creates them. He has no reference to them nor He to them. It is customary and correct to say that time existed ‘in God’ from eternity, and so existed before creation. But that existence is not concrete, objective existence any more than are Plato’s eternal forms or the monads of German philosophers or whatever is reckoned to be in the Absolute. My right hand and the Japanese mechanical pencil I hold in it existed in God’s eternal counsels before the world began also, but not as real existence in a created world.

Commenting on eternity as an attribute of God, A. H. Strong observes:

‘We must not make *Kronos* (time) and *Ouranos* (space) earlier divinities before God’. They are among the ‘all things’ that were ‘made by him’ (John 1:3) [quoting I. A. Dorner]. Yet time and space are not *substances*; neither are they *attributes* (qualities of substance); they are rather *relations* of finite existence ... With finite existence they come into being; they are not mere regulative conceptions of our minds; they exist objectively, whether we perceive them or not... ‘They furnish the conditions of our knowledge...’

Space and time are mental forms, but not only that. There is an extramental something in the case of space and time as in the case of sound' [quoting G. T. Ladd].<sup>14</sup>

This topic is among listings of about every encyclopedia.<sup>15</sup>

3. This biblical concept of time as created, linear durative has had a determinative influence on Christendom, where it has been nourished.

Carl F. H. Henry, in two dictionary articles, starts his development of time in history, theology, philosophy and the Bible with this fine statement, speaking of

one of the most vexing problems of philosophy. The Bible presents a distinctive conception of time ... Instead of viewing time abstractly as a problem, it regards time *as a created sphere* [emphasis added] in which God's redemptive plan is actualized.<sup>16</sup>

The importance of regarding time as a creature of God, not a condition within which He exists and works, has been seen clearly by most theologians—as opposed to the idealistic philosophers of the nineteenth-century (Hegel and disciples) who placed time and history in the *Absolute*, their God. Neo-orthodox writers credit the Hebrew people (not Old Testament Scripture as such) with correcting among the ancients the cyclical view of history. Early Christian theologians saw the cultural importance of doctrine long ago.<sup>17</sup> In a comprehensive treatment of the doctrine of divine creation Langdon Gilkey has this to say:

One of the most significant and dramatic points in the development of Western culture was the victory over [the] deadly view of circular time achieved by the biblical understanding of history. As important culturally as the destruction of the pagan gods was the overthrowing of the endless cycles: for on nothing does the modern sense of life depend so directly as on the Christian view of time. The contrast between these two conceptions of time was absolute; and only a faith as virile and certain as that of early Christianity could have uprooted the ingrained sense of temporal meaninglessness that permeated and deadened the ancient world.<sup>18</sup>

Gilkey goes on to warn the Western world once transformed by the biblical view of time but now operating on a theory of evolutionary 'progress' (and, I would add, of 'cultural diversity'):

Having dispensed ... with its religious foundation on the rock of the divine eternity, the divine creation, and the divine providence, this edifice [belief in progress as norm] has proved too shaky. Based now solely on the sand of historical observation instead of the

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<sup>14</sup> A. H. Strong, *Systematic Theology* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 1907), p. 275.

<sup>15</sup> A contrary view is set forth by R. A. Killen. R. A. Killen, 'Time'. In *Wycliffe Bible Encyclopedia vol. II*, ed, Pfeiffer, Vos & Rea (Chicago: Moody Press, 1975), p. 1708.

<sup>16</sup> Carl F. H. Henry, article 'Time' appears in both *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* and the earlier *Baker Dictionary of Theology*.

<sup>17</sup> See Augustine, *The City of God*, Book 12, chapters 13 and 14.

<sup>18</sup> Gilkey, *op. cit.*, p. 301.

rock of faith, it has no deeper foundation on which to stand the recent storms of history, and threatens to collapse.<sup>19</sup>

Unfortunately Gilkey, who came to write theology after a short career in literature, accepted the disjunction between a factual revelation and a myth-but-true revelation of the then prevalent neo-orthodoxy. He has no assurance that the absolute beginning taught in Scripture and understood by numberless generations of Jews and Christians is factually true. Thus the unstable tension between ‘religion’ and ‘science’ as he understood it is given the status of a learned form of enlightened ‘orthodoxy’. Though he and others of similar persuasion keep the ‘religious value’ of absolute creation, they tie it to the idea of a continuation of divine creation in the evolutionary process. Hence, to borrow Browning’s line, Gilkey’s idea of creation ‘That began best’ did ‘end worst’, and what was ‘once blessed’ has indeed ‘proved accurst’.<sup>20</sup>

### III. Genesis 1:1–3 and the Doctrine of Creation

The discussion of God’s work of creation to this point has established that the Bible teaches (1) the world, including heaven and earth, all that exists, was created by God and (2) the world had a beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, at which moment (or epoch) both time and space came into existence.

Before proceeding to discuss the methods, means and purposes of the triune God in creation some problems and questions related to our discussion this far call for at least brief attention. They are as follows. First, is Genesis 1:1 a distinct, independent sentence or is it a subordinate clause qualifying the second verse? Second, is Genesis 1:1 a summary of the passage on to the end of the creation narrative or a statement of absolute origin of the matter and energy of the universe with the rest of the narrative relating what happened following? Third, how should the seven days of creation and of Sabbath rest be interpreted? The first two questions just proposed, as necessary preliminaries to further consideration of the doctrine of creation, will be answered together.

The first ‘official’ translation of Genesis 1:1–3 is the Greek Septuagint of about 280 BC. It was made by Jewish scholars familiar with Hebrew as a second (perhaps first) language and probably used at home as well as synagogue. At any rate they were familiar with Hebrew syntax, grammar and idiom. They translated verse 1 as an independent statement of which verse 2 is an enlargement about the same as KJV, RV, RSV and, recently, ESV. Juxtaposed below are the RSV of 1952, the NRSV of 1989 and Spieser’s translation in *Genesis of The Anchor Bible* of 1964. RSV retains the independence of verse 1 and represents the obvious, simple syntax of the Hebrew text and of previous versions. The other two introduce principles of modification that scarcely fit any category except adaptation to modern evolutionary, materialistic understanding of reality. That principle is evolutionary theory applied to translation and interpretation. Hold in mind that though some recent evangelical, orthodox scholars might accept one or the other of the ‘new syntax’ versions, it originated in liberal (if not post-modern) interpretation of the history of ideas.

RSV of 1952 ‘1. In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. 2. [‘and’ omitted] The earth was without form and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep; and the Spirit

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<sup>19</sup> Gilkey, *op. cit.*, pp. 309, 310.

<sup>20</sup> Robert Browning, *Apparent Failure*, lines 62 and 63.

of God was moving upon the face of the waters. 3. And God said, “Let there be light”, and there was light’, NRSV of 1989 ‘1. In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, 2. the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters. 3. Then God said, “Let there be light”; and there was light.’

The Anchor Bible: Genesis of 1964 ‘1. When God set about to create heaven and earth—2. the world being then a formless waste, with darkness over the seas and only an awesome wind sweeping over the water—3. God said, ‘Let there be light’. And there was light’.

Except for the omission of ‘and’ as the first word of verse 2 the RSV of 1952 has essentially the same sense as all translations from the Greek Septuagint of about 280 BC to Luther’s Bible of four centuries ago and on to the ASV of 1901.

Thoroughly to report, discuss and document the reasons for the obvious changes in Speiser’s translation in the *Anchor Bible* and the NRSV, now standard in liberal churches and used in some conservative evangelical ones, cannot be undertaken here. Having myself, over an initial period of ten years of teaching seminary courses, taken students painstakingly through the first twelve or fifteen chapters of Genesis annually, it is tempting to wade in more deeply than is prudent here.

Let us make one general observation and several specific ones. I shall try to avoid use of technical grammatical-syntactical jargon.

1. There is ongoing controversy over how much of the translator’s interpretation of the text should be incorporated into translation from original languages of the Bible to current languages. The degree varies within the first known one, the Septuagint, but generally speaking the translators who issued the Authorized Version of 1611 held as close to literal rendering as possible for conveying meaning in language of minimally educated people. Yet they rendered the text as elegantly as possible. If slang existed then they did not use it but made few concessions to prissy sensibilities (as, for example, David’s oath).<sup>21</sup> However, several of the new Versions, sometimes with reserve, sometimes blatantly, adjust the translation, against the long tradition of meaning and against the natural reading, to fit their opinions of what the ancient Hebrews really thought and said. This is clearly the case in these late twentieth-century translations.

2. Both NRSV and *Anchor Bible* say that when God ‘created’ heaven and earth ‘the earth’ (NRSV) or ‘the world’ (AB) was already in existence. The translators are assuming, in spite of the simple and plainest sense of this passage, that the cosmology and cosmogony (order and origin of the world) prevalent among ancient heathen nations of the Levant and Mesopotamia was shared by the author(s) of Genesis 1:1–3. It is true that the myths of the priests of Mesopotamia and Canaan presuppose the existence of formless matter previous even to the birth of their gods. So their ‘creation’ myths have the gods creating the heavens and earth (and underworld too) of pre-existing materials. About the standard Mesopotamian form of the myth, the *Enuma Elish* epic, Jack Finegan, in one of his many standard volumes says:

The account begins with the time when only the two divine principles, the mythical personalities Apsu and Tiamat, were in existence. These two represented the living, uncreated world-matter, Apsu being the primeval sweet-water ocean and Tiamat the

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<sup>21</sup> 1 Sam, 25:22, 34; cf. 1 Kings 14:10; 16:11 *et al.*

primeval salt-water ocean ... Tiamat is explicitly called a woman in the myth ... and she and Apsu become the mother and father of the gods.<sup>22</sup>

After awhile, in one of the myths, Marduk, one of the created gods, created the earth. Later on, one of the pantheon named Kingu 'was slain and when his arteries were cut open the gods fashioned mankind with his blood.'<sup>23</sup> Speiser points out (correctly) that in ancient Mesopotamia (whence Hebrew ancestors came) 'science often blended into religion' and claims 'that on the subject of creation, biblical tradition aligned itself with the traditional tenets of Babylonian "science"'.<sup>24</sup> He thinks (as about all who follow this line of thought) that the Hebrew account (Gen. 1) is the myths, purified by ethical monotheism.

Speiser marshalls his arguments from grammar-syntax for the new view on one and one-third pages.<sup>25</sup> They are not definitive, however, as even the scholars of NRSV acknowledge in their first footnote, which says: 'The traditional translation as an independent sentence, following the Greek Bible (Septuagint) of the 3rd century BC, is defensible', etc. In their notes NRSV proposes three defensible translations, of which the traditional is one. In any case they know the evidences are not compelling.

Franz Delitzsch (not in the Keil and Delitzsch series) brought his immense mastery of Hebrew and related studies to these three verses. He commits himself to the traditional translation, in the way he introduces comments on Genesis 1:1—'The Fact of creation in a universal statement: In the beginning Elohim created the heavens and the earth.' Yet he gave full range to contrary views and proposed contrary evidence, making this statement:

Ancient translators all regard verse I as an independent proposition. Rashi [celebrated Jewish Scholar, 1040–1105], however, and among moderns Ewald, Bunson, Schraeder, Budde construe: In the beginning, when Elohim created heaven and earth—and the earth was waste and desert, etc.—then God said; otherwise Abenezra [1092–1167, one of the most distinguished Jewish scholars of the Middle Ages] and Grotius [Dutch savant]: In the beginning, when Elohim created the heaven and the earth, the earth was waste and desert.<sup>26</sup>

So the current departures from the traditional rendering of Genesis 1:1 have these precedents. Delitzsch, however, in a display of technical finesse hard either to report or to match, I think, demolished the notion of this supposed biblical ground for a world of chaotic mass of material in existence before God first moved to create the present world order. H. C. Leupold, in his justly praised work, declares:

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<sup>22</sup> Jack Finegan, *Light from the Ancient Past: The Archeological Background of Judaism and Christianity* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1969), p. 63.

<sup>23</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 64, 65.

<sup>24</sup> E. A. Speiser, *The Anchor Bible: Genesis* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1964), p. 11.

<sup>25</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 12, 13.

<sup>26</sup> Franz Delitzsch, *New Commentary on Genesis* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1888), pp. 74, 75.

The phrase, 'In the beginning (*bereshith*) refers to the absolute beginning of created things ... This fact is supported by the following arguments in the face of many and strong claims to the contrary.'<sup>27</sup>

Leupold is an arch conservative, but Gerhard Von Rad, a celebrated recent Form-Critical Old Testament scholar, and convinced advocate of the documentary theory of pentateuchal origins, regards the view we are resisting here as impossible for theological reasons, precisely because the late priestly (post-exilic) author could not have assigned any truth at all to the Babylonians. This he emphatically renounces, holding as plain sense the demand for full rejection of the myths.<sup>28</sup> I must agree when he states, 'These sentences [Gen. 1:1–2, 4a] cannot be easily overinterpreted theologically' (p. 46)! I must quote somewhat at length. After his strong language in support of the ancient and traditional translation of Genesis 1:1–3, one reads:

Syntactically perhaps both translations are possible, but not theologically. One must not deprive the declaration in v. 1 of the character of a theological principle. If one considers vs. 1–2 or 1–3 as the syntactical unit, then the word about chaos would stand logically and temporally before the word about creation. To be sure, the notion of a created chaos is itself a contradiction; nevertheless, one must remember that the text touches on things which in any case lie beyond human imagination. That does not mean, however, that one must renounce establishing quite definite and unrelinquishable theologumena. The first is that God, in the freedom of his will, creatively established for 'heaven and earth,' i.e. for absolutely everything, a beginning of its subsequent existence. The second is expressed in v. 2, for unless one speaks of chaos, creation cannot be sufficiently considered at all. To express divine creation, the Hebrew language already had a verb, which, as the Phoenician shows, could designate the artistic creation. But the Old Testament usage rejects even this comparison. The verb was retained exclusively to designate the divine creative activity. This effective theological constraint which extends even into the language is significant (cf. *salah*, 'to forgive,' alluding only to divine forgiving). It means a creative activity, which on principle is without analogy. It is correct to say that the verb *bara*, 'create', contains the idea both of complete effortlessness and *creatio ex nihilo*, since it is never connected with any statement of the material. The hidden pathos of this statement is that God is the Lord of the world. But not only in the sense that he subjected a pre-existing chaos to his ordering will! It is amazing to see how sharply little Israel demarcated herself from an apparently over-powering environment of cosmological and theogonic myths. Here the subject is not a primeval mystery of procreation from which the divinity arose, nor of a 'creative' struggle of mythically personified powers from which the cosmos arose, but rather the one who is neither warrior nor procreator, who alone is worthy of the predicate, Creator.<sup>29</sup>

Robert L. Reymond provides a valuable advocacy of the syntactical independence of Genesis 1:1, including the excellent contributions of Edward J. Young.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> H. C. Leupold, *Exposition of Genesis* (Columbus, OH: Wartburg Press, 1942), p. 39.

<sup>28</sup> Gerhard Von Rad, *Genesis, A Commentary* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1961), pp. 45, 46.

<sup>29</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 46, 47.

<sup>30</sup> Robert L. Reymond, *A New Systematic Theology of the Christian Faith* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1998), pp. 384–391.

I summarize reasons for continuing to treat Genesis 1:1 as an independent sentence, opening the Bible with the profound declaration of absolute origin of the world by God's act of creation 'in the beginning'.

1. *Bereshith* (in the beginning) as accented by the Massorites (standard in all Hebrew Bibles)<sup>31</sup> tends to support the independence of the sentence.

2. Though contested, as noted above, the Massoretic pointing (vowels) and accentuation, standard now for over 1,000 years, supports (if it does not demand) the independence of verse 1 from verses 2 and 3.<sup>32</sup>

In other words, the technical features in no wise require a change from the traditional rendering. This is convincingly supported by Delitzsch and Edward J. Young among many others. See also G. J. Spurrell.<sup>33</sup>

3. The proposal to unite verses 1–3 into one complex sentence 'is opposed ... to the simplicity of style which pervades the whole chapter, and to which so involved a sentence would be intolerable, apart altogether from the fact that this construction is invented for the simple purpose of getting rid of the doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo*, which is so repulsive to modern pantheism.'<sup>34</sup> Though I cite the authority of Keil, thousands of readers of Genesis in the standard versions before the NRSV of 1989 would share Keil's opinion as well as the thousands of seminarians who have learned to read the verses in Hebrew. Speiser does not document his statement: 'the majority of medieval Hebrew commentators and grammarians ... could see no objection to viewing Genesis 1:1 as a dependent clause.'<sup>35</sup> Are Rashi (1041–1105) and Aben Ezra (1092–1167) a 'majority' of Jewish scholars of the Middle Ages?

4. Liberal modern scholarship is opposed to the idea of revelation to divinely accredited messengers (Moses, apostles, prophets). This predisposes most of them to assume the author(s) of Genesis 1–3 shared the view of the ancient Near East that chaotic matter, not a self-existent Creator, was already present 'in the beginning'. Dr Reymond enlarges on this important point.<sup>36</sup> This explains why—although most of them acknowledge that verse one may properly be an independent sentence—they prefer to regard it as subordinate to verse 2. This supports their views of the evolutionary origin of cultural ideas.

5. John's Gospel, in obvious and usually uncontested reference to and dependence on Genesis 1:1, says: 'In the beginning was the Word.... All things were made through him'. This depends entirely on understanding Genesis 1:1 as an independent sentence.

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<sup>31</sup> See Delitzsch, pp. 74–78, also Young, as cited by Reymond.

<sup>32</sup> See Appendix to this chapter, p. 151.

<sup>33</sup> G. J. Spurrell, *Notes on the Hebrew Text of the Book of Genesis* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1887), pp. 1–3.

<sup>34</sup> C. F. Keil, *Biblical Commentary on the Old Testament, vol. i*, Keil & Delitzsch (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, n.d.), p. 46.

<sup>35</sup> Speiser, *op. cit.*, p. 12.

<sup>36</sup> Reymond, *op. cit.*, pp. 387–389.

6. The Septuagint of Genesis 1:1, the most ancient extant translation, reads *en archē epoiēsen ho theos*, etc. (and there is no proof of modification of the text of this verse). This translates the Hebrew as an independent sentence. It is also the obvious source of the opening of John 1:1. In each case the phrase refers to absolute beginning.

7. The Jews in ancient times, when Hebrew was still a living language for some, and widely comprehended by others, understood Genesis 1:1 as teaching the absolute origin of all things in acts of God. This too is acknowledged by some of the scholars who think that a mistake. We have already noted the Septuagint rendering of about 280 BC.

8. Creation out of ‘things that were not’ was the common faith of ancient Jews throughout their history. This is apparent in the many references to creation in the Old Testament. Also, in the inter-testamental period we have the confession of the martyr mother of the seven martyr brothers who admonished her son: ‘I beseech thee, my son, look upon the heaven and the earth, and all that is therein, and consider that God made them of things that were not’ (2 Maccabees 7:28). A faithful regard for the Bible’s own claim for the Mosaic antiquity of the first chapter of Genesis would insist, it seems to me, that these ancient people derived their view of creation from the first chapter of the Torah, not by inference from some experiences in the eighth to fifth centuries BC (as Von Rad supposes).

9. What has been said in the previous paragraph applies to statements of the New Testament, such as Hebrews 11:3—‘the universe was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things that are visible’—and Romans 4:17, which speaks of ‘God in whom he [Abraham] believed, who gives life to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist’, and much more.

## A Final Comment

Von Rad, as many who share his opinion, acknowledges that ancient Jews interpreted Genesis 1:1 as an independent sentence affirming ‘creation out of nothing’ by God, *yet* holds they were mistaken.

Arguments as to the grammar and syntax of Genesis 1–3, pro and con, have been vigorously pursued for about two centuries now in the scholarly literature. The reader should be aware that this is contemporary with the rise of evolutionary theories of development of all religions, including the religion of Israel. The same is true of most critical theories of the origin and growth of the literature of Israel which we call the Old Testament. This led negative critical scholarship away from any notion of supernatural (special) revelation. Hence the appearance of a strictly monotheistic religion and a doctrine of fiat ‘by the word of God’ creation in the fifteenth or fourteenth century BC and a prophet like Moses is unthinkable. So if feasible such critics will take fiat (*ex nihilo*) out of Genesis 1:1–3. They prefer a primeval, pre-existing chaos to be expressed in Genesis 1:1–3, such as was the view of second millennium BC Babylonians, Assyrians and Canaanites. Interestingly, however, Von Rad sees the logic of a late Priestly origin (P of the JEDP theory) for Genesis chapter 1 would require the doctrine of creation *ex nihilo*, then admittedly present in Jewish minds. He advocates the same documentary theory of origin held by those represented by Speiser but a better logic and, hence, a better syntax!

## Appendix to Chapter 17

No one brings better technical credentials to interpreting Hebrew texts than were brought by Umberto Cassuto, a Jewish scholar. In his commentary, he states the opposing view that in Genesis 1, verses 1 and 2 (or perhaps the first three verses) are parts of one sentence, then says:

[A] decisive objection can be raised on the basis of the syntactical construction of verse 2. If the first rendering [‘at the beginning of the creation of the heavens and the earth, when the earth was without form and void’] were correct, the predicate in the second verse would precede the subject, viz. *wattehi ha’arets* [‘and was the earth’], or *hayetha ha’arets* [‘was the earth’]; cf. Jer. 26:1, ‘In the beginning of the reign of Jehoiakin ... CAME THIS WORD, etc.’; so too Jer. 27:1; 28:1 and Hos. 1:2: ‘when the LORD first spoke to Hosea, SAID THE LORD to Hosea’. Had the second translation [verses 1–3 a single sentence, ‘at the beginning ... when the earth was ... God said’, etc.], been correct, the wording would have been: *weha’aretz tohu wabhohu* [‘and the earth without form and void’] omitting *hayetha* [‘was’].

Here Cassuto illustrates from the Hebrew text of 1 Samuel 3:2–4 and concludes: ‘It follows, therefore, that the first verse is an independent sentence that constitutes a formal introduction to the entire section, and expresses at the outset, with majestic brevity, the main thought of the section: that in the beginning, that is at the commencement of time, in the remotest past, that the human mind can conceive, God created the heavens and the earth.’<sup>37</sup>

## 18

### God’s Work of Creation (II)

#### IV. The Divine Work of creating the Heavens and Earth was Completed

The divine work of creating the heavens and earth and all that is in them had not only a time of beginning but a definite time of completion. This proposition must be qualified to point out that there is a ‘heaven of heavens’ above the material universe where angels ‘behold the face’ of Jesus’ ‘Father who is in heaven’. These angels were present when God ‘laid the foundation of the earth ... when the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy’ (Job 38:4, 7). We do not know what worlds there may be besides the cosmos, of which is our galaxy, near the eye of which our solar system revolves, about whose center our earth, scene of important transactions, occupies a portion. This world, however, is no longer coming into existence. God began to create ‘in the beginning’ and completed the great work in six successive creative [not necessarily solar] days. After that ‘on the seventh day God finished his work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all his work that he had done’ (Gen. 2:2).

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<sup>37</sup> Umberto Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Genesis, Part One*, trans. Israel Abrahams (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, The Hebrew University, 1944, 1978), pp. 19, 20.

Was there any continuing work of creation? Moses seems to answer with an emphatic *No*. ‘Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. And ... God finished his work’ (Gen 2:1, 2a).

The Bible occasionally describes some subsequent works of God as creating, making, forming, and the like. In each case there is no suggestion that God is adding materials to what He did in the biblical creative beginning. This world which God created and where redemption is in process is, as far as divine revelation is concerned, no smaller or larger than when on the seventh day ‘he rested ... from all his work that he had done’. There are continuing divine works in this world. Jesus said so, as we shall shortly attend to, but they involve preservation and providence, upkeep and governance, to employ non-theological language.

As we shall demonstrate shortly, the primary meaning of the Hebrew word *bara*’, create, is to bring into existence something new, having no inherent reference at all to whether pre-existing materials are used. It is the context of the statement, the syntax of the sentence and numerous later statements of Scripture that definitively show that ‘the heavens and the earth’ (our universe) had absolute beginning in God’s creative act, and such is what the opening statement of the entire Bible means. When God says, ‘behold, I create new heavens and a new earth’ (Isa. 65:17) it is *re-newal*, as the next verse, in parallel use of *bara*’, shows. There God says ‘behold I create Jerusalem to be a joy’—clearly a renewal, not something *ex nihilo*.<sup>1</sup> God is said to create the changes in the world of nature (Ps. 104:30) but that is equated with renewing ‘the face of the ground’ in parallel statement. To sum up, in the many texts of Scripture which speak of God’s creating something, never is any addition to the material creation intended. Procreation—as in the birth of babies and animals—is quite the same. In no case is new material brought into being, as in the sense of Genesis 1:1 and subsequent references to it.

To cite an admirer of Augustine who was also well acquainted with Aquinas, Calvin comments on Psalm 104:30:

He [the Psalmist] again declares, that the world is daily *renewed*, because God *sendeth forth his spirit*. In the propagation of living creatures, we doubtless see continually a new creation of the world (emphasis added).<sup>2</sup>

Calvin plainly interprets the propagation of life, in what we now call nature, as *renewal* not *fiat* (or *de novo* or *ex nihilo* creation).

Jonathan Edwards and several New England theologians who followed, while not rejecting an original divine creation, asserted continuous moment-by-moment creation. Descartes, before Edwards, taught that preservation means ongoing creation at each moment.<sup>3</sup> Edwards’ is more a

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<sup>1</sup> I sought to demonstrate that the eschatological ‘new earth’ of 2 Peter 3:10–13 and the last chapters of Revelation is re-pristination of the old one in a dissertation published as *Daniel and the Latter Days* and later in *The Earthly Reign of Our Lord With His People*. Robert D. Culver, *Daniel and the Latter Days* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1954, 1977), pp. 177–190. *The Earthly Reign of Our Lord With His People* (20508 County 26, Houston, MN 55943: Vinegar Hill Press, 1999), pp. 188–200.

<sup>2</sup> John Calvin, *Commentary on the Psalms* vol. IV, trans. James Anderson (Edinburgh: Calvin Translation Society, 1847), p. 168.

<sup>3</sup> Descartes, *Meditations III*, 36 cited by Pannenberg in *Systematic Theology II* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), p. 49.

theory of metaphysics than of theology and is of interest chiefly because it was famously advocated by a learned and godly man of historical importance. The central idea is that the same sort of divine action which began the world and all its parts is necessary continually to maintain it, else it would retreat to nothingness. A. H. Strong devotes about a page to the advocates and their arguments and two to his objections<sup>4</sup> and likewise C. A. Hodge.<sup>5</sup>

The doctrine of *continued creation* is rather conspicuously proposed by some recent authors. Thomas Oden—in a quite satisfactory discussion of the origin of time and space concurrently with creation of the cosmos—proposes this somewhat puzzling sentence:

The very idea of creation implies this paradoxical conjunction: as divine activity, creation is eternally occurring, transcending all specific times and places; as temporal effect, creation has a beginning and end, however remote.<sup>6</sup>

Oden goes on to refer to Augustine (*Confessions* XI. 10–13). But I think Oden has misread Augustine, for in the section cited the bishop of Hippo said: ‘If we mean by the whole of creation when we speak of heaven and earth, I unreservedly say that before he made heaven and earth, God made nothing’ (*Confessions* XI. 12). He additionally makes clear that ideas in the mind of God have no concrete existence in the world of heaven and earth. Oden also cites Thomas Aquinas (*Summa Theologica* I.45.1). But in that article Aquinas says nothing remotely like Oden’s opinion that ‘creation is eternally occurring’ in God’s mind or anywhere or any other time than in the one creative epoch.

Dr Oden’s enigmatic statement does not really endorse the notion the world we live in is either *continuously* being created or that in it God is occasionally creating new materials for the world He made ‘in the beginning’.

What Thomas Oden seems merely to hint, perhaps as reflection of some unstated metaphysical speculation, Wolfhart Pannenberg states—not without reservations and concessions to what he acknowledges to be the contrary sense of ‘the Old Testament stories’, but plainly. Pannenberg is a learned writer, as much metaphysician as theologian. He brings the weight of the history of philosophical speculation to bear, and an apparent acceptance of the ancient creeds, but only as much authority of Scripture as passes the bar of the critical judgment of modern criticism. Let Pannenberg speak for himself:

A trinitarian exposition of the concept of creation makes it possible, then, to relate what is said about creation to the totality of the world from the standpoint of its duration in time. It does not concern merely the world’s beginning. To limit it [creation] to the beginning, as the Old Testament stories seem to do in accordance with Near Eastern myths of a primal era, is one sided. Yet what the two Genesis accounts are really seeking to describe is the normative and abiding basis of creaturely reality in the form of depiction of the initial event.

Thus preservation goes with creation. Nor are we to view preservation simply as an unchanging conservation of the forms of creaturely existence laid down at the first. *It is a*

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<sup>4</sup> A. H. Strong, *Systematic Theology* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 1907), pp. 415–419.

<sup>5</sup> Charles A. Hodge, *Systematic Theology I*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1960), pp. 577–581.

<sup>6</sup> Thomas Oden, *The Living God, Systematic Theology I* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1992), p. 242.

*living occurrence, continued creation* [emphasis added], a constantly new creative fashioning that goes beyond what was given existence originally. Creation, preservation, and overruling [providence] thus form a unity whose structural relation has yet to be defined more closely.<sup>7</sup>

Thus while quite traditionally recognizing the three distinct divine works of God toward the cosmos (creation, preservation and providence), he also blurs their distinctions and affirms ‘continued creation’. He promises to define the ‘relations’ ‘more closely’ later. Which indeed he does through the following 128 pages. It includes a systematic survey of views of the cosmos; the nature of reality in philosophy from the pre-socratic Greek metaphysicians through Whitehead, Bergson and Bertrand Russell; the theologians, Jewish, Christian and Islamic, from Philo to Teilhard de Chardin and Karl Barth; and the scientists from feeble beginnings to the amazing discoverers and discoveries, Planck, Einstein, Heisenberg and the rest. Along the way several of Pannenberg’s ideas regarding the doctrine of creation are clarified and supported.

1. Pannenberg’s understanding of divine creation of the natural order by evolution requires that creation and preservation be one ongoing process. He appeals to scriptural statements about ‘the creative nature of God’s acts in history’ and acknowledges ‘this approach has its roots in the atomic theory of Democritus’. He asserts that ‘the element of chance [as Democritus featured it] ... is important for theological interpretation of the ongoing creative action of God’.<sup>8</sup>

2. Creation, preservation and providence must be united with the consummation.<sup>9</sup> This consummation is being progressively realized in an evolutionary process. He has fully absorbed evolutionary process as developed by Darwin and clarified by leaders of thought in recent times. The universe is expanding indefinitely and gives added space for onward development.<sup>10</sup>

3. The resistance to evolutionary explanation of the world by Christians has been mistaken and futile.

In the 19th and early 20th centuries Christian churches and theologians were painfully slow to recognize this opportunity that evolution had given theology relative to natural science. The fight against Darwinism was a momentous mistake in the relations between science and theology ... We say this in spite of the hypothetical character of the theory of evolution.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology II*, trans. G. W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids:, Eerdmans, 1994), p. 34.

<sup>8</sup> I have already stated biblical reasons for rejecting the continued-acts of creation theory, which I shall not repeat. Pannenberg brings modern developmental theories of evolutionary development not only to his doctrine of creation but by way of the documentary-development theory of the composition of the Old Testament and to the formation and history of Israel’s religion of faith in one God, the rituals, sacrificial and festival system, and the ethics of the Pentateuch and prophetic section of the Old Testament.

<sup>9</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 136–140.

<sup>10</sup> *ibid.*, p. 127.

<sup>11</sup> *ibid.*, p. 119 and note 310, p. 119.

4. The Holy Spirit (whom he firmly sees as the *ruach*, spirit, not wind in Gen. 1:2) is the agent of creation in the evolutionary world process (76–115). He finds connection between the ‘field of force’ theories of recent physicists and the energy of the Spirit of God effecting the ‘sequence of forms’ and all else moving to the perfection and consummation (108–110 *et al*). In a manner he does not make clear, the Spirit of God is ‘the dynamic of natural occurrence, which is in effect the evolution of earth and its living inhabitants’. He says: ‘[I]n the history of earth ... the development of organized life ... changed the face of the earth. Vegetables ... molluscs ... reptiles ... mammals ... and then humans.’ He sees in this ‘higher structuring ... from atoms and stars to humans, and especially the development of life ... a kind of countertrend to the increase of entropy in natural processes ... The evolution of life [is] ... an upward movement toward increasingly higher and more complex forms of organization.’<sup>12</sup>

5. As far as the narrative account of creation and the flood is concerned, though there are good insights, it is based on an antiquated view of the world, hence not to be regarded as authoritative. He calls it ‘time bound’. He writes:

The story carries features of a view of nature that was widespread in the Near East in the first millennium [not second, Moses’ time] ... a particular example of a time bound insight that we have now.<sup>13</sup>

6. Though the authors of Genesis 1 had an utterly mistaken word picture (*weltbild*) (‘The story of the flood tells us what happens when leaks in the vault [firmament] occur and are not stopped’) they were only ‘bearing impressive testimony to the science of antiquity’. We should not follow their cosmology, but ‘should follow where the biblical witness leads by claiming current knowledge of the world for a description of the divine work of creation ... theologically appropriating contemporary knowledge’.<sup>14</sup>

I shall not repeat my reasons for rejecting the idea of continual creation complementing or completing at the beginning a cosmos, including all its living creatures. Whatever place there may be in real history for development in the variety of the earth’s features—inert, chemical, topographical, geological and biological—there is no place in plain statements of theological fact in the Bible to support emergent evolution or equating a so-called *elan vital* with the Second and Third Persons of the Godhead in a continued creation.

## V. God and Man in the Present Created Order

I have in mind features of the world created in part by God, presently sustained and governed by Him, which are built into that *cosmos*. Cosmos is the Greek term (*kosmos*) usually behind ‘world’ in the English New Testament. We are thinking of the world, the creation, into which we, the descendants of Adam, the first man, are born and from which we view ‘the heavens and the earth’. Let us look closely, briefly and naively, without bringing speculative, philosophical theories along with us.

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<sup>12</sup> *ibid.*, p. 113.

<sup>13</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 116, 117.

<sup>14</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 116, 117.

1. God has left traces of Himself in the created material world. By means of these ‘traces’, as I have called them, people are able to draw inferences about their Creator. Just as the electric light tells us something (though only a little) about the genius of Thomas Edison, its inventor, and my sister-in-law’s beautiful handmade quilts about Marie their maker, so ‘The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork’ (Ps. 19:1). This is Hebrew idiom for majesty and power. Paul says that though God’s attributes as such are ‘invisible’, ‘since the creation of the world’ (cosmos), God’s ‘power and divine nature’ are ‘clearly perceived’ by the mind, by way of necessary inference (Rom. 1:20). Scripture also says the wisdom of God is manifest in His works, especially in the subtlety and variety of the creatures: ‘In wisdom have you made them all’ (Ps. 104:24). See Calvin’s comments on Psalm 119:15.<sup>15</sup> Calvin said the knowledge of God shines forth in the fashioning of the universe and the continuing government of it, beginning his chapter on the subject with these eminently quotable sentences:

The final goal of the blessed life . . . rests in the knowledge of God. Lest anyone then, be excluded from access to happiness, he not only sowed in men’s minds that seed of religion of which we have spoken but revealed himself and daily discloses himself in the whole workmanship of the universe. As a consequence, men cannot open their eyes without being compelled to see him. Indeed, his essence is incomprehensible, hence, his divineness far escapes all human perception. But upon his individual works he has engraved unmistakable marks of his glory, so clear and so prominent that even unlettered and stupid folk cannot plead ignorance.<sup>16</sup>

Calvin, like good Bible expositors and theologians before and since, brought numerous texts of Scripture as unmistakable evidence, among them Psalm 19:1–4, Hebrews 11:1–3 and Romans 1:19, 20.

Recent developments in Christian evidence (factual apologetics, some call it) have developed what used to be called ‘the teleological argument’ or ‘argument from design’ and ‘intelligent design in nature’—the latter both by evolutionary and non-evolutionary theists. Except for technical features of recent science in these discussions all is anticipated in Calvin’s treatment. From Butler’s *Analogy* onward the teleological argument has varied only in the amount of supporting data supplied, the linguistic force of the argument and the way the conclusions are drawn.

As of this writing two recent books in particular have argued convincingly for the presence of ‘intelligent design’ in the natural order. Michael Behe, a Roman Catholic author who writes from his professional standpoint as a professor and researcher in one of the life sciences, suggests that perhaps organic evolution does prevail in the natural order and is thereby ‘intelligent design’—hence a Creator-Designer. Evidences drawn for intelligent design seem decisive.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> John Calvin, *Institutes III*, 25.7 and I, 15.3.

<sup>16</sup> Calvin, *Institutes I*, 5.1.

<sup>17</sup> Michael Behe, *Darwin’s Black Box: The Biological Challenge to Evolution* (New York: Free Press, 1996).

Phillip E. Johnson, a lawyer, argues somewhat less technically to a conclusion of intelligent design.<sup>18</sup> A stream of new literature, videos, and similar, supporting this approach, is developing.<sup>19</sup>

Not only primal unfallen mankind but sinners such as we are do see these unmistakable evidences. It is only a mark of our depravity, according to Scripture (Rom. 1:19 ff.), that people refuse to retain God in their knowledge and are therefore ‘without excuse’.

2. God has left far more than traces of Himself in the created constitution of human beings. That mankind is ‘the image and likeness of God’ says this in a general way. Mankind’s nature, what and who we are, mirrors God’s nature in some particulars—certainly not completely. Further, by creation and subsequent procreation, every child of Adam has the voice of God in his heart (conscience) telling everyone of us we *ought* to do right and ‘accusing’ or ‘excusing’ our thoughts, which says much more. This is taught specifically in Romans 1:19, where Paul says ‘For what can be known about God is plain *to them*’ (emphasis added), later expounded in Romans 2:14–15. Even the heathen have ‘the work of the law ... written on their hearts, while their conscience also bears witness, and their conflicting thoughts accuse or even excuse them’ (Rom. 2:15). This expresses knowledge of God as lawmaker and judge is written in mankind’s consciousness, suppressable but not expungeable.

Moreover, by looking carefully at other members of our race and by serious introspection—as being the image and likeness of God (Gen. 1:26, 27) and ‘the image and glory of God’ (1 Cor. 11:7)—we find not only our sinful self, but in our creaturely excellencies a ‘clear mirror of God’s works’ (Calvin, *Institutes I*, 1.3). Calvin again here has an excellent paragraph (*Institutes I*, 5.3). I take the matter up more fully in treatment of the doctrine of mankind (see Part 2: Anthropology: Man as Created).

There is considerable difference of opinion as to whether so-called ‘general revelation’ in God’s creatures, nature and human beings, is sufficient basis for a ‘natural theology’ parallel to ‘revealed theology’ or as preliminary to revealed theology. Neo-orthodox theologians Barth and Brunner debated this in terms no longer of much interest today. I shall here forebear entering that not very fruitful debate. It does seem to me that based only upon the limited content of natural (general) revelation there are important theological affirmations to be made: that God is; that God is an almighty, glorious person, creator of me and all I see, hear, feel, touch, taste; and that, if so, He must be worshiped. Further, though spoiled by sin and rendered spiritually dead thereby, people nevertheless have value to God because of our likeness to God and, hence, even in estrangement salvagable.

The literature of this subject was already very large in Martin Luther’s time. In his paradoxical manner of teaching salvation wholly by grace through faith on the ground of Christ’s work of redemption he characterized theology derived from creation (Rom. 1:20) as false theology when employed by the worldly wise, citing 1 Corinthians 1:21–25. Adam before the fall might have constructed a ‘natural theology’, but now it only makes those who construct a

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<sup>18</sup> Phillip E. Johnson, *Darwin on Trial* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2nd Ed., 1993).

<sup>19</sup> Stanley Grenz, *Renewing the Center* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2000), p. 155.

*Institutes* John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 2 volumes

*Institutes* John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 2 volumes

natural theology fools. What is available to us now is not God's invisible nature but only as much as was made visible in Christ's suffering on our behalf. Luther in this way was repudiating the speculations of medieval scholasticism. One wonders what he might have said of some of the speculations and refinements of the age of Protestant theological scholasticism which immediately followed.<sup>20</sup>

3. Certain creaturely privileges and duties of mankind as crown and climax of God's creative art are set forth in the creation narrative of Genesis. Among these are duties to propagate the race, to exercise dominion (i.e. rule and conservation) over the created environment which supports His existence, to observe a weekly Sabbath, to work as keeper of the garden of Paradise and subsequently elsewhere. These matters I reserve for extended treatment later in the doctrine of mankind.

## VI. Social Order for Primal Mankind in a Created Order

The subject of human society in the created order of things is a topic not always treated in connection with the doctrine of creation but which, in view of current social interests and radical differences of current thought, calls at least for brief attention. Whether viewed as a second creation account or as a fuller account of the sixth day of the creative week, Genesis 2 after verse 4 relates entirely to the creation of 'Man' (Gen. 5:2 ESV): male called *Adam* (earth) and female *Eve*, or more correctly *Ava* (life). The theological implications and consequences of the unity of the race in the first male, as related to the fall of chapter 3, belong in theological anthropology and I treat them there (in Part 2 of this book) at some length. There are enormous social implications and consequences of the fall as well. I have written a book on that subject.<sup>21</sup> Coercive civil government was not a part of the created human social order. Rather it is a late, post-diluvian development, an aspect of divine preservation and providence. Coercive rule of the mass of mankind by other men was devised by God to control the devastating social effects of the fall.<sup>22</sup> Each of us comes to full flower in society with other people but not necessarily in the state.

There is validity to the contention of some (as noted earlier in the chapter) that God is essentially 'creative' in the sense that in ordering of the world, in His power, wisdom and love, God produces 'new things'—but as an aspect of preservation and providence. The heavens and the earth, however, were finished from the standpoint of the creation narrative, at the end of the sixth day and, on the seventh day, evidently even terminated. As regards creation, God is now resting.

The earth was created in anticipation of mankind's residence there. This is a necessary inference from the Genesis record—mankind is the crown of creation, last created, only then is everything 'very good' (Gen. 1:31)—and it is specifically stated in Psalm 115:16: 'The heavens are the LORD's heavens, but the earth he has given to the children of man.' Karl Barth makes this

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<sup>20</sup> See Paul Althaus' treatment of Luther's 'Theology of the Cross'. Paul Althaus, *The Theology of Martin Luther*, trans. R. C. Schultz (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1966), pp. 23–34.

<sup>21</sup> Robert D. Culver, *Civil Government: A Biblical View* (Edmonton, Canada: Canadian Institute for Law, Theology and Public Policy, 1975, 2000) 308 pages.

<sup>22</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 64–80.

fact the basis, in part, of the doctrine of angels—those messengers between heaven (the ‘above’) and earth (the ‘beneath’)—in *Church Dogmatics III*.<sup>23</sup>

The various spheres of human expression are rooted in created human nature and cannot be made to derive from any source other than what it is to be human. In other words, both personal expression of individuals and of society flow out from human nature. The state or some agency created by the state cannot successfully produce results foreign to the created nature of mankind.

The most obvious of these ‘orders’ or ‘spheres’ is marriage and family as the organ for propagation of the race and the primary sphere of social happiness. The philosophers of the French Revolution thought they could abolish it; the Soviets and Maoists and more recently the biological technocrats who wish to give us clone babies have tinkered with abolishing or modifying the family. Yet the formula of monogamous marriage initiated at creation (Gen. 2:21–25) may be corrupted by sinful people, attacked by ambitious technocrats, but hardly abolished. It will always be true that the LORD ‘makes ... families like flocks’ (Ps. 107:41) and where social and civil *shalom* prevails God sets all the solitary ‘in families’ (Ps. 68:6). Even the numerous social engineers of the secular establishments are now beginning to acknowledge that good families are the only sound foundation of a sound social order.

Other spheres of human expression derive from the created order of things. Among them are the following.

1. The necessity of labour by the human male to support his wife and family. It was Adam not Eve of whom it is said ‘The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work [“tend” KJV] it and keep it’ (Gen. 2:15). ‘Tend’ translates Hebrew *‘avadh*, meaning to do work, and in certain forms meaning servant and slave. Hard work is not absent from the meaning here. This is previous to the fall, hence in this prototype of the *normal* adult, he is to work vigorously at something as an engine of supply for family needs. The fall only rendered this ‘natural’ state of affairs more rigorous: ‘in pain you shall eat ... all the days of your life ... By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread’ (Gen. 3:17, 19). Like all the duties inherent in mankind by virtue of creation, this duty is also at its best both privilege and sphere of joyful personal fulfillment as well as the means whereby civilization is created.

2. Art, science, education, religion, music, medicine—indeed every form of social expression (of which no complete list has ever been attempted)—are not inventions created by human beings but modes of expression of what they already are. In such a case each such expression has duty and privilege to do and be what it is. They exist together in society and complement one another but are not controlled by one another. The same person may be interested and creative in both art and education, or science and religion, or even in all four and more besides (say architecture and farming). However, he does not learn how to worship God from art any more than he demands that as a builder (architecture) he consult the local pastor (religion) as to how to construct the court house. As Christians it is our duty to bring each of these spheres to the judgment and direction of God, the Creator, who has given freedom to each, conditioned by respect of every one of the other spheres.

A creation subjected to the vanity of sin both in mankind and all we survey is inevitably destined for conflict. Which of God’s gifts have not we corrupted in some way? Nevertheless the church is not the ‘guardian’ either of art or science, like minor children *en route* to maturity, even though in our own time we have seen the world which lies in the wicked one take them over. Further, it is right that each of us engage our abilities and gifts in any of these areas of life

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<sup>23</sup> Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics III*, trans. G. W. Bromiley (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1975), pp. 369–531.

which a kindly Providence opens up for us. Nor should the devout believer scorn the developments of the arts, sciences and the like among unbelievers, however cautious in embracing them. I cite a famous passage of John Calvin's commentary on Genesis 4:21, 22, which reports that art and science arose first among the descendants of Cain, the rebel, not of Seth whose sons called on the name of the LORD (Gen. 4:26).

[T]he liberal arts and sciences have descended to us from the heathen [ancient Greeks and Romans]. We are, indeed, compelled to acknowledge that we have received astronomy, and the other parts of philosophy, medicine, and the order of civil government from them. Nor is it to be doubted, that God has thus liberally enriched them with excellent favours that their impiety might have the less excuse. We admire the riches of his favour.

Calvin goes on to say:

[A]lthough the invention of the harp [by Cain's family], and of similar instruments of music, may minister to our pleasure, rather than to our necessity, still it is to be thought not altogether superfluous; much less does it deserve in itself to be condemned, unless it be combined with the fear of God, and with the common benefit of society. But such is the nature of music, that it can be adapted to the offices [service] of religion, and made profitable to men ... Finally, Moses, in my opinion, intends to teach that the race flourished in various and pre-eminent endowments, which would both render it inexcusable, and would prove most evident testimonies of the divine goodness [in created endowments].<sup>24</sup>

As civilization has developed and channels of the expression of human creative ability have multiplied mankind has usually claimed credit for it. For 200 years random evolution by some material law of progress (or logic, as in the case of science) has been given credit for these advances. Deductivists, empiricists, behaviorists, idealists and similar have explained it all by their favorite theories, and after doing so have usually in recent times sought to make each a department of government. They have no better way to explain and to exploit the behavior of people in society.

To the contrary, Scripture traces these developments into the created nature of mankind and their environment. The Reformers and later Christian biblical theologians taught that God placed before man in the Genesis revelation and in his nature 'ordinances for practical societal institutions, such as the church as an institution, the state, the school, university and industry ... there is no one social institution such as the state of which the others are merely parts'.<sup>25</sup>

This is close to Luther's teaching that all human activity 'is both established and limited by God's *creative* [emphasis added] will ... [It is] nothing else than a form of readiness to receive God's gifts'.<sup>26</sup> Luther wrote:

Man must and ought to work, ascribing his sustenance and the fulness of his house, however, not to his own labor but solely to the goodness and blessing of God ... God

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<sup>24</sup> John Calvin, *Commentary Upon the Book of Genesis*, trans. John King (Edinburgh: Calvin Translation Society, 1847), pp. 218, 219.

<sup>25</sup> E. L. Hebden Taylor, *Reformation or Revolution* (Chatley, NJ: Craig Press, 1970), p. 320.

<sup>26</sup> Althaus, *op. cit.*, p. 106.

wants the glory as the one who alone gives the growth ... And so we find that all our labor is nothing more than the finding and collecting of God's gifts; it [our labour] is quite unable to create or preserve anything.<sup>27</sup>

I cited Calvin's comments on the independent authority of musicians to make music unfettered by rules supplied by science or 'religion', and the like, as exemplary, first, of his outlook on liberal arts (which he mentions) and, second, of his outlook on all human gifts, powers, 'talents' as we say today. All, however, was to be subject to all divinely revealed truth. He held that civil government should protect the church and (in a Christian commonwealth such as Geneva) should support it.<sup>28</sup>

Spiritually discerning Christians will be on guard not to follow the world's enticement into doubtful and unrighteous channels in these quite proper areas of human activity, especially as currently organized, sometimes under government sponsorship. I cite Abraham Kuyper's telling remarks about the membership in the social organizations (labor, political, etc.) which modern society creates to support their agenda.

In mixing socially danger always lurks for Christians. One so easily allows the law to be laid down by society and its worldly forms. What society can get away with Christians too can so easily permit. One floats on a stream to which one can offer no resistance. And consciously one exchanges the principle of the Christian life for the unpurified principle of worldly society.<sup>29</sup>

Kuyper's concluding remarks stand as a stark rebuke to conducting any lawful enterprise according to corrupt worldly standards and against drifting with the currents in the worldly organizations we may be inclined to join.

The spirit at work in such principally unbelieving social organizations is so alluring and contagious that almost none of us, once he enters into such company, can offer resistance to it. One absorbs this godless spirit without suspecting it. Especially so because one is a part of such organizations, one sees one's Christian principles doomed to silence.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Althaus, *op. cit.*, p. 320.

<sup>28</sup> The theology of 'sphere sovereignty' and endorsement of full participation in the created orders of human society introduced here with cautious approval is no new thought, not presently widely discussed in evangelical theological circles. The seed of these ideas is to be found in both Calvin and Luther. In slightly different language it was proposed by Helmut Thieleke and Werner Elert, both German Lutherans, and by Emil Brunner. It received fullest expression in the writings of Abraham Kuyper and Herman Dooyeweerd and has been taken up by R. J. Rushdoony and other 'Christian Reconstruction' theologians in America. Its most balanced and persuasive proponent has been E. L. Hebden Taylor.

<sup>29</sup> Abraham Kuyper, *Pro Rege*, Vol III, pp. 189–191 as cited by E. L. Hebden Taylor in *The Christian Philosophy of Law, Politics and the State* (Nutley, NJ: Craig Press, 1966), p. 603.

<sup>30</sup> *op. cit.*, p. 191.

## The Method of God in Creation

We live in an age that likes to think of itself as scientific. Science is interested in methods, so people want to know *how* God created the world. Did He do it all at once? Once He created matter and energy did the rest develop by laws He created with the matter and energy? By virtue of the nature of the case these questions cannot be answered for certain.

Firstly, creation out of nothing was a supernatural event. Since there was as yet no order of nature it might be better to say, a non-natural event. Once all the ‘natural’ causes for an event are explained it ceases to be a supernatural event and loses its force as one.

Secondly, try as the astronomers, geologists and physicists may, they can never know how God created. There are several competing ‘scientific’ models of creation. However one decides to interpret the six days of the Genesis creation-narrative, it is very clear that God ended the work of creating things when the epoch was over. According to Genesis 2:1–3, God rested (ceased) from the now finished work of creation.

## VII. What Revelation says about Method and Means, Purposes and Agencies in Creating

Preservation continues, but God’s methods are probably different in this present work. Hence, though the scientist may learn much about present-day natural processes, he can never be quite sure they prevailed in creation—whether it took a moment, six twenty-four-hour days, or several billion years. The processes he observes now relate to God’s works of preservation and of providence, not of creation. By revelation we do know several things about the methods God used in creating our world, but even what revelation tells us relates more to things modern people are not particularly curious about, even though they ought to be. These constitute the matters Christian teachers ought to enforce in our churches, rather than (I judge) theories of *how* or *how long*. Here are several of them.

1. God employed His *wisdom* in creating. In Proverbs 8, Wisdom (represented as a female) stands forth (vv. 3, 4) and cries, ‘The LORD possessed me at the beginning of his work, the first of his acts of old’ (v. 22). Then Wisdom claims to have been present at the various stages of creation, assisting at each juncture (vv. 27–31). Elsewhere Scripture states, ‘he ... established the world by his wisdom ... by his understanding’ (Jer. 10:12b); ‘O LORD, how manifold are your works! [creation and preservation] In wisdom have you made [creation] them all’ (Ps. 104:24). These texts are telling us the functional efficiency of the creation, including that the starry heavens testify to God the Creator’s intelligence.

2. God employed His *power* in creating. This seems so evident, even apart from texts which say it, that it scarcely can be doubted. David was impressed with the creative power of God, saying, ‘the sky above [i.e. the expanse of space] proclaims his handiwork’ (Ps. 19:1).

As a young pastor I personally built most of a church house with my own hands. The walls were of twelve-inch concrete blocks, each weighing in excess of sixty pounds. The size of the building was fifty-two feet by sixty-four feet. How my muscles hurt during those fourteen months! To the present day I never pass large masonry construction without silently calculating the power necessary to put the stones in place. The first time I saw the gigantic, dressed Herodian stones at Hebron—several feet in each dimension—I had to ponder them quietly for several minutes to estimate their weight. What power it took to emplace them! But God effortlessly put the lights in the expanse of heaven—the greater to rule the day, the lesser to rule the night. He made the stars also (Gen. 1:14–18) and has been, by preservation, keeping them in

place ever since. 'He ... hangs the earth on nothing' (Job 26:7). 'It is he who made the earth by his power' (Jer. 10:12).

3. God employed His *will* in creating. The four and twenty elders of John's vision say to God: 'for you created all things, and by your will they existed and were created' (Rev. 4:11). This means that the various aspects of creation are God's execution of His own eternal decree. Will is the nearest thing that we have to creative power, as God's only rational earth-creatures. We can create ideas in the mind without apparent reduction of energy. These ideas are, in the case of some of the more artistic of our number, the finest work we do, for the ideas are parent to works like Rembrandt's paintings or Gutzon Borglum's statuary or the Grand Coulee Dam.

4. God employed His word in creating. Many times the formula, 'And God said, "Let there be" ... and there was', appears in the familiar narrative. The Bible reader naturally connects this with Hebrews 11:3 (KJV), 'the worlds were framed by the word of God'. Several other passages bear on the subject: 'By the word of the LORD the heavens were made, and by the breath of his mouth all their host.... For he spoke, and it came to be; he commanded, and it stood firm' (Ps. 33:6, 9); 'For he commanded and they were created' (Ps. 148:5). The word of God may be written (the Scriptures), spoken (as at Jesus' baptism), personal (as the Son of God in John 1). There may be other senses. All derive from the familiar phenomenon of human language whereby ideas, commands, wishes and the like are communicated.

5. All three members of the Godhead co-operated in the work of creation. Some attention has already been given to the fact that the distinctions between the Three Persons of the Godhead are in part with reference to functions outside the Trinity (*ad extra* is the Latin phrase) rather than immanent relations within the Godhead. We know that all three of the Persons participated in the creation of the heavens and the earth, just as also in the work of redemption. Sometimes Scripture speaks simply of God as the Creator. Sometimes this way of putting things draws redemption into the sphere of what the one true God has done, with the result that both creation and redemption appear together. One such text is 2 Corinthians 4:6. Paul has been speaking of the devil, 'the god of this world', and of how he 'has blinded the minds of the unbelievers' (v. 4). Then he shows how Christ is God's light and follows with a striking sentence joining creation and redemption to the individual persons: 'For 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).

The Scriptures, therefore, in creation as in redemption, preserve the formula 'of the Father', 'through the Son', 'by the Spirit'. The Father as Planner originates: 'there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things' (1 Cor. 8:6). The Son as Mediator effects the plan, 'For by him [the Son] all things were created ... all things were created through him' (Col. 1:16<sup>31</sup>). The Spirit of God (in the Old Testament not always clearly the Third Person) completes and operates day to day (see Gen. 1:2; Job 26:13).

6. The Bible declares that God had certain *purposes* in creating the world. Why did God create the world? Secularist writers of today do not concern themselves with purposes. If, as they suppose, there is no reality outside the material world, locked up in cause-effect sequences, there is no goal of the world except just to be whatever it is. An important text of Scripture speaks to the contrary: 'The LORD has made everything for its purpose' (Prov. 16:4). The purpose in view in this verse may be an immediate functional one, as for example, the sun to shine, eyes to see, ears to hear, fins for swimming, legs for walking. But each immediate purpose was intended to

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<sup>31</sup> See also John 1:3, 10; Heb. 1:2, 10.

serve one ultimate, divinely intended purpose for the whole of creation. That purpose may be summed up in three short statements, each scripturally derived.

i. The ‘chief end’ of creation is God Himself, ‘For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory for ever. Amen’ (Rom. 11:36). God’s design is, as Paul puts it, ‘that God may be all in all’ (1 Cor. 15:28; cf. Isa. 48:11). From what we know of creativity in ourselves, we should suppose that the Maker’s own satisfaction is a primary goal in creativity, not that it is the only one.

ii. The goal of God for Himself, in creation, is the manifestation of His perfections. This is spoken of as His will, or His pleasure. James Orr pointed out that the creation of mankind had a distinct place in God’s scheme for displaying His own perfections:

Till a mind of this kind appeared, capable of surveying the scene of its existence, of understanding the wisdom and beauty displayed in its [creation’s] formations, and of utilizing for rational purposes the vast resources laid up in its treasures, the very existence of such a world as this remained an inexplicable riddle: an adequate final cause ... was not to be found in it.<sup>32</sup>

Orr goes on to say, ‘There is a delight which creative wisdom has in its own productions, which is an end in itself. God saw the works that he had made, and behold they were good; though not until man appeared on the scene were they declared “very good” [Gen. 1:31].’<sup>33</sup>

iii. The above paragraph must be joined to another thought for proof and development—God created the world for His own glory. All of God’s works are for this purpose. In the achievement of this goal all other goals are attained. That to achieve His own glory was God’s goal in creation is the plain truth of Scripture and is demonstrable by reason as well.

In the first place, when God purposed to create He did so before any creature existed. It must be, therefore, that the reason lay in God Himself, not in the non-existing creature. The absolute cannot be subordinate to the finite.

Secondly, God is a more worthy being than the sum of all creation. His own excellence on display is therefore more worthy than the excellence or happiness of all or some of creation. Thirdly, even among ourselves as people, the excellency of our makings and doings—be it building a better mousetrap or running a faster mile—is rightly attributed to the maker and doer. The same is surely true of God, the master Maker and Doer, and His creation.

Finally, the securing of the Creator’s glory as the ‘chief end’ not only of mankind but of all creatures, secures also their own highest good, happiness and excellence. A. H. Strong has written:

His own glory is an end which comprehends and secures, as a subordinate end, every interest of the universe. The interests of the universe are bound up in the interests of God. There is no holiness or happiness for creatures except as God is absolute sovereign, and is recognized as such. It is therefore not selfishness, but benevolence, for God to make His own glory the supreme object of creation. Glory is not vain-glory, and in expressing this ideal, that is, in expressing Himself, in His creation, he communicates to His creatures the utmost possible good.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> James Orr, *The Christian View of God and the World* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1947), p. 135.

<sup>33</sup> *ibid.*, p. 135.

<sup>34</sup> A. H. Strong, *op. cit.*, p. 400.

A survey of selected Scripture passages shows that the chief end of God, not only in creation but also in His eternal decrees and government of the world, is His glory. As regards God's ends in creation, see Colossians 1:16, Revelation 4:11 and Romans 11:36. Compare Isaiah 43:7, Isaiah 60:21 and 61:3. As regards God's end in decrees (predestination) see Ephesians 1:5, 6, 12 and as to God's ends in providence (government) and gracious arrangements for His creatures, see Romans 9:17, 22, 23 and Ephesians 3:10.

It is the duty of mankind and angels to adopt God's goal as their own: 'So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God' (1 Cor. 10:31; cf. 1 Peter 4:11).

## VIII. Mediate or Immediate Creation and Science

This leads to a current debate. Some very serious Christians think that when expressions like these concerning divine goals and actions are used, *immediate* application of divine power is always designated; secondary (as opposed to primary), mediate causes are thought to be eliminated. So the creation of the world had to be a succession of instantaneous divine 'fiats'—literal spoken commands which without passage of time, and without employment of means of any sort, material or otherwise, effected creation. There are several recent books employing considerable display of scholarship to prove that in the texts which speak of creation by God's word (mouth, breath, command), the Bible specifically means immediate (without means), instantaneous creation and nothing else. All this must have happened not very long ago, perhaps 10,000 or 15,000 years.

It should be pointed out, however, that such has not been the view of some first rank conservative scholars from early to recent times. Many of them have thought the opposite (use of means and extended time), if not specifically indicated, is at least allowed.

Insistence that the six days of creation in Genesis 1 must be interpreted as six literal, twenty-four-hour days as we know days and nights, evenings and mornings, has not by any means been characteristic of all the great teachers or of the church of the past. It seems rather to be the child of modern controversy. Says one respected and saintly modern writer:

Respecting the length of the six creative days, speaking generally, for there was some difference of views, the patristic [church Fathers] and mediaeval exegesis makes them to be long periods of time, not days of twenty-four hours. The latter interpretation has prevailed *only in the modern church* [emphasis added]. Augustine teaches that the length of the six days is not to be determined by the length of our week-days. Our seven days, he says, resemble the seven days of the account in Genesis, in being in a series, and in having the vicissitudes of morning and evening.... He calls attention to the fact that the 'six or seven days may be, and are called six days, God-divided days,' in distinction from 'sun-divided days.' Anselm remarks that there was a difference of opinion in his time.<sup>35</sup>

Shedd adds that there is merit in the suggestion that 'the seven days of the human week are copies of the Divine week. Thus "sun-divided days" are images of "God-divided days".'<sup>36</sup>

Let me try to convince the reluctant reader that God's word of creation does not necessarily mean immediate, instantaneous creation. One of the most important texts is 2 Timothy 3:16

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<sup>35</sup> W. G. T. Shedd, *Dogmatic Theology I* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1969), p. 475, 476.

<sup>36</sup> *ibid.*, p. 477.

which says all Scripture is *theopneustos*, literally, God-breathed. Conservative scholars everywhere accept the evidence adduced and summarized by B. B. Warfield, that the breath of God and similar expressions (command, mouth) refer simply to His creative acts. Warfield cites all the passages I have cited above and more. He also affirms that either mediate or immediate creation may be meant.<sup>37</sup>

In the case of Holy Scripture we know God took about 1,500 years and must therefore have used both time and human means in addition to writing materials. At least several dozen human authors produced the sixty-six books. God's breath, command, word, mouth and similar in such contexts indicate *God's creative power in action, by whatever means effected and taking as long a time as needed*. The Bible really says little specifically about the means employed. On the other hand, neither does the so-called geological or astronomical record. Theories about the means and time employed will always remain just that—theories. We do not have sufficient revelation as to the means of creation and the time of it to construct a dogma about the week. It was a God-divided week, whether a sun-divided week or not is not ours to say until God says so.<sup>38</sup>

It is presently the style to demonstrate this or that alleged truth by 'scientific' evidence. A system of thought called 'Creation Science' has been proposed. So efforts to prove how and when creation took place take the form of books, articles and debates on a scientific outlook on creation. But it has been futile as far as *proof* of how and when God did what He did. Thomas Aquinas' comment is apropos:

The will of God cannot be investigated ... But the divine will can be manifested by revelation, on which faith rests. Hence that the world began to be is an object of faith, not of demonstration or of science. And it is useful to consider this, lest anyone, presuming to demonstrate what is of faith, should bring forth reasons that are not cogent, so as to give occasion to unbelievers to laugh, thinking that on such grounds we believe things that are of faith.<sup>39</sup>

## Questions About Creation

There are several questions which almost must occur to those who become acquainted with the biblical view of creation. One is a philosophical question, the others a problem of Bible interpretation.

1. How can there be evil in a world which the holy God has made? The presence of sin in the world is never explained in the Bible. The serpent is there at a very early stage. We know how the human race fell into sin. It came through a wrong exercise of God-given freedom by our common father, Adam. '[S]in came into the world through one man.... For as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners' (Rom. 5:12, 19). Sin therefore is present and prevalent in the race through an original sinner's sin. It is therefore here by God's permission. God placed the man in the situation of trial by moral decision. But Genesis does not say a thing

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<sup>37</sup> B. B. Warfield, *The Inspiration and Authority of the Bible* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian & Reformed Publ., 1958), pp. 243–296.

<sup>38</sup> See the section, 'Questions About Creation', below.

<sup>39</sup> *Summa Theologica*, 46.2.1.

as to the ultimate source of sin, for though the serpent—or Satan the tempter (Rev. 12:9)—was there, he is left unexplained throughout the Bible. God himself only is uncreated. Satan exists. Therefore Satan is a created being. God's Creation is good, therefore Satan was not originally evil. Moral evil originates in a wrong exercise of freedom on the part of a moral being. So Satan is a fallen moral being. A comparison of Romans 8:20–22 with Genesis 3:16–19 shows that the physical evils of our world are related to the entrance of moral evil and both will be eradicated at the consummation. The present imperfect state is temporary.

2. How should certain details of the Genesis account be interpreted? Large volumes have been written in response to some of these questions. Some are piously speculative questions; some have to do with the literary form or forms of the several sections: Genesis 1:1, 2:4a; Genesis 2:4b–25; Genesis 3. Others, related in part to the above, are concerned with interpretation of specific words, phrases, sentences and sections. These are some of these questions: Are the days of creation literal twenty-four-hour, earthly days? And if so, why this or that (e.g. why is vegetation, which requires sunlight, a day ahead of sun and sunlight)?

3. Is there unbroken continuity in the narrative, or is the creation of heaven and earth (Gen. 1:1) a separate event from the rest of chapter 1? An unmentioned judgment has been postulated as falling between verses 1 and 2. The rest of the chapter has then been interpreted as orderly restoration of a primeval condition.

4. Might the days be days wherein God revealed the creation to Moses according to topics: light and darkness, day and night, day one, and so on, to animals and mankind, day six?

5. Might the days be 'geological ages' or some other taxonomic arrangement?

6. Might the days be a 'revelatory device', something like a series of six slide-frames whereby God makes known *what* He has done and showing by arrangement mankind's importance as last, lord of earth under God and crown of God's creation?

7. How much is literal and how much figurative? Is it historical with symbolical elements? Is it symbolical with historical elements?

These are only a few of the questions. Each generation of readers and interpreters brings its own 'science' and philosophy to the questions and phrases them differently. Yet the doctrine of the Genesis account of creation remains essentially the same throughout Christian history. These questions and many more like them are beyond the scope of this chapter. Suggested answers will be found in later sections of this volume. Several old and new books of theology, as well as numerous controversial monographs, essays and journal articles, argue for this or that interpretation. Meanwhile we must keep right on employing the plain scriptural data for theology. We cannot wait for the inscrutable to be scrutinized, for the imponderable to be pondered. Revelation is a miracle and so is creation. Miracles cannot be fully explained. The revelation regarding creation in the Bible is addressed to our faith by way of our minds, but it is not addressed to curiosity.

Many an earnest *tour de force* is presently being mounted to win our minds to 'early earth', 'young earth', 'creation science' and other causes by people who wish to do good. Meanwhile, important truths of revelation regarding creation are not being taught our youth in church and school, truths such as that God is Creator of all except God, Himself. All other existences began not in Him but were created *ad extra* by Him. God created in His *wisdom*, by His *power*, by His *will*, by His *word*. The triune God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, was active in bringing the world to existence. God created the world for Himself, to manifest His perfections for His own glory. These are some of the chief matters Scripture is concerned about. They are deeply religious truths and must be disseminated. These are the real alternatives to evolutionism, to scientism,

pantheism, and indeed to humanism and secularism. These truths represent the proper arena of discussion if we are to win people's minds to God, revealed truth and morality.

Readers are well advised to commit themselves without reserve only to the clear theological truths of Scripture revelation, likewise to the truthfulness of the chapters of Genesis and other scriptural passages on creation. Beyond that they will be wise to listen to the voices of moderation. Those who insist that we simply must agree with them or else be somewhat sub-Christian or of questionable loyalty to biblical revelation are shouting too loudly to be obeyed. It will be wise to commit ourselves irrevocably to none of the theories. Creation was supernaturally brought to pass. As such it is a divine mystery. We can never penetrate it, though we may trust all that God has said about it.<sup>401</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Since writing the above I have carefully read and added to a long shelf of my reading on this subject a very insightful book by Harry L. Poe, an evangelical theologian, and Jimmy H. Davis, an evangelical chemistry professor, *Science and Faith: An Evangelical Dialogue* (Nashville, TN: Broadman and Holman Publishers, 2000). Apparently quite independent of anything I have said or written about creation, the creative week and present processes of nature, they have reached conclusions similar to mine and have carried them further. Their relating the same to quantum theories, chaos theory, etc. is instructive. I disagree with their somewhat hesitant theory of continuous creation.

<sup>1</sup> Robert Duncan Culver, *Systematic Theology: Biblical and Historical* (Ross-shire, UK: Mentor, 2005), 122-63.

## God's Work of Preservation and Providence

*'My Father is working until now, and I am working' (John 5:17)*

### How God keeps the World Operating and Governs it

Ours must surely be one of the most anxious generations in the entire history of Western civilization. The community in the rural south-east corner of Minnesota where I live exposes to the eye few signs of severe poverty. There are sufficient hospital rooms at the county seat for two counties; Mayo Clinic is an hour away. Everything is here to make its well-fed citizens happy, including some of the most graceful hills, interesting river bluffs, valleys, forests and farms one would ever care to see. Yet, the mood in the places where people meet—small cafes, bars, bank vestibules and church foyers, even farm auctions and sale barns—though it ranges from grief to joyous laughter, seems to be characteristically a sigh.

The national anxieties have been institutionalized and professionalized in many medical and quasi-medical centers. There are several related professions which minister to our fractured psyches. Anxiety is the engine for human behavior in the most accepted post World War II philosophy, existentialism. Have you heard of 'metaphysical *angst*', 'the concept of dread', 'the threat of nothingness'? A segment of our youth of decades past must have heard about all this, judging from their sad, pouting faces, though the fad passed away before the sad but spectacular decease of Elvis Presley and several other of their well-paid, popular models.

Contrast with this the ideal of Christian joy in the book of Philippians, 'Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice' (Phil. 4:4); 'The Lord is at hand; do not be anxious about anything' (Phil. 4:5, 6). Jesus' own prevailing good humour sets the pace expressed in His famous advice against anxiety (Matt. 6:25–34), concluding, 'Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble' (Matt. 6:34).

The support for this cheerful optimism is the biblical world-and-life view. Specifically, we understand firstly, that God made the world 'good ... very good', (Gen. 1:10, 31) 'He has made everything beautiful in its time' (Eccles. 3:11) (*Creation*); secondly, that this was according to a plan which he formed in eternity (*Decrees*, or *Predestination*) so that no emergencies would ever arise requiring patchwork maintenance; thirdly, that when He finished creating the world He immediately set about maintaining it in good order (*Preservation*); and fourthly, that He is governing it in such a way as to accomplish His good goals (*Providence*). These four aspects of God's permanent relation to the world are clearly taught in the Bible. They have been almost unconsciously absorbed by people exposed to the whole Bible over any lengthy period of time. Together, these few profound truths are the prescription for human happiness (joy) in spite of pain, illness, disappointment, decrepitude, and, ultimately, death. We have already considered the first two, now let us attend to the third.

### The Doctrine of Preservation

As we have seen (under creation above, chapters 16, 17), God ceased from creating the natural order and mankind and has not resumed that kind of creative work (Gen. 2:2). That sabbath of rest still endures, but God is still working. Not so evident in English as in Hebrew, a servant is one who works (*obhedh*); so the incarnate Second Person of the Trinity, 'the Servant of the

LORD’, said of the Father and of His incarnate self: ‘My Father is working until now, and I am working’ (John 5:17). This was the high point of an argument about working on the weekly Sabbath. Jesus is saying in effect that not every kind of work is unlawful on Sabbath; God has a permanent sabbath from creating the world but He is nevertheless working still at other projects.

That project of working still, at least as regards the created universe, is maintenance, or preservation. It is important that theology recognize this logically and scripturally necessary work and to distinguish it from both creation and providence. The distinction is clearly made in Ezra’s ascription of praise to God, showing how Ezra, the paramount theologian of late biblical Judaism, interpreted the Mosaic revelation, and Ezra said: ‘You are the LORD, you alone. You have made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth and all that is on it, the seas and all that is in them [what God did in the distant past]; and you preserve all of them’ (what God is doing now) (Neh. 9:6). One of David’s temple hymns proclaims, ‘O LORD, You preserve [save ESV] man and beast’ (Ps. 36:6 NKJV)—*preserve* renders the Hebrew root *yasha*, hence *Jeshua* ‘or Jesus). Job, a Gentile saint, addressed God as ‘thou preserver [*notser*, one who guards or looks after another] of men’ (Job 7:20 KJV).

So plainly it is fully scriptural to say that both with regard to the whole and to its individual atoms, the Creator is, in the present, actively, immediately, and continually preserving and maintaining creation, and that this is to be distinguished from a forever finished work of creating this particular heaven and earth. Providence is not so distinct from preservation, for it also is a continuing work of the triune God. Some theologians speak of sustaining providence (preservation) and governing providence. There appears to be no serious error in thinking this way, but to make preservation a species of creation is false and misleading, as we shall note in the case of Jonathan Edwards, theologian, and René Descartes, philosopher.

As in most aspects of divine activity each person of the triune God participates, yet as with creation (John 1:2) preservation is the peculiar work of the Son as well. There are two plain statements, both relating the work of preservation to the Son: ‘And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together’ (Col. 1:17); ‘He is the radiance of the glory of God ... and he upholds the universe by the word of his power’ (Heb. 1:3). Paul told a pagan audience that the God ‘unknown’ but worshipped in ignorance by them, not only gave all their life and breath to every nation of earth but is also the one in whom ‘we [all mankind] live and move and have our being’ (Acts 17:23, 28).

Preservation, therefore, implies the immanent presence of God in the remotest star as well as the nearest object, in the functions of mass attraction as well as the movement of my pen and in the largest galaxy as well as in the smallest subatomic particle. Nothing would operate except by what theologians call divine *concurrence* in all operations of matter and mind—in every movement as well as all properties, powers and processes. Though we as personal beings have permanent existence and God’s immediate power is not a force of which we are immediately aware, it is nevertheless true that apart from divine concurrence we would cease to exist—and that will be forever true whether in hell or heaven. In direct support of such a statement, in addition to passages already cited, Job said rightly that in the ‘hand of the LORD ... is the life of every living thing and the breath of all mankind’ (Job 12:9, 10). Daniel reminded the cowering Belshazzar, ‘God’ is the One ‘in whose hand is your breath’ (Dan. 5:23)—as many other passages state or imply. Psalm 104 ought to be read to show how this upholding maintenance (concurrence) by renewal extends to all the natural order—the heavens, weather, soil, plants and mankind—in politically correct language, to the *environment*.

Hollywood has not yet found a way to produce the illusion of a realistic decapitation. If they do the viewer will see a gush of blood spouting several feet. The heart never rests except between beats and all the blood in the body passes through it hundreds of times every day, pumping plus or minus 2,500 pounds every hour. It beats about seventy-two times a minute. Yet I am scarcely aware of this amazing organ except after vigorous physical exertion, illness or when I lie awake with my ear on a pillow. Yet it has been serving me without interruption for three-quarters of a century with scarcely a flutter. It will continue to do so with God's concurring operation, called *preservation* by well-taught believers and by good theologians. Whether one knows a name for this concurrence or not it is understood by every Bible reader who has absorbed the sense of the whole Bible. Let us continue with more detail.

### **The Integrity of Creation Preserved by God**

The doctrine of preservation teaches that God maintains the integrity of things, both simple (the periodic table of elements, the key of 'C') and complex (H<sub>2</sub>O, the solar system, laws of musical harmony). One author speaks of the 'existence of the whole created universe' and its 'laws, properties, powers and processes'. Another asserts that preservation is that continued exercise of divine energy whereby the Creator upholds all his creatures in being, and in the possession of all those inherent properties and qualities with which he endowed them at their creation. That is, both the being, the attributes of every species, and the form and faculties of every individual are constantly preserved in being by God.

It is easy to see how science, and industry dependent on the discoveries science makes, could develop in a civilization committed to this sort of world-view. And it is precisely in such a place, Christian Europe, where it did marvellously emerge in the period of the Renaissance and the Reformation.

### **Amazing Detail**

The scriptural detail is truly amazing. Let us start with the sky above: 'Lift up your eyes on high and see: who created [past tense] these? He who brings out [present tense] their host by number ... by the greatness of his might, and because he is strong in power not one is missing' (Isa. 40:26). Job and his friends understood, 'In his [God's] hand is the life of every living thing' (Job 12:10).

Psalm 104 starts off with a present-tense, pictorial representation of God as presiding over the weather (vv. 1–4). Then after a past tense 'frame' about the creation (its terms suggest geological history, vv. 8–9), the Psalm continues with a presentation of God's gracious care for all His earthly creatures. He provides water for all beasts (vv. 10–13), then provides for the growth of animals and plants (wind, oil, bread and trees for birds). He causes mountains and crags to rise up for exotics like wild goats and badgers (vv. 14–18). The heavenly bodies mark the seasons: night is for wild beasts to stalk prey; day for their sleep and for mankind's work (vv. 19–23). Birth and death are within God's power as well as the sequence of day and night and of the seasons.

Full many a gem of purest ray serene  
The dark unfathomed caves of ocean bear;  
Full many a flower is born to blush unseen  
And waste its sweetness on the desert air.

These lines from Gray's *Elegy* are not strictly true, however sadly evident they seem, because God has a place for all good things and employs them to support that plan wherever and whenever they are. Furthermore, even if no human being sees a pearl hidden in an oceanic crevice and most wild flowers grow where no human eye observes, the heavenly Father does see and for His pleasure 'they are and were created'.

### **A Continuous Work**

The divine work of preservation is never represented in Scripture as simply the running down of a clock-like cosmos, wound up at creation and now unwinding. Some theological writers assert that it is unreasonable to suppose that God could or would or should be personally concerned with the innumerable details of millions of human lives, to say nothing of all existing things. It is, however, precisely God's present sustaining of us, His people, which imparts much of the 'religious' value to the Christian idea of God. 'I can do all things through him who strengthens me' (Phil. 4:13); 'The eternal God is your dwelling place, and underneath are the everlasting arms' (Deut. 33:27).

Jesus taught His disciples to rely on this truth. '[D]o not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on.... Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?' (Matt. 6:25, 26) and 'Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? And not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father.... Fear not, therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows' (Matt. 10:29, 31). Comforting, quotable, reliable, psychic medicine such as these passages is not available in any religion wherein God is Creator only. He must act concurrently with us as well.

We know that God sustains evil people in their ways too—not because they are evil, but because they are His creatures. 'God concurs with the evil acts of his creatures only as they are natural acts, not as they are evil.' The sense of this statement by A. H. Strong, appears frequently in orthodox theologies of every denominational persuasion.<sup>1</sup>

### **A Gracious Work**

The gracious work of God in preservation may be regarded as an aspect of His faithfulness, love and mercy for all, for the human race in particular. The sun, moon and stars go through their motions at the right times. Spring ever returns after winter. 'While the earth remains' (Gen. 8:22) lovers marry, families are born, science and industry operate, indeed life goes on, because God is faithful to maintain His creation. David summed it up: 'Your steadfast love, O LORD, extends to the heavens, your faithfulness to the clouds. Your righteousness is like the mountains of God; your judgments are like the great deep; man and beast you save, O LORD. How precious is your steadfast love, O God! The children of mankind take refuge in the shadow of your wings' (Ps. 36:5–7).

## **The Doctrine of Providence**

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<sup>1</sup> A. H. Strong, *Systematic Theology* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 1907), p. 418.

Providence is the theological term for the continuous going forth of God's power whereby He causes all features of the created universe to fulfil the design for which He created them.

*Creation* explains how there happens to be a world at all; *preservation* explains why it still exists in good order; and *providence* explains how it will develop toward God's eternally planned goal. It is the consummation in time of the plan of God made in eternity.

'General' and 'special' providence are terms without a fixed meaning used by theologians. For some, e.g. Louis Berkhof, the former denotes 'God's control of the universe as a whole' and the latter 'his care for each part of it in relation to the whole'.<sup>2</sup> Calvin reserves 'providence' as a term for the 'especial care over each of his works'. 'Yet', says he, 'I do not wholly repudiate what is said concerning universal providence', though he regards it as 'some kind of blind and ambiguous notion'.<sup>3</sup>

There are also theologians who restrict 'special' or 'particular' providence to 'such particular exhibitions of [God's] wisdom and power in emergencies ... to awaken conviction of his interest in and guardianship over his creatures'.<sup>4</sup> These instances are usually restricted to miracles, fulfillment of prophecy, special acts of God in redemption and answers to prayer.

As applied to any specific event, the Bible seems to suggest that providence originates with God's *foreknowledge*. In the Bible, foreknowledge is not mere information in the sense of God's mind knowing what He prefers to do. Foreknowledge is God's act of informing His will. Although there is no temporal 'process' in God's mind, we may think of a logical order in God's mind and action. So in this manner of speaking we may think of God in the 'process' of *planning* (decreeing) to do what He knows His will is; then through *creation*, next *preservation* and finally *providence*, events come to pass.

## Examples of Providence

Let a biblical, historical incident furnish an example of providence (2 Sam. 15–18). We know from many texts that God planned to rule Israel through David for a while and, more importantly, to bring Christ into the world through David. There was a plot by a rebellious son, Absalom, to destroy David. Ahithophel and Hushai were King David's counsellors. When David fled Jerusalem both advisors stayed behind: Ahithophel voluntarily, for he joined Absalom's rebellion; Hushai at David's request. Not long afterward Ahithophel gave Absalom *good* advice, if Absalom was to destroy his father; while at about the same time Hushai gave him *bad* advice, knowing it was bad and hoping thereby to destroy Absalom and to save David. Absalom followed the bad advice of Hushai, lost the battle, lost his kingdom, lost his life, while Ahithophel went to his home city, put his business affairs in order and hanged himself.

Now God was not far away in heaven simply letting history unwind in the grip of immutable laws of men and things. No person's freedom was limited by God. Many individuals—Joab, Ahithophel, Hushai, the elders and the men of Absalom's partisans—each did what he voluntarily decided to do. Yet, says the Scripture, 'And Absalom and all the men of Israel said, "The counsel of Hushai the Archite is better than the counsel of Ahithophel."' For the LORD had

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<sup>2</sup> Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 2nd rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1941), p. 168.

<sup>3</sup> John Calvin, *Institutes I*, 16.4.

<sup>4</sup> S. H. Platt, 'Providence' in *McClintock and Strong Cyclopedia VIII*, pp. 710, 711.

ordained to defeat the good counsel of Ahithophel, so that the LORD might bring harm [a disastrous defeat] upon Absalom' (2 Sam. 17:14). If biblical narrative is authority for doctrine, and it is, this narrative teaches a strong doctrine of particular providence. I do not think any Christian is at liberty to disbelieve it.

The Bible itself employs the story of Joseph and his brothers as an illustrative example of divine providence. The force is of such magnitude to warrant including all the texts. I assume the reader knows the story (Gen. 37–45). At the denouement when Joseph, last seen by his family as a boy, and now middle-aged, is unveiled to their eyes as their betrayed brother Joseph, he reassured them with these words:

And now do not be distressed or angry with yourselves because you sold me here, for God sent me before you to preserve life [in Egypt as well as in Jacob's family].... God sent me before you to preserve for you a remnant on earth, and to keep alive for you many survivors. So it was not you who sent me here, but God (Gen. 45:5, 7, 8).

Much later Joseph reassured the brothers, when after their father's death they feared Joseph might take vengeance on them, with this affirmation of providence:

Joseph said to them, 'Do not fear, for am I in the place of God? As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today' (Gen. 50:19, 20).

The thought of Psalm 105 is wholly occupied with divine preservation and providence and takes up the story of Joseph and his brothers as an example of the same (Ps. 105:16–23). In the recital, amongst other things, God 'summoned a famine' and 'he sent a man ahead of them, Joseph, who was sold as a slave ... until what he had said came to pass ... to bind his princes at his pleasure'.

Finally, Stephen in his address to the mob who killed him recited the same story as part of his narrative of God's providential and preserving care of the Hebrew people from Abraham onward (Acts 7:9–16).

### **Regular Methods and Means of Providence**

The Bible informs us of at least three ways through which God regularly executes His work of providential control.

(1) The most obvious is through supernatural miracles and 'special' uses of natural forces. God saved Jerusalem during Hezekiah's reign through a supernatural plague (Isa. 37:36–38); He got the Israelites out of Egypt through a succession of eleven wonders (ten plagues and the parting of the Red Sea); He secured their entrance into Canaan by stopping the waters of Jordan, then by shaking down the walls of Jericho and causing the sun to 'stand still' for several hours. That some of these wonders were accomplished by uses of natural forces is certain—an east wind, for example, helped at the Red Sea (Exod. 14:21). Yet each was specially God's act in an extraordinary way.

It is hard to find absolute, unlimited human free will in these cases. On closer look it cannot be denied that some people's wills were indeed manipulated by circumstances controlled by God. The Egyptians were made willing to give abundance of goods, silver, precious stones and costly textiles by the ten divinely inflicted plagues. We cannot imagine love or generous feelings promoting such generosity for a despised lower class. Pharaoh and his army, for another

example, were deliberately baited to follow the Israelites, yet as soon as they got into the trap of the seabed, God sent the waters back to destroy them.

These stories of divine providence in action are not shaded by the writers of Scripture to let God off from being in charge even of the uncoerced actions of free people. Mankind's power of voluntary choice is unimpeded by God in each case. Yet on closer examination it is also plain enough that God directed (if 'manipulated' be too strong a term for the reader's taste) people's choices by His control of the circumstances. Paul dealt with objectors who complained, 'Who can resist his will?' by a sort of 'so what' response: 'But who are you, O man, to answer back to God? Will what is moulded say to its moulder, "Why have you made me like this?"' If anyone can think of a better response to objections to a God who is in charge, let us hear it!

The miracles of the virgin birth of Jesus and His resurrection, like His death in our place, were planned in eternity and executed in time. If, however, Augustus had not decreed his census (Luke 2:1–5) and if Herod had not sought the young child's life, Jesus would never have fulfilled the prophecies involving both Bethlehem and Egypt (Matt. 2:19–23). We may be sure that neither Augustus nor Herod was coerced in any way to do what he did. Herod was no poor king—certainly no victim or object of sympathy. He was a monster who did exactly what his inclination, already bond-slave to sin, inclined his will to decide. Similarly, if Bethlehem (Mic. 5:2) was to be the scene of the Savior's birth, then God sent Naomi and Ruth back home to Bethlehem, and Jesse did business there. Fulfillment of prophecy requires divine governance in detail of everything that exists.

It is important to observe that in no case did God coerce anyone's will. Providence operated effectively and people acted without coercion. I am not quite sure we should say they acted 'freely' for they were 'slaves' to sin, as Jesus affirmed (John 8:34). The usual disjunction between the 'free will' of mankind and the sovereignty of God is incorrect. Mankind does have the unimpeded power of voluntary choice and we are not coerced by God. But we are slaves to sin and so not entirely free. Jesus, as cited above, says everyone who sins (and there are no exceptions) is a slave of sin. The disjunction is between the free will of mankind and the sovereignty of God only if by free will one understands *uncoerced* will. The power to choose is there, but not apart from predisposition to choose in a certain way. It helps in thinking about this problem to propose that every man or woman is a self-determined free agent (as all parties do agree) whose choices (will) are determined by what the person already is—a natural-born sinner.

Calvin, who canvassed the dimensions of the problem, liked to compare a healthy free will to a person with good legs but the will of a sinner to a person with two complete legs, both broken. The sinner has the right equipment for walking but it is out of order.<sup>5</sup>

(2) A second area of providence is the regular processes of nature. Psalm 148:8 speaks of fire and hail, snow, vapor, and stormy winds fulfilling God's word. Again people find little to offend them in this—unless they think deeply. It is easy to say that God sent a snow flurry to Waterloo in Belgium, two centuries ago, to defeat Napoleon, or to say that God kept the English Channel calm for several days to allow the defeated British army at the Dunkirk beachhead to escape Hitler's forces in the early days of World War II. Yet, few approve the suggestion that a Chicago fire may have been caused by God, especially when the cow of a careless Irish housewife can be blamed. What about the San Francisco earthquake, and floods and quakes in China? A few years ago the television news showed a Turkish woman renouncing Allah because her grandchild had been killed in a terrible earthquake a few hours before. People find it easier to say Hitler

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<sup>5</sup> Calvin, *Institutes II*, chapters. 2–5.

unnecessarily destroyed the heart of Britain's cities than that God rained bombs on them as He did fire on Sodom. Is it that Sodom deserved judgment while London did not? Or is it that the fires that rained down on Sodom may have been natural and volcanic while the bombs which fell on London were manufactured in Munich or Stuttgart? Let us defer answering to the next few paragraphs.

(3) A third area of providence is the acts of moral beings, both angels and people, both good and bad. In the course of recent chapters we have cited certain examples of how God accomplishes His will through the acts of 'free' beings. Joseph and his coming to Egypt through the evil deeds of his brothers has been cited, as also the rejection of Jesus by the leaders of the Jews, which rejection brought Jesus to Calvary (Acts 2:23). Judas' treachery is another example often cited—he fulfilled a prophecy. Paul cites the rejection of Jesus by the nation of Israel in a similar way (Rom. 11). Shortly we shall try to provide further suggestions to alleviate any distress from our natural sense of justice or from our intuitions of 'freedom'.

### **God's Providence is All-inclusive**

The Bible is clear that nothing at all in this entire universe is outside the Creator's providential control. The evidence is varied. The teaching is in all parts of the Bible and it is overwhelming. The article on providence in the *McClintock and Strong Cyclopedia*, after an extensive citation of passages, adds, 'The teaching of the more than five hundred passages might be confirmed, were it necessary, by nearly as many thousands more, showing with what emphasis the Scriptures proclaim the doctrine of divine providence.'<sup>6</sup> So comprehensive is this that it is said, 'his kingdom rules over all' (Ps. 103:19); He 'does according to his will among the host of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth' (Dan. 4:35); and He 'works all things according to the counsel of his will' (Eph. 1:11).

It will be impressive to examine a few of the more comprehensive categories of things wherein divine providence works. We will cite only a few passages, though in most cases there are dozens of other passages which might also be cited. God's providence rules over the following.

(1) *The physical world.* 'Whatever the LORD pleases, he does, in heaven and on earth, in the seas and all deeps. He it is who makes the clouds rise at the end of the earth, who makes lightnings for the rain and brings forth the wind from his storehouses' (Ps. 135:6, 7).<sup>7</sup>

(2) *Plant life.* 'The trees of the LORD are watered abundantly, the cedars of Lebanon that he planted' (Ps. 104:16). Psalm 104:21, 28 says that the lions are fed by God, Matthew 6:26 that He feeds the birds, and Jesus said of the sparrows, 'not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father' (Matt. 10:29). God 'appointed' the great fish which featured in Jonah's experiences (Jonah 1:17), as also the worm (Jonah 4:7).

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*McClintock and Strong Cyclopedia of Biblical, Theological and Ecclesiastical Literature*, prepared by John McClintock and James Strong, 12 volumes

<sup>6</sup> *McClintock & Strong Cyclopedia*, viii, p. 708.

<sup>7</sup> See also Job 37:5, 10; Matt. 5:45; Matt. 6:30.

(3) *People's social position.* God rules over people's birth, and place in life. David (Ps. 139:16), Jeremiah (Jer. 1:5) and Paul (Gal. 1:15, 16) were aware of this. There were many fine families in Israel but the one to provide the new king was prepared by God (1 Sam. 16:1).

(4) *People's successes and failures* are brought to pass by God, 'For not from the east or from the west and not from the wilderness comes lifting up, but it is God who executes judgment, putting down one and lifting up another' (Ps. 75:6, 7). Furthermore, 'he has brought down the mighty from their thrones and exalted those of humble estate' (Luke 1:52).

(5) *The time and circumstances of a person's death* are under God's government. Such was the case with Moses (Deut. 32:48–50), as well as all the adult Israelites who came out of Egypt (Num. 14:29). But the same was true of Peter (John 21:18, 19). And Job was not mistaken when he said, 'In his hand is the life of every living thing and the breath of all mankind' (Job 12:10; cf. Ps. 104:29).

(6) *Guidance and spiritual needs.* God supplies the material needs of His people (Matt. 5:45; 6:8, 11, 26; Phil. 4:19) and their spiritual guidance. Paul knew when 'Satan hindered us' (1 Thess. 2:18) and when he was 'forbidden by the Holy Spirit' (Acts 16:6). While we do not have quite the same insights as a prophet or an apostle, we have assurance of His superintendence over our lives.

(7) *His people.* God's care for His people is so complete that seeming calamities are blessings in disguise (Phil. 1:12–14; cf. Eph. 3:1).

(8) *Apparent calamities.* These may even be the very means of God's grace to others (Phil. 1:12–14; Philem. 15).

(9) *Temptations, trials, persecutions.* Deliverance from temptations, trials, persecutions have all been provided for (1 Cor. 10:13; cf. Dan. 3:17, 18). The Christian outlook thus permits me to see national events of great moment as developing out of seeming trivial, chance events—a sleepless night (Esther 6:1) or a sad countenance (Neh. 2:1, 2). These seeming trivialities are often more decisive than the decisions of judicial and legislative assemblies or executive decisions of national leaders.

There is no doctrine about God more resoundingly proclaimed throughout the Bible than that of providence. In addition to the selections already cited here, there are dozens of texts which assert God's direct control over nature, birth, disease, death, afflictions, adversity, prosperity, rewards, punishments, deliverances, disasters, bad laws and good ones. 'The teaching of more than five hundred passages [cited in the article] might be confirmed, were it necessary, by as many thousands more, showing with what emphasis the Scriptures proclaim the doctrine of divine Providence.'<sup>8</sup>

## **Providence and Chance**

Does God's providence extend to chance—to what is sometimes called statistical probability? The answer is affirmative, with qualification. 'The lot is cast into the lap, but its every decision is from the LORD' (Prov. 16:33). This bit of proverbial wisdom assumes that God is in charge even of card games and roulette wheels. No Christian can accept chance as an 'undesignated cause' of reality in general. The regularity and uniformity of the sequences of nature are not assigned to chance in the Bible, even though some scientists base their logic for the theory of evolution on

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<sup>8</sup> S. H. Platt, *op. cit.*, viii p. 708.

chance and explain origins that way. The Bible traces the origin and present integrity of every existing thing to God, the Creator.

Chance had a name among the ancient Greeks, *Tyche*. She became an important goddess, in Latin *Fortuna* (hence our words, fortune and fortunate). She was not above control by some other deities—the fates, hence our words fate and fatal. As Douglas Spanner writes:

[Man] cannot help being a religious animal; so what does he do? He makes his own gods, of a sort which won't impose unacceptable demands on him and which he can manipulate. The mysterious and unknown, of course, must enter into their constitution, or they could hardly be gods. So he looks around for suitable material, and Chance [luck] suggests itself as an eligible candidate. It accordingly becomes deified, an active agency in its own right.<sup>9</sup>

Tyche, chance, fortune, fate are all of the 'nothing' variety of whom Paul wrote (1 Cor. 8:1–4). Chance turns out to be a name of what God knows but we do not (Ps. 139:1–5; Isa. 40:27, 28; Jer. 23:24; Luke 12:6, 7). Because God controls even the casting of lots it could be said<sup>10</sup> both that it was by lot and that it was proportioned to the size and need of each tribe and according to divine plan.

There is a class of Scripture passages which assert God's government of what people call chance and accident. Among the 'statutes' accompanying the decalogue, for example, is this: 'Whoever strikes a man so that he dies shall be put to death. But if he did not lie in wait for him, but God let him fall into his hand, then I will appoint for you a place to which he may flee', and similar (Exod. 21:12, 13; cf. Deut. 19:4–5). Elijah predicted, 'In the place where dogs licked up the blood of Naboth shall dogs lick your [Ahab's] own blood' (1 Kings 21:19). Later in the battle of the allied kings (Ahab and Jehoshaphat) against the Syrians, 'a certain man drew his bow at random and struck the king of Israel between the scale armour and the breastplate.... So the king died.' They brought the king's body back to Samaria in his blood-soaked chariot, which they washed by 'the pool of Samaria, and the [prophesied] dogs licked up his blood ... according to the word of the LORD that he had spoken' (1 Kings 22:34–38).

Occasionally the Scriptures call an event 'chance'. These are events *unpurposed by human beings*. Even Jesus spoke of chance in this way (Luke 10:31). The Hebrew word for 'chance' or 'hap' (literally, a meeting) is used of Ruth's undesigned (as far as she was concerned) gleaning in the field of Boaz (Ruth 2:3). It is therefore correct to think of unpurposed human events as occurring by chance. But God has a purpose in every event. Chance is simply our name for certain things, not God's. He merely deigns occasionally to use our term instead of His.

A paragraph from A. H. Strong gives sensible advice:

Not all chances are of equal importance. The casual meeting of a stranger in the street need not bring God's providence before me, although I know that God arranges it. Yet I can conceive of that meeting as leading to religious conversation and to the stranger's conversion. When we are prepared for them, we shall see many opportunities which are

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<sup>9</sup> Douglas Spanner, *Biblical Creation and the Theory of Evolution* (Exeter: Paternoster Press, 1987), pp. 47, 48.

<sup>10</sup> See Josh. 18:10; Ps. 47:4; Acts 1:24–26.

now as unmeaning to us as the gold in the river beds was to the early Indians in California.<sup>11</sup>

Paul calls such occasions ‘Redeeming the time’, i.e. making use of every opportunity (Eph. 5:16 KJV).

Chance therefore is a valid notion in the context of human ignorance of what God’s plans and actions are. It has a place in the science of physics and statistics, and the like. Whether the idea is sound of chance mutation as sufficient mechanism for evolution in the history of organic life is a thought for another occasion.

### **Providence and the Evil Acts of ‘Free’ People**

Everything said earlier about divine concursus in all acts of people and freedom of the will as non-coercion of people’s wills and acts is relevant to evil acts as well as good ones. In addition, it has seemed that when God’s government of His world includes evil acts of His creatures, providence may be explained as of four kinds: (1) *permissive*, (2) *preventive*, (3) *directive* and (4) *limiting*. The terms have been supplied by generations of theologians but the ideas are biblical, even though some Supralapsarian ‘super’ Calvinists are rather scornful of these distinctions. It seems such an analysis of the scriptural evidence is valid, as can be seen.

1. *Permissive providence*. Though God might have restrained them, Paul declared ‘In past generations he allowed all the nations to walk in their own ways’ (Acts 14:16), and regarding the heathen, ‘God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts... God gave them up to dishonourable passions’ (Rom. 1:24, 26). Paul explains that, previous to the propitiation wrought by Christ, ‘in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins’ (Rom. 3:25). God simply withheld impediments to their wickedness.<sup>12</sup>

2. *Preventive providence*. In Abimelech’s dream God explained, ‘It was I who kept you from sinning against me. Therefore I did not let you touch her [Sarah]’ (Gen. 20:6). This is one of many similar passages. Hosea’s immoral wife could not be restrained as far as her husband’s power went, but Israel could be restrained. Therefore God addressed a poignant appeal to the nation, in the midst of which he said, ‘I will hedge up her way with thorns, and I will build a wall against her, so that she cannot find her [wicked] paths’ (Hos. 2:6). Thus God prevents sins which might otherwise be committed. The ‘hedge’ and ‘thorns’ may be age, disease, enlivened conscience, memory of neglected lessons and so on. There are many such scriptural texts and illustrative passages.

3. *Directive (or redirective) providence*. Here we recall the earlier example in the life of Joseph (Gen. 45:7, 8; 50:20, 21). Similarly, the Assyrians served God’s good purpose though they intended evil. Assyria was ‘the rod’ of God’s anger in judging many wicked nations. ‘But he does not so intend, and his heart does not so think’ (Isa. 10:5, 7). ‘[Y]ou meant evil ... but God meant it for good’.

4. *Limiting or determinative providence*. In a sense this is an aspect of common grace whereby God keeps evil movements in society, evil people in our company and evil impulses in individuals from full development. Otherwise life on this planet would cease. There are many

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<sup>11</sup> A. H. Strong, *op. cit.*, p. 428.

<sup>12</sup> See also 2 Chr. 32:21; Deut. 8:2; Ps. 81:12, 13; Hos. 4:17.

passages in which God places severe restraints on intended evils in order to spare His people (Ps. 124:2; Job 1:12; 2:6). He thus shields each saint from overmuch trials (1 Cor. 10:3). Finally, God will put such immediate restraints on ‘that ancient serpent’ (Rev. 20:2, 3). Except for this extension of God’s gracious providence, the race would have come to oblivion long ago.

### **Providence and ‘Hypothetical Contingency’**

What will Mr X do if he discovers Mrs X is lying about where she spends her Saturdays? If Grandfather gets well by Christmas will he really take me skiing? Can God predict and control such things? Actually, God’s knowledge is specifically involved in such cases more directly than His government. There is a passage where just such a hypothetical situation is proposed. Would the citizens of a certain town betray David if they had opportunity? David inquired of God and got the answer, Yes they would. So David acted accordingly and left town (see 1 Sam. 23:1–2). A little reflection will convince one that if we accept the other areas of God’s providence, then hypothetical contingency is as much an area of His government as any other.

The relation of predestination and providence is closely related to the topic of divine omniscience. The ‘openness of God’ sect of theology and ‘process theology’ deny God’s omniscience and with it His complete control (providence, government) of the world He created and sustains.<sup>13</sup>

### **Providence and Prayer**

Does God’s plan and its certain fulfillment leave room for prayer by believers and answer by God? We are told by Jesus (Luke 18:1) that we ought always to pray and by the great Apostle to pray without ceasing (1 Thess. 5:17). Paul, who wrote more about God’s decrees and providence than any other writer of Scripture, not only commanded Christians to pray but showed great confidence that God does answer prayer. Thus, the answer to our question is ‘Yes’. Providence not only leaves room for prayer—it requires prayer.

We do not answer, ‘Yes’, but mean only that prayer has reflex action on the one who prays. This would be merely a religious athletic exercise. Subjective effects from prayer may or may not be good. Daniel was exhausted by his prayers and would not have engaged in prayer except that he expected objective results from God (Dan. 7:28; 8:27). Nor do we mean that prayer is a precondition to spiritual blessing, though that is true in some cases.

The Christian God is the God of all creation. He has known all along about our prayers. ‘Before they call I will answer; while they are yet speaking I will hear’ (Isa. 65:24); ‘Then you shall call, and the LORD will answer; you shall cry, and he will say, “Here I am” ’ (Isa. 58:9). God’s plans included the prayers. God not only recommends prayer, He commands prayer and moves our hearts to seek Him out in prayer. This should be kept in mind in reading how that ‘The eyes of the LORD are towards the righteous and his ears towards their cry’ (Ps. 34:15).

Let us boldly assert that God’s plans are all-important in prayer. Three times in one terrible night Jesus asked God to let the cup of Calvary’s suffering pass from Him, yet added, ‘Nevertheless, not my will, but yours, be done.’ He acknowledged that His death for sinners was planned from eternity and that Scripture predicted it (see John 1:29, 36; Rev. 13:8). Christ was

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<sup>13</sup> See the earlier section on God’s attribute of omniscience, and discussion of ‘middle knowledge’ (Chapter 11, The Greatness of the Godhead).

and is the ‘lamb ... foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times’ (1 Peter 1:19, 20 KJV).

We may be sure that the will of God *ought* to condition all our requests in prayer. We cannot command God, nor is strong faith always necessary; Jesus responded favourably to hesitant faith more than once.

At first glance James 1:6–8 seems to demand very vigorous faith as prerequisite for prevailing prayer—‘the one who doubts ... will [not] receive anything from the Lord’. In view, however, of what Jesus said about faith being ‘like a grain of mustard seed’ (Luke 13:19) and instances of amazing answers to hesitant prayers the wavering of James is not hesitancy between strong faith and weak faith but between unbelief and genuine belief. Tennyson’s lines come to mind: ‘There’s more faith, I tell you, in honest doubt, than in half the [recitals of] creeds.’

If, in prayer, we ‘ask anything according to his will’ (1 John 5:14), we ought to devote ourselves to diligent Bible study and reflection on Scripture, consulting also with Christians wiser than we are. These are part of genuine faith. Let us seek to learn what God wants and wish for the same, even if personal loss, suffering or even death are necessary to bring it to pass. It is not wrong to pray for one’s self. The Psalmists did and so did our LORD. But effective prayer will certainly focus on God and His plans. Our plans will be adjusted to His.

There can be no *physical* demonstration that God answers prayers. There are moral preconditions which forbid a scientifically controlled situation. God’s will is not subject to scientific analysis and His sovereign power cannot be brought to the laboratory. ‘You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.’ Faith-compelling answers even to saintly prayers are rare. God answered Elijah’s prayer for such a demonstration for good reasons, and we know what they were (see 1 Kings 18:36–39). But when the Pharisees said to Jesus, ‘Master, we would see a sign from thee’, Jesus responded, ‘An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and no sign there shall be given to it’ (Matt. 12:38, 39 KJV).

### **Providence and Christian Effort**

Does belief in providence hinder Christian effort? Hardly! Some of the most active evangelists and pastors, philanthropists and missionaries have had great confidence in God’s providence. Again Paul may be cited<sup>14</sup> and he is typical.

Quietism counsels self-abnegation, abandonment of effort, quiet yielding. Extremists of this persuasion advocate the giving up even of will and reason as demanded by the will and wisdom of God. Contrariwise, naturalistic or sceptical advice leaves no place to trust anything but self-help and human effort. But both trust and effort are parts of God’s will for us. We know that God uses means for almost everything He does. We are His means to accomplish many things.

You are the only Bible  
The careless world will read.  
You are the sinner’s Gospel,  
You are the scoffer’s creed.

Prayer without employment of God’s means is an insult to Him. If the house catches on fire, call on God to put it out but also call the fire department and get busy with a water bucket. ‘When

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<sup>14</sup> See Rom. 9:1–3, 15–18; 10:1–3, 12–15.

God gets ready to save the heathen He will save them', all right, but don't be surprised, if you are interested in *when* He does it, that He tells you to help in the project now!

### **Providence and the Will of God**

George Mueller of Bristol, one of the most active Christians who ever lived, had some fine things to say on this subject.

I seek at the beginning to get my heart into such a state that it has no will of its own in regard to a given matter. Nine-tenths of the difficulties are overcome when our hearts are ready to do the Lord's will, whatever it may be. Having done this, I do not leave the result to feeling or simple impression. If I do so, I make myself liable to a great delusion. I seek the will of the Spirit of God through, or in connection with, the Word of God. The Spirit and the Word must be combined. If I look to the Spirit alone, without the Word, I lay myself open to great delusions also. If the Holy Spirit guides us at all, He will do it according to the Scriptures, and never contrary to them. Next I take into account providential circumstances. These often plainly indicate God's will in connection with His Word and His Spirit. I ask God in prayer to reveal to me His will aright. Thus through prayer to God, the study of His Word, and reflection, I come to a deliberate judgment according to the best of my knowledge and ability, and if my mind is thus at peace, I proceed accordingly.

Thus the great founder of Christian orphanages brought prayer, God's will (decrees) and His providence to focus in a marvellously useful life.

### **'Application of the Doctrine of Providence'**

I have borrowed the heading from John Flavel, whose book, *The Mystery of Providence*, first saw the light of day in print in 1687, over 300 years ago. The last forty-one pages of his 221-page book are devoted to practical application of providence to Christian life.

I select a few lines:

If God performs all things for us, then it is our great interest and concern in all things to study to please him upon whom we depend for all things.... Fear nothing but sin. Study nothing so much as how to please God. Do not turn from your own integrity under temptation. Trust God in the way of your duty. These are sure rules to secure yourselves and your interests in all the vicissitudes of life.<sup>15</sup>

The whole book is a treasure very productive of 'righteousness and peace and joy, in the Holy Ghost'.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> John Flavel, *The Mystery of Providence* (London: Banner of Truth Trust, 1963) from last paragraph of chapter 11.

<sup>16</sup> Available from Banner of Truth Trust.

## Appendices on God's Preservation and Providence (Chapter 21)

### Appendix I

#### Creation, Preservation, Providence, and the Rise of Experimental and Applied Science

As long ago as the late third century BC, Aristarchus of Samosa, a Greek astronomer, was convinced by his observations and calculus that in spite of appearances the sun is larger than the earth, hence not likely to be revolving around the earth as it seems, but the other way around. He even anticipated the modern methods of employing trigonometry to calculate the distances of sun and moon from our earth.<sup>1</sup> But the time was not ripe, so in want of indisputable evidence, these ideas gained no general acceptance until the age of discovery (1400s AD) and the development shortly thereafter of an experimental, then fully inductive, study of nature.

Why did it take so long? The wisdom of the Greek philosophers never seriously engaged the material world. They had 'little sympathy for a disinterested science of nature'.<sup>2</sup> Greek 'intellectuals (Plato and Aristotle, for example) held manual labor in low esteem'. The philosopher considered it beneath his dignity to engage in manual work or to use working methods of mechanics to solve his scientific problems. The age of science had to wait until there was social acceptance for putting head and hands together.

There is a catch, however, as anyone knows who has read of Adam's duty to dress and guard his garden and to earn his bread by the sweat of his brow, or of Jesus' dictum, 'My Father is working until now, and I am working', or Paul's stern sentence, 'If anyone is not willing to work, let him not eat'—the Bible from beginning to end sets a high social value on work. Why then did not an intellectual and social climate conducive to manual work, and material experimentation essential to applied science (industry), develop in the lands of Christendom? I think R. Hooykaas has the right answer. He asserts:

For the building materials of Science (logic, mathematics, the beginning of a rational interpretation of the world) we have to look to the Greeks; but the vitamins indispensable for a healthy growth came from the biblical concept of creation [also preservation and providence, guaranteeing the uniformity of nature]. The fact that the victory of Christianity did not bring an immediate liberation from the bonds of Greek metaphysics [where either fate and chance rule over falling atoms of air, earth, fire and water falling in a void] in no way disproves this statement. The compromise of Christian religion, first with Platonism, then with Aristotelianism, strongly influenced not only secular learning but also theology. Even the positive biblical appreciation of the crafts hardly overcame the traditional attitudes of Graeco-Roman (and perhaps also autochthonous [indigenous]) social conception, especially after the first force of love had spent itself and Christianity had become a firmly established world religion.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *The Harper Encyclopedia of Science*, vol. i, p. 88.

<sup>2</sup> R. Hooykaas, *Religion and the Rise of Science* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972), pp. 78, 79.

<sup>3</sup> *ibid.*, p. 85.

In the changing atmosphere of the Renaissance, the Reformation reintroduced the biblical view of nature in a time when religious convictions of the general culture had to be accommodated by the movers and shakers of society.

Augustine may have come close. He certainly had a strong doctrine of providence. He interpreted history in terms of providence but focused on the spiritual side as a long ‘drama of sin and redemption [which] philosophy dominated the Middle Ages’.<sup>4</sup> Some of the scholastics of a nominalist trend may have come close to escaping the closed system of medieval thinking. God’s world was still full of superstitious fears of the unknown (causes of disease, spooks, demons out of control), and in Roman theology, at the local level, miracles occupied the minds of priests and laymen much more than a benign providence.

The Reformation changed that wherever its thought-patterns prevailed. All the Reformers deprecated the popular beliefs in the power of relics, amulets, priestly blessings, apparitions of saints and similar to interfere with the normal ‘order of nature’, as Calvin called it. After citing several passages of Scripture he summarizes: ‘From this we gather that his general providence not only flourishes among creatures so as to continue the *order of nature* [emphasis added] but is by his wonderful plan adapted to a definite end.’<sup>5</sup> Rejecting confused ancient semi-patheistic or vitalistic notions of God’s presence in nature, which made ‘a shadow deity to drive away the true God, whom we should fear and adore’, he goes on to say:

I confess ... that it can be said reverently, provided it proceeds from a reverent mind, that nature is God; but because it is a harsh and improper saying, since *nature is rather the order prescribed by God* [emphasis added], it is harmful in such weighty matters, in which special devotion is due, to involve God confusedly in the inferior course of his works.<sup>6</sup>

It is the same Calvin who a few pages later affirmed of the special ‘nature’ of things:

[T]he depravity and malice both of man and the devil or the sins that arise therefrom, do not spring from nature, but rather from the corruption of nature. And from the beginning nothing at all has existed in which God has not put forth an example both of his wisdom and of his righteousness.<sup>7</sup>

In this way this Reformer soundly rejected the false basis of asceticism—that there is something evil in the fleshly-material side of ourselves and the world about us—opening up for investigation and practical use the vast world which experimenters and synthesizers have explored since that time.

Calvin found this new outlook in the biblical teachings of creation and providence. In this world, speaking strictly, ‘God’s providence, as it is taught in Scripture, is opposed to fortune and fortuitous happenings ... And concerning inanimate objects we ought to hold that, although each one has by nature been endowed with its own property, yet it is directed by God’s ever present

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<sup>4</sup> Dagobert D. Runes, *Twentieth Century Philosophy* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1943), p. 97.

<sup>5</sup> Calvin, *Institutes I*, 16.7.

<sup>6</sup> *ibid.*, 5.5.

<sup>7</sup> *ibid.*, 14.3.

hand... Nothing is more natural than for spring to follow winter; summer, spring; and fall, summer—each in turn. Yet in this series one sees such great and uneven diversity that it readily appears each year, month, and day is governed by a new, a special, providence of God.’<sup>8</sup>

In another Appendix we shall see that for this Reformer the steady maintenance and control of nature by God condemns the flourishing of the miracle business rampant in the medieval church, resulting in further corruption of an ignorant population of Christendom.

Luther did not develop a systematic doctrine of providence. Rather, throughout his reforming career he wrote and spoke of God’s power and will by which He energizes and controls everything which exists. Among hundreds of possible quotations I cite one. Luther does not distinguish sharply between God’s creating, preserving and providential works.

It is God who created, effects, and preserves all things through his almighty power and right hand, as our Creed confesses. For he dispatches no officials or angels when he creates or preserves something, but all this is the work of his divine powers itself. If he is to create or preserve it, however, he must be present and must make and preserve his creation both in its innermost and outermost aspects. Therefore, indeed, he himself must be present in every single creature in its innermost and outermost being, on all sides, through and through, below and above, before and behind, so that nothing can be more truly present and within all creatures than God himself with his power.<sup>9</sup>

Luther thought of this work as an aspect of sovereign divine omnipotence and carried that outlook into the doctrine of justification as a matter of divine creativity.<sup>10</sup>

It was Melancthon who sorted out Luther’s teachings in this regard and gave them ‘scientific’ statement in the *Loci Communes* (common topics of theology) of 1555, citing the same texts of Scripture I have employed in demonstration of creation, perservation and providence. The fourth of his five main affirmations in connection with this article says:

Human blindness thinks that God is like a carpenter who, having built a ship, departs and abandons it to water and weather, and has nothing further to do with it. Men imagine that after creating this earth and mankind, God departed, and now has nothing to do with this realm of created things. We must root these false thoughts out of our hearts with God’s work, and we must learn the solace of true doctrine and believe that God is truly present in all places, that he sustains the being of all things, and that everything that has being or life [*Wesen* or *Leben*], so long as it remains in being or life, is sustained by God. So the heavens, the sun, and moon remain in being and have their ordered courses; the earth annually yields fruit; angels, men, and animals live; and all this happens through the concurring activity [*Mitwirkung*] of God.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> *ibid.*, 16.2.

<sup>9</sup> Paul Althaus, *The Theology of Martin Luther*, trans. R. C. Schultz (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1966), p. 106.

<sup>10</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 118–129.

<sup>11</sup> Philipp Melancthon, *Loci Communes*, trans. C. L. Manschreck (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1982), p. 41.

Of course some Roman Church theologians understood the biblical teaching of creation, preservation and providence. There are passages in Thomas Aquinas similar to these quotes. They did not, however, disseminate, much less convince, the priests and laymen of Europe. The Roman Catholic parts of Europe lagged far behind the Protestant parts for generations in developing the experimental and applied science which broke out rather quickly in the Netherlands and Britain. Many streams of change were in the air in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, slowly overcoming the stagnation of medieval ages. The most effective impulse toward what we now call science, reflecting a correct biblical view of the world of nature, came from Francis Bacon (1561–1626) who had studied the matter deeply. In his *Novum Organum* and other works he explained the sad situation of ‘the sciences’, where the best effort of the best minds was expended on fruitless ‘wars of words’ (*logomachies*). This inevitably led, Bacon said, to separation of the best thought from nature and experience to ‘superstition and blind religious zeal’, excessive reverence for antiquity (the error of the new humanism), reliance on abstract theories and traditional prejudices. In other words Christendom had neglected the world-view of the Bible. When in Europe, particularly the Netherlands and Britain where the Calvinists’ form of the Reformation prevailed, science flowered, slowly at first. I shall leave to others the development of the story. I refer the reader to Hooykaas’ two chapters, ‘The Rise of Experimental Science’ and ‘Science and the Reformation’<sup>12</sup> and his extensive bibliography.

‘It is interesting to note’, says Garret Vanderkooi, ‘that natural science developed and flourished in the Western Hemisphere (*sic*) during a time when belief in a supreme creator God was widespread. No comparable development took place in Eastern animistic or Hindu cultures where natural events are often given magical explanations.’<sup>13</sup>

A. D. White contended that liberal ‘religion’ fostered science but orthodox theology smothered it.<sup>14</sup> As late as 1965 Bruce Mazlish, in the introduction to an abridged edition, expressed the opinion that White had established his thesis. But say D. C. Lindberg and R. L. Numbers:

Such judgments ... overlook mounting evidence that White read the past through battle-scarred glasses. A number of scholars, including Alfred North Whitehead and Michael B. Forster, had begun to downplay the conflict between science and Christianity as early as the 1920s and 1930s. Indeed, Whitehead and Forster became convinced that Christianity,

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<sup>12</sup> R. Hooykaas, *op. cit.*, pp. 75–144. Professor Hooykaas’ book is based on The Gunning Lectures delivered by him under the auspices of the University of Edinburgh in February, 1969.

<sup>13</sup> Garret Vanderkooi, ‘A Theistic Approach to Science’ in John Warwick Montgomery’s book, *Evidence for Faith* (Dallas: Word Publ., 1991) p. 45. Since writing the above, the year 2000 recent work of H. L. Poe and J. H. Davis (*Science and Faith: An Evangelical Dialogue*) likewise sets the matter straight and encourages Christians to claim their intellectual inheritance in the confluence and mutual support of a sound science and a sound interpretation of Scripture.

<sup>14</sup> A. D. White, *A History of the Warfare of Science with Theology in Christendom*, two volumes, (NY: Appleton & Co., 1876).

rather than impeding science, had actually encouraged it by establishing that nature behaves in a regular and orderly fashion—a basic promise of modern science.<sup>15</sup>

In an earlier chapter I cited Stanley Jaki and R. Hooykaas in support of this theme. Lindberg and Numbers are citing Whitehead and Forster to the same effect.<sup>16</sup>

## Appendix II

### Providence and Miracles

As we have seen, there is basis for the regularity of nature including systematic sequences of seasons, chemical reactions, verifiable causes and effects, and the like, in the divine government by God's law and will. Without this there would be chaos rather than cosmos. Life could not continue. In such case, how do miracles, both biblically reported and others, which seem to violate this regularity, fit into the scheme of things?

The Bible of course reports many unusual occurrences, such as Jesus turning water into wine and the feeding of the 5,000, the parting of the waters of the Jordan by Joshua, and Elijah's calling down fire to consume water-soaked sacrifice on Mount Carmel. Some of these 'miracles' might seem like circus stunts to some but others are of acknowledged timeless significance, as for example the crossing of the Red Sea on dry ground at Moses' word. It is celebrated throughout the rest of Scripture as an important work of God of timeless significance. Let us consider as briefly as possible how this variation from the ordinary laws and course of nature, secured by divine providence, should be regarded.

1. Let us observe first off that in Scripture everything that occurs on earth or in heaven is within God's plan, is sustained and ruled by Him. In biblical thought, the explosion of a distant star is no less the work of God than the raising of Lazarus, the emergence of a duckling from an egg no more or less than the healing of the demoniacs of Gadara. God is immanent in all creation as well as transcendent above it. He made it and though God uses 'second causes' such as mass attraction, Boyle's Law and Charles' Law for expansion and contraction of gasses, these forces and 'laws' have been aptly characterized as God's habits of operation. They are under His control and, like the world picture of Psalm 104, ordinarily can be counted on by mankind for 'service ... food ... wine ... oil ... and bread' (Ps. 104:14, 15 KJV), though not without interruption. The weather may not be quite as regular as mass attraction, yet the laws that control the weather are as regular as mass attraction.

The immediate power of God can operate either in nature or in mankind, as in the case of that special calling or prevenient enlightenment (some call it regeneration) which God effects in every person who comes to Christ in faith.

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<sup>15</sup> D. C. Lindberg and R. L. Numbers, *God and Nature: Historical Essays on the Encounter Between Christianity and Science* (Berkeley, CA: Univ. of Calif. Press, 1986) pp. 2–4.

<sup>16</sup> Alfred N. Whitehead, *Science and the Modern World* (New York: Macmillan, 1925) and Forster, 'The Christian Doctrine of Creation and the Rise of Modern Science' in *Mind* magazine, 43, 1934), pp. 446–468; also 'Christian Theology and the Modern Science of Nature' in *Mind* magazine, 44, 1935), pp. 439–466 and *Mind* 45, 1936), pp. 1–27. More recently M. Klaren, *Religious Origins of Modern Science, Belief in Creation in Seventeenth Century Thought* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977).

2. From this point of view some theologians have aptly placed miracles *within* providence. The ordinary habits of God in the world are *general* providence, while the unusual works of God that seem to interrupt the ordinary course of nature are a species of *special* providence. In special providences God concerns Himself with *particular* events of history (say the calling of Isaiah to be a prophet) or with answers to prayer and particular needs of His people. To coin a term, miracles might be termed *extra-special* or extraordinary providences.<sup>17</sup>

3. In coming to an exact definition of a miracle (as opposed simply to the supernatural) the special vocabulary of Scripture will help us. These special events of divine activity which we sometimes call miracles have several semi-technical designations in the Bible.

In the Old Testament the chief term is *'oth*. 'Most of the eighty occurrences ... refer to miraculous signs: all the plagues on the Egyptians are called "signs". In these contexts the complementary word *mopeth* meaning "wonders" often occur.'<sup>18</sup> Throughout the Old Testament the special, distinct character of a miracle is not so much in its departing from the ordinary course of nature, as the divinely intended meaning usually supplied by a prophet. They are both signs (of meaning) and wonders.

In the New Testament four Greek words designate these extraordinary events of God's providential government of the heavens and earth He created. Of these one is *sēmeion*, 'a sign consisting of a wonder or miracle, an event that is contrary to the usual course of nature',<sup>19</sup> which answers precisely to the Hebrew *'oth*, both translated in the plural 'signs'.

A second Greek word *teras*, usually plural, meaning 'a prodigy, portent, omen, wonder',<sup>20</sup> is usually coupled in plural form with *sēmeion* ('signs and wonders'). This word has more reference to the effect on observers. A verb of similar meaning (*thaumadzō*, to marvel or wonder) describes this effect. This is what modern secularist people really mean by the overworked term, 'miraculous' or 'a miracle'—simply something to impress as exceptional, amazing, marvellous. The effect on viewers of such events depends much on what they bring to it—as seen in the case of Jesus' miracle of healing on the Sabbath (Matt. 12:9–45).

A third word is *dunamis*, rendered as might, power, authority. In Acts 2:22 it is parallel with signs and wonders 'that God did', referring to the miracles which Jesus performed publicly among the Jews of His time. This word points to God's special activity in 'miracles'. This word is occasionally rendered 'miracle' in KJV and does particularly indicate the divine power which God employed in performing signs and wonders.

A fourth word is *ergon*, which simply means a work, in this case a work of God. It designates the fact—healing a leper, a pot of oil that never runs empty, a Lazarus coming forth, fire called down from heaven.

4. These original words of the Scripture language provide a guide to defining what miracles are, their effects on observers and others who learn of them, their function as significant events of special meaning and their cause in God. Biblical miracles are extraordinary events (*ergon*) which capture public notice, producing amazement (*mopeth*, *teras*, *thaumadzō*) and which have

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<sup>17</sup> Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* pp. 168, 169.

<sup>18</sup> Robert L. Alden, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament, i* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1980), p. 18.

<sup>19</sup> Bauer, Arndt & Gingrich, *Lexicon*, p. 755.

<sup>20</sup> *ibid.*, p. 820.

meaning (*'oth, sēmeion*). This meaning is the special presence of God in some special way usually declared by a prophet (Aaron, Elijah, Moses, Jeremiah). Finally a biblical miracle is *dunamis*, the product of and evidence of divine power and authority, not only in the event itself but of delegated power in the divinely authorized person at whose word the miracle took place.

5. As 'wonders', the miracles of the Bible are publicly observed events connected with revelation and redemption. By the ten plagues of Egypt, and the miraculous crossing of the Red Sea, Israel was redeemed from Egypt and by them God made His love, wisdom, judgment, power and glory known. By these same miracles Moses was certified and magnified before Israel as leader, revelator and governor. Without the miracles Moses would have been no more convincing or effective as liberator than he was to the Hebrew who saw him kill an Egyptian taskmaster. Jesus of Nazareth became 'a Man attested by God to you [Jews] by miracles [*dunamis*], wonders [*terasi*] and signs [*sēmeiois*], which God did through Him in your midst' (Acts 2:22 NKJV). And He was 'declared to be the Son of God in power' before all by 'his resurrection from the dead' (Rom. 1:4).

Jesus held the Jews of His time to be hardened sinners precisely because His person and message had been accompanied by authenticating 'works', saying: 'If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not have been guilty of sin, but now they have no excuse for their sin ... If I had not done among them the works that no one else did, they would not be guilty of sin [that of rejecting Jesus], but now they have seen and hated both me and my Father ... "They hated me without a cause"' (John 15:22–25; cf. John 10:25, 37, 38). The same method of accrediting divine messengers identified and magnified the prophets before Israel, and the apostles before the church (Heb. 2:1–4). Predictive prophecy is a special form of miracle, of the same effect in revelation and redemption. Revelation and redemption are truly aspects of divine providence. Extraordinary works, signs, wonders and powers (miracles) were employed by God in effecting revelation. Where the extraordinary is useful to revelation and redemption, God is free to use it. He is not bound to the ordinary.

In Scripture, miracles and successful predictive prophecy, as proof of the authenticity of divine spokesmen, loom large. These spectacular accomplishments did not however *per se* authenticate prophets and apostles. Two passages of Deuteronomy set the standards—chapters 13 and 18. The prophet must also be of the nation of Israel (cf. Rom. 3:1), he must speak in the name of the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and his message must conform to the Mosaic revelation, including moral and spiritual elements. The tests on Mt Carmel (Elijah and prophets of Baal, 1 Kings 18), and Jeremiah against Hananiah (Jer. 28), are illustrative examples. The Eleven against Judas (Acts 1) is another example. Careful perusal of the above extended texts will amply demonstrate these assertions.

The amount of literature on miracles as attesting divine revelation and its revelators, produced in the past three centuries, is baffling to the mind of anyone who attempts to list it, much less to master it. I excerpt a few related remarks from the superb article in McClintock and Strong.

The Universal instincts of men prove the necessity of the existence of religion.... [A] revealed religion [as opposed to natural religions] can be proved only by that which involves the supernatural. What our Lord says to the Jews, that 'they would not have

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McClintock and Strong *Cyclopedia of Biblical, Theological and Ecclesiastical Literature*, prepared by John McClintock and James Strong, 12 volumes

sinned in rejecting him but for his works' (John 15:24), commends itself at once to our reason... In order to its being revealed, God must be the giver of it. And how are we to know it is he who speaks? Its strength, its value, its authority, all depend on its being the voice of God... We must have direct evidence—something pledging God himself—before we can accept religion as revealed.<sup>21</sup>

There really isn't much to say on the subject of miracles not covered directly or indirectly in the forty densely printed columns in the volume, under 'Miracles' and 'Ecclesiastical Miracles'.

Jesus said once, 'no one who does a mighty work in my name will be able soon afterward to speak evil of me' (Mark 9:39), but on another occasion remarked, 'On that day many will say to me, "Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?" And then will I declare to them, "I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness"' (Matt. 7:22, 23). Luther used Balaam (Num. 24) as an example of one who fits the seeming contradiction. All his motives were false even though his miracle was authentic. Absent was the moral characteristic of love—Luther cited 1 Corinthians 13:2, 'And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing.' Luther often discussed this verse in controversy with the Roman Church. His latest thought on it was that the statement was 'aimed at people who called themselves Christians and who did great things with their faith but had no love'.<sup>22</sup>

6. We have no way of knowing how many times each day in answers to prayers or for other reasons, Providence directs second causes in a 'supernatural' way. The conversion of every sinner is a supernatural event in that the Spirit of the Father in concert with the Word of God plants spiritual life in a soul in a way that is contrary to the workings of 'nature'—human or otherwise. But such events are short of *public* demonstration of the significant, amazing working of divine power. Secular scientists will explain such conversion experiences as wholly resulting from natural causes, including *The Will to Believe* (William James' famous thesis, 1897). Public miracles, openly demonstrating the presence of supernatural power, are quite rare in the Bible.

Note for one thing that miracles occurred almost exclusively in brief epochs: the time of the Exodus from Egypt and entering Canaan, the crisis of apostasy among the northern tribes in the time of Elijah and Elisha, the birth of Jesus, again during His ministry and of course His resurrection, and the early period of the book of Acts and the ministry of Paul (Rom. 15:18, 19).

Note also that a comparison of Deuteronomy 18:9–22, with Deuteronomy 13, shows that miracles served to authenticate Moses as God's appointed teacher, legislator and revelator—the burning bush of Exodus 3, the miracles of the rod, the leprous hand and turning water to blood (Exod. 4:1–9). Just so many, if not all, succeeding prophets to Israel, and God's authentic mouthpieces and writers of Scripture, whether prophets or apostles, were similarly authenticated.<sup>23</sup>

7. Evidence is far from certain that supernatural signs, that is miracles, continued in any general sense after the apostolic age. Like the 400 plus silent years in Egypt (Exod. 12:40, 41)

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<sup>21</sup> McClintock & Strong, sentences from 'Miracles' in *Cyclopedia of Biblical Theological and Ecclesiastical Literature* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1876, reprinted Grand Rapids: Baker Books, VI, 1969), p. 309.

<sup>22</sup> Paul Althaus, *op. cit.*, p. 436.

<sup>23</sup> See for example 1 Kings 18:36–39 and Jer. 28; Heb. 2:1–4; 2 Cor. 12:12.

and the 400 plus years after the prophet Malachi—when prophecy was silent and miracles ceased—the present age is a similar time. There is to be a time of renewed miracles at the Second Advent. Even during times of prophets and apostles miracles were not daily affairs. General providence held sway, when laws of nature’s cycles, of morals and economics, sowing and reaping, were not repealed or superseded by a wholesale relaxation of the order of nature.

Even in apostolic times, after the apostles and prophets who founded the church and produced revelation had been thoroughly accredited by ‘signs and wonders’, the supernatural sign gifts fade from the New Testament record. Norman Geisler points out that in the period of the book of Acts (AD 30–60) ‘tongues’, healings, exorcisms, even raising from the dead occurred, but in the later period—the period say AD 60 onward—tongues are never mentioned, nor healings, exorcisms or raising the dead. Geisler (as many good writers before him) points out:

[A]s soon as we arrive at the time of Paul’s imprisonments (around AD 60–70) there is not only a complete absence of reference to any of these special apostolic gifts ... there is strong evidence that they no longer possessed these abilities. For example, the same apostle who could heal everyone on an island (Acts 28:9) could no longer even heal his coworkers in the ministry. The apostles could heal a person born lame (Acts 3), but Paul could not give Timothy relief from a simple stomach ailment and had to recommend that he take medicine for it (1 Tim. 5:23). The same apostle who exorcised a demon on command (Acts 15) could only hope for repentance that Hymenaeus and Philetus would ‘escape from the snare of the devil’ (2 Tim. 2:26). And the same apostle who once had the power to raise the dead (Acts 20) now cannot even raise his needed friend Trophimus from a sick bed (2 Tim. 4:20). And when we reach Hebrews (AD 68–69) the sign gifts are referred to as a past event (Heb. 2:3–4). The writer says that what Jesus announced ‘*was confirmed* to us by those who heard him [apostles]. God also testified to it by signs, wonders and various miracles’.<sup>24</sup>

Geisler goes on to say: ‘the sign gifts have ceased, just as Paul predicted they would (1 Cor. 13:8). Although Paul does not specify when these gifts would cease, he does say they will. Furthermore, he hints that this would occur as the church progressed toward “maturity” (1 Cor. 13:10; cf. Eph. 4:12) although this will not be complete till the Second Coming (v. 12), he does not say that all the gifts will last until then. Indeed, it is obvious from the contrasts above that the miraculous gifts petered out as the early church matured.’<sup>25</sup>

8. From two sides evangelical Protestant religion has had to defend itself from a demand that the movement produce miracles. The first was from the side of the Roman Church in early Reformation times. The credulous, illiterate populace of Christian Europe had developed an appetite for miracles—of which the ‘miracle of the altar’, transubstantiation, was only a tame sample. Superstitious expectations increased and have not ceased in many Roman Catholic countries even today. (In Reformation times Belarmine, official Roman apologist, sought to prove ‘the continuity of the miraculous power of the Church of Rome [and] the Protestant Church lacking this [power] is manifestly not of God.’<sup>26</sup> In an endeavour to embarrass the

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<sup>24</sup> Norman Geisler, *Signs and Wonders* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House, 1988), p. 137.

<sup>25</sup> *ibid.*, p. 137.

<sup>26</sup> McClintock & Strong, *op. cit.*, pp. 320–326.

evangelical leaders of Geneva and win back the Reformed community there, Bishop Sadolet of that jurisdiction had written a letter to the Genevans charging among other things that the ‘new’ religion lacked the ‘miracles’ which were still being produced in the mother church. To this Calvin replied, in his Prefatory address to King Francis I:

In demanding miracles of us, they act dishonestly. For we are not forging some new gospel, but are retaining that very gospel whose truth all the miracles that Jesus Christ and his disciples ever wrought serve to confirm. But, compared with us, they have a strange [i.e. inauthentic] power; even to this day they can confirm their faith by continual miracles! [So they say.] Instead they allege miracles which can disturb a mind otherwise at rest—they are so foolish and ridiculous, so vain and false.... God’s name ought to be always and everywhere hallowed, whether by miracles or the natural order of things.<sup>27</sup>

Calvin goes on to show how the apostles were authenticated by signs and wonders (citing Acts 14:3; Heb. 2:4) but miracles were not sufficient ‘to confirm falsehoods’. One must ‘examine that doctrine which the Evangelist says is superior to miracles’ (John 7:17, 18) and see if it tends to God’s glory (John 8:50; Deut. 13:2 ff.). Calvin goes on to warn against the tricks of magicians (Pharaoh’s magicians) and of Antichrist (2 Thess. 2:9, 10).

There are still elements in the Roman Church which would derive authentication—say of eligibility for beatification—from miracles. This is presently an embarrassment, hence Vatican II said,

Let us teach the faithful, therefore, that the authentic cult of the saints does not consist so much in a multiplicity of external acts [miracles], but rather in a more intense practice of our love, whereby, for our own greater good and that of the Church, we seek from the saints [i.e. the officially beatified] example in their way of life, fellowship in their communion, and the help of their intercession [as deceased, now in heaven with direct access to Jesus, etc.]<sup>28</sup>

From another quarter, time to time throughout church history, from the Montanists onward through ‘enthusiasts’ of Reformation times and ‘pentecostalists’ of recent decades, groups of folk have arisen within the church demanding the church produce all the supernatural gifts present in the apostolic church, including the performance of miracles—duplicating all the miracles of Jesus, the Twelve and the Seventy. I am of the opinion the vast majority of Protestant theologians (and denominations) still hold, as Dr Charles Hodge wrote:

[W]hile there is nothing in the New Testament inconsistent with the occurrence of miracles in the post-apostolic age of the church ... when the apostles had finished their work, the necessity of miracles, so far as the great end they were intended to accomplish was concerned ceased. This, however, does not preclude the possibility of their occurrence, on suitable occasions, in after ages. It is a mere question of fact to be decided on historical evidence.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Calvin, *Institutes*, vi, Prefatory Address to King Francis, Westminster Ed., vol. i, p. 16.

<sup>28</sup> Vatican Council II, vol. i, *The Conciliar and Postconciliar Documents*, New Revised Ed., 1996, p. 412.

<sup>29</sup> Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, iii (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1960), p. 452.

The above statement by Dr Hodge states the matter precisely. From long, often unpleasant experience, including pastoral survival through the waves of television healing (Kathryn Kuhlman, Oral Roberts and similar) and before them neo-Pentecostalist invasions of post-Depression congregations of anxious people I have learned that good people of this persuasion must be left to discover what someone has called ‘the unerring verdict of history’.<sup>30</sup> A current scholarly opinion by C.L. Blomberg somewhat generous toward assertions of need for contemporary miracles will conclude this discussion:

Throughout the Bible, miracles consistently serve to point people to the one true God, ultimately revealed in Jesus Christ. Their primary purpose is not to meet human need [Jesus did not heal all the sick in Palestine], although that is an important spin off blessing. But they are first of all theocentric and Christocentric, demonstrating the God of Israel and of Jesus to be supreme over all rivals. Contemporary experience suggests that this pattern continue; miracles today seem most frequent in regions where Satan has long held sway and where people require ‘power evangelism’ to be converted. But God’s sovereignty warns against trying to predict when they may occur and refutes the ‘name it and claim it’ heresy that tries to force God to work miracles upon demand, if one exercises adequate faith.<sup>31</sup>

*Per contra*, veteran China missionary Doris Ekblad writes me that her father, a pioneer missionary to north central China about sixty-five years ago, had a standard formula for people who came from distances to have him deliver someone from demon ‘possession’. She says, ‘My father would cleanse them both spiritually by prayer and physically—with a big spoon of castor oil. I expect they never came back!’

## Appendix III

### The Problem of Evil, Theodicy, Protest Atheism and the Structure of Barthian Theology

#### The Problem of Evil

It is true that when seemingly random tragedy strikes the ‘undeserving’, reflective people wonder if a wise, just and omnipotent good God is really in charge, governing the whole creation. Likewise when monstrous catastrophes strike large numbers of people, violently carrying away thousands at once, waves of doubt of God’s goodness or of His power distress many of the faithful and give strength to avowed sceptics. This was true when the world heard the news of

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<sup>30</sup> For any earnest and ambitious enough to seek guidance I suggest two old reliable sources: the lengthy article ‘Miracles’ and ‘Ecclesiastical Miracles’ in McClintock and Strong’s *Cyclopedia* and Hodge’s chapter on ‘The Ninth Commandment’ (appropriately entitled ‘Thou Shalt Not Bear False Witness’), pages 437–463 in the work cited above. After these sources *The Silence of God* by Sir Robert Anderson and perhaps *Miracles* by B. B. Warfield and *Signs and Wonders* by Norman Geisler brings the matter up to date.

<sup>31</sup> C. L. Blomberg, art. ‘Miracles’ in *Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1984), p. 534.

the terrible earthquake which struck the great city of Lisbon, the port from which the Spanish Armada sailed to attack Britain in 1688. On the first of November, 1755, the city was reduced almost in an instant to a heap of ruins. At the same time a tidal wave broke over the docks and warehouses followed by fires. About 40,000 people lost their lives. Good and bad, young and old, believers and unbelievers died together.

This was during the ‘age of reason’ among Europe’s intelligencia and, though more severe catastrophes have occurred since, the professional sceptics of that time (David Hume in particular) found in Lisbon the proof of the non-existence of the good God of Christianity. In the twentieth century what is called ‘protest atheism’ took over their arguments and added more.

From ancient times philosophers have sought to define ‘the good’ along with ‘the beautiful and the true’ without ever coming to a settled opinion. But to judge whether or not the presence of physical evils in the world such as pain and ‘premature death’ (as it is now said) are irrational, purposeless evils or not, there must be a standard of the good by which to judge. Several recent Christian philosophers have challenged sceptics and atheists at this point to present a universal standard of the good which is a manifest improvement on the will and love of God.

As observed previously in the chapter on providence, the Bible represents evil, whether moral or physical, as a real problem in the world. It does not trace its origin or cause to the basic structure of the universe, nor to any element of nature or mankind, nor to God as its Creator. Evil is here by God’s permission. Why God has permitted evil, we have not been told. The Bible nowhere directly addresses the question, even though both David and Habakkuk directly asked the question (Ps. 73; Hab. 1:1–11).

Extensive treatment of theories proposed by philosophers as to the nature and origin of evil would divert us into something far different from a biblically based theology. Several hours reviewing my files, scanning long-shelved books on ethics, meta-ethics, philosophy of religion and the like, have reawakened my awareness of at least a dozen indecisive philosophical kinds of ethical systems defining good and explaining the nature and origin of evil. It will be pertinent here only to take note of some of the theories which have taken root on Christian soil and which have had important bearing on secular attitudes and theologies of our own time. Alvin Plantinga has addressed the problem of evil in several works.<sup>32</sup> His first burden is to show that the certain existence of evil is no proof of the non-existence of God. John E. Hare evaluates Plantinga’s contribution at length.

I think Plantinga is largely successful in what I shall call the *negative project*. This is the project of showing that there is no demonstrative or conclusive proof from the existence of evil to the non-existence of God. This leaves, however, the most important positive project untouched. Plantinga is himself completely pessimistic about the success of any positive project. Numerous discussions of this problem have appeared since the 1970s, though probably little new can be said.<sup>33</sup>

Probably no one has contributed a more comprehensive, readable and convincing report of the unsuccessful philosophical literary effort to explain the presence of evil in society while

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<sup>32</sup> Alvin Plantinga, *The Nature of Necessity* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1974), chapter 9; *God, Freedom and Evil* (New York: Harper Torchbook, 1974), and journal articles.

<sup>33</sup> John E. Hare, ‘The Problem of Evil’ in *Evidence of Faith*, ed. J. W. Montgomery (Dallas: Word Publ., 1991).

maintaining mankind as essentially the good victim than Reinhold Niebuhr. His brilliant summary, to which I am indebted, is chapter 4, ‘The Easy Conscience of Modern Man’.<sup>34</sup> P. H. T. Holbach (1723–1789) of the German *Aufklärung*<sup>35</sup> and C. A. Helvetius (1715–1771), a Frenchman of the so-called Enlightenment, in common with many *literati* of their age, felt entrenched religious and political conservatism of their own and previous times was the cause of social evil.<sup>36</sup> A return to a state of nature would cure it. This was the naturalism of Epicurus brought up to date. In such a case, these ‘enlightened’ philosophers seemed quite unaware that if mankind are bond slaves of history they are hardly capable of writing books on politics and philosophy.

Only a little earlier Thomas Hobbes (1588–1679) held a nearly reverse view (*The Leviathan* 1:13–14 and 2:1–20): regarding evil as a primeval peril from nature. Two centuries later this theory merged with Darwinian evolutionary doctrine, teaching that moral evil is a hangover from mankind’s brute ancestors and a stage toward good—in some writers *en route* to attainment of Christian character.<sup>37</sup> Hobbes thought civil government, preferably absolute monarchy, the best restraint of evil.

John Locke (1632–1704) was another who supposed moral evil rises out of mankind’s condition in a state of nature, though he retained what he believed was biblical orthodoxy. He thought that a social contract establishing democratic government, wherein ‘freedom’ could be exercised, would be a sounder basis of (social) deliverance from the state of nature.

David Hume (1711–1776), if I understand his remarks correctly, thought that the presence of evil was everywhere, and so, acknowledged and experienced by everyone, might be the very spring from which the idea of God arises in all people.<sup>38</sup>

A lineal descendant of such thinking was the *laissez-faire* economic-philosophical-ethical philosophy of Adam Smith (1723–1790), Scottish economist. Though Smith had much to say which harmonizes with the biblical doctrines of mankind and sin, yet he taught that there is a pre-established harmony in ‘nature’ which if interfered with will produce economic injustice. When Smith’s ‘let nature take its course’ in economics was joined to Darwinian evolutionary theory the result was social Darwinism and some of the economic-social disorders of the late nineteenth century.

All these physiocrats and democrats, and similar, in finding the causal source of moral and physical evil in social institutions of one sort or another were equally in error. For if moral evil (and physical evils to an important degree, according to the biblical narrative and interpretation

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<sup>34</sup> Reinhold Niebuhr, *The Nature and Destiny of Man: A Christian Interpretation*, vol. i, *Human Nature* (New York: Scribners, 1943).

<sup>35</sup> *ibid.*, p. 197.

<sup>36</sup> *ibid.*; also McClintock & Strong, *Cyclopaedia of Biblical, Theological and Ecclesiastical Literature* (1969 ed.), 4:179, 180.

<sup>37</sup> John Fiske, *Through Nature to God*, (Boston and New York: Houghton, Mifflin & Co., 1899), a book dedicated to T. H. Huxley.

<sup>38</sup> David Hume, Remarks of Demea in *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*, Part X, reprinted in *God and Evil*, ed. Nelson Pike (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1964), p. 17.

thereof) lies anywhere in mankind, it is in their perilous, but God-given, moral capacity, involving voluntary use of uncoerced freedom of choice.

I defer to the plentiful literature of Karl Marx (1818–83) and Friedrich Engels (1820–95) and their theory of evil and good (dialectical materialism), similarly the ‘positive’ theories of the founder of sociology, Auguste Comte (1798–1857). With Comte’s Marx-like views of mankind and nature both sin and crime are thought of as ‘anti-social conduct’. This term has passed into modern language along with many other terms and ideas more subversive, in my opinion, of the moral realm of Scripture and authentic ethical-social analysis than is commonly recognized even in centres of evangelical learning.

## Theodicy

The Bible never mounts an effort at *theodicy*, an effort to save the character of God from harmful inferences derived from the presence of evil. Evil is allowed in the world for reasons God has never seen fit fully to disclose and which no human wisdom, Christian or otherwise, has been able fully to discover or to explain. As we have seen, evil is not beyond His control. This has prompted such biblical sayings as, ‘Surely the wrath of man shall praise you’ (Ps. 76:10). It also has resulted in reports of how God raised up wicked tyrants ‘that my name may be proclaimed in all the earth, (Exod. 9:16; cf. Rom. 9:17) and in prophetic declarations wherein God called an oppressive and destructive emperor ‘my servant’ (Jer. 25:9).

This does not mean that it is wrong to wonder if God was obligated to create the ‘best possible of all worlds’ or if the best possible is one where there would have been no freedom to sin, or if there really is something rightly called ‘free will’ without qualifications. These and other musings have been canvassed enough. There has been great difference of opinion among theologians on these questions. Gordon Clark’s chapter ‘God and Evil’ treats the problem of theodicy in a manner deserving respect.<sup>39</sup> Anyone interested might start his research by examining the articles by John Feinberg on ‘Theodicy’, ‘Problem of Sin’ and ‘Pain’ in his 2001 volume on the doctrine of God, *No One Like Him* and pursue the bibliographical suggestions. These topics are of more legitimate interest in the philosophical disciplines of ethics and its recent twin *axiology* (values), and the theological disciplines of philosophy of religion and apologetics. [Dr Feinberg has also published a book in which he addresses the problem of evil.]

Before we move on let us note that both the musings and the severest rational reflections of theists—whether devoutly orthodox Christians or not—have usually come to the conclusion that God willed that moral evil (sin) should enter the world, but did so not *antecedently* but *consequentially*. This means that He planned for good *ultimately* (beyond the detailed history of creation) as fruit of history, that the presence of temptation to moral evil was necessary to the good of fixed moral character, that sin came to be as a *consequence*. This helps with the narrative of Genesis 3 but does not explain how the serpent (= Satan) came to be morally evil. Who tempted him? Was the temptation simply God’s exalted position and glory? If created wholly good, what inner movement of will caused him to envy God and desire to be his own god, to seek other than God’s proper glory as Creator?

As to physical evil, why do we have plagues, tornadoes and earthquakes which are purely natural, and why does God allow humanly caused harm to others: whether small, such as the

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<sup>39</sup> Gordon Clark, *Reason, Religion and Revelation* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian & Reformed Publ., 1961, republished by Trinity Foundation in 1995), pp. 194–242.

proverbial family starving because the father spends his earnings on alcoholic drink, or large, such as the attempted extinction of Jews by Hitler and the killing of 100,000,000 people in the twentieth century by the communisms of Russia, China, Cambodia, Yugoslavia and others. Again, theistic efforts at theodicy in one way or another suppose that natural perils to life and health on small or large scale are necessary parts of reality, aspects not subject to ‘power’, whether limited or unlimited.

F. R. Tennant, Anglican clergyman and Cambridge Professor, put it well:

That painful events occur in the causal chain is a fact, but, that there could be a determinate ... world of unalloyed comfort, yet adapted by its law-abidingness to the development of rationality and morality, is a proposition the burden of proving which must be allotted to the opponent of theism. One can only add that, so far as experience in this world enables us to judge, such proof seems impossible. To illustrate what is here meant: if water is to have the various properties in virtue of which it plays its beneficial part in the economy of the physical world and the life of mankind, it cannot at the same time lack its obnoxious capacity to drown us... There cannot be assigned to any substance an arbitrarily selected group of qualities from which all that ever may prove unfortunate to any sentient organism can be eliminated, especially if one organism’s meat is to be another’s poison.<sup>40</sup>

Tennant goes on to observe that the order of nature, the regularity of nature as part of the divine world plan, insures the conditions of life.

Thus physical ills follow with the same necessity as physical goods from the determinate ‘world plan’ which secures that the world be a suitable stage for intelligent and ethical life.<sup>41</sup>

Like every attempt at a Christian theodicy ever proposed—from Irenaeus and Augustine onward—Tennant’s essay is not unchallengeable. Already pagan ethical philosophers of late antiquity such as Seneca and Cicero attempted to justify the god of their incipient monotheism. But it probably is as good as any proposed. All are musings, reflections in effort to satisfy the demand of human minds for rational consistency. President Lincoln tried to think through to God’s honour and righteousness in bringing the United States to a great Civil War, but like us all had simply to acknowledge without emperical proof, that (citing Psalm 19:9 KJV) David was right when he confessed, ‘the judgments of the LORD are true, and righteous altogether.’

### **Protest Atheism and Barth’s Theology**

As, however, Paul reminds us, ‘yet for us there is one God ... from whom are all things.... However, not all possess this knowledge’ (1 Cor. 8:6, 7). Paul was speaking of the lack of knowledge of *only* one God in an age of prevalent polytheism. The same lack of knowledge (or

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<sup>40</sup> F. R. Tennant, *Philosophical Theology II* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1930), pp. 197–205, as reprinted by G. L. Abernathy and T. A. Langford, *Philosophy of Religion* (New York: Macmillan, 1962), p. 441.

<sup>41</sup> *ibid.*

rejection of the same) in Enlightenment and now post-Enlightenment times takes the form of atheism (no-god-ism), the extreme opposite of polytheism (many-gods-ism).

The term atheism is not without ambiguities. Its meaning varies (1) according to how the one who uses it defines 'god', (2) whether deliberately adopted by someone as a name for his own theological view, or (3) as applied by opponents for some other view. In our case it is the second—how certain writers describe their own religious outlook. It is worth remembering that Socrates, a monotheist of sorts, was called an atheist by Athenians because his god was not one of their family of deities who lived up on Mt Olympus. The Christians among the heathen populace of Rome were called atheists for similar reasons.

Further, since Enlightenment times, in some religious writing there is dogmatic rejection of the 'theistic arguments' for the existence of God (i.e. in this narrow sense of theism). Some of these opponents of 'theism' are designated *critical* atheists. If there is a god, they say, you theists have not proved it so, these critical atheists say. These same thinkers and others from another epistemological slant simply distrust or deny the capacity of finite minds to say anything at all about an infinite God, if He exists, hence are distinguished as *sceptical atheists* or perhaps *agnostics*. Finally there are the *dogmatic atheists* who outrightly deny the existence of any being answering to the biblical Jewish or Christian God.

In the eighteenth century several widely influential writers in the several languages of Europe were sceptical or dogmatic atheists in the sense that the God of the Bible does not exist. They lived in a time when inherited belief in God was shared by nearly 100 per cent of the population of Europe and America. David Hume (1711–76), for example, was the ultimate empiricist, insisting that all knowledge is based on sense experience. He was consistent therefore in asserting that given the universal absence of sensory experience of a god, and therefore also the incapacity of reason to inform us about a god, there can be no proof of God's existence. Miracles cannot certify any message or messenger of God because miracles never occur. In his best-known essay he summarized:

There must, therefore, be a uniform experience against every miraculous act, otherwise the event would not merit that appellation. And as a uniform experience amounts to a proof, there is here a direct and full *proof*, from the nature of the fact, against the existence of any miracle.<sup>42</sup>

Hume concluded his *Essay* with this challenge:

If we take in our hand any volume of divinity or school metaphysics let us ask, *Does it contain any abstract reasoning or number?* No. *Does it contain any experimental reasoning concerning matter of fact or existence?* No. Commit it then to the flames for it can contain nothing but sophistry and illusion.<sup>43</sup>

Hume relates to the subject of this Appendix primarily in that he consistently insisted that the presence of evil in the world absolutely forbids that theism could prove the existence of the same God more fully described in 'revealed religion'. He sought to demonstrate that, in want of sense experience of God, 'reason is impotent either to establish or falsify religious beliefs'. In *The*

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<sup>42</sup> David Hume, *An Inquiry Concerning Human Understanding* (New York: C. H. Hendel, 1955), p. 120 as cited by J. C. Livingston, *Modern Christian Thought* (New York: Macmillan, 1971), p. 54.

<sup>43</sup> *ibid.*, p. 173.

*Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion* he has one of his debaters say sarcastically: ‘This world for aught (any man) knows, is very faulty and imperfect compared to a superior standard; and was only the first rude essay of some infant deity, who afterward abandoned it, ashamed of its lame performance.’<sup>44</sup>

In Hume’s world there is no guiding Providence bringing history to happy consummation, much less working all things together for good for any particular lover of God. Also, sad to say, to venture however briefly into Hume’s thought where empiricism reigns (all we know is via sensory experience) is to feel a profound sense of uneasiness. John Stuart Mill and Ludwig Feuerbach drew out some consequences less considerate of the tender feelings of theists in general and Christians in particular but hardly moved beyond Hume.

Ludwig Feuerbach (1804–77) ‘saw himself as giving birth to a new religion of man’. He saw the Christian God as nothing more than ‘projection of finite human attributes to an imagined transcendent being called God’. He rejected the speculative idealism of Hegel, his teacher. Reality is not the subjective idea in my head but is received through the organs of sense, especially sight. Reality is in the material objects of sense.

N. Waite Willis, Jr. relates this central fact of Feuerbach’s philosophy of knowledge to our present purpose well.

If objectivity of thought and truth are to be achieved, the objects of our thoughts must be primary, must control our knowledge of them. *Sensual experience must take precedence* [emphasis added]: thinking must follow sensation of the concrete object. ‘In sensation,’ Feuerbach declares, ‘I am determined by objects. In thought I determine the object’ [Feuerbach, *Preliminary Theses Concerning the Reform of Philosophy*, as cited by Willis, p. 29]. Therefore according to Feuerbach to arrive at truth ... thought must give up control of its objects and allow to objects [of sensation only] their proper autonomy as independent subjects [Feuerbach, *Principles of the Philosophy of the Future*, Trans. Manfred Vogel, Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Co., 1966, p. 54 as cited by Willis].<sup>45</sup>

In another lecture Feuerbach laid out the principle which later Barth took up as the structural ‘omega point’ of his *Dogmatics*:

In thought, I am absolute subject... I am intolerant. In the activity of the senses, on the other hand I am liberal; I let the object be what I myself am—a subject, a real and self-actualizing being. Only sense and perception give me something as subject.<sup>46</sup>

On such principles Feuerbach determined that Christian theism, since it starts with thought, not sensible objects, is nothing more than projection of what the theologian *sees* in himself and other people.

If Barth is important to recent theology, Feuerbach, the idealists (Hegel and disciples) against whom he reacted, and the empiricists (Locke, Berkeley and especially Hume), whom he

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<sup>44</sup> G. L. Abernathy & T. A. Langford, *Philosophy of Religion: A Book of Readings* (New York: Macmillan, 1962), p. 141 note.

<sup>45</sup> W. Waite Willis, Jr., *Theism, Atheism and The Doctrine of the Trinity* (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1987), p. 29.

<sup>46</sup> *ibid.*, p. 29.

duplicated, are important for understanding Barth. Barth wrote the essay which serves as introduction to my thumb-worn (by my students) copy of the English translation of Feuerbach's *The Essence of Christianity*.

Barth's efforts to withdraw from the 'modernism' of his day seemed to be supported by Feuerbach's essay. He too rejected the god of the 'theism' of the nineteenth century, that of idealistic philosophers and their theological counterparts. He felt that by accepting the empirical epistemology of Feuerbach he could start theological construction with the concrete Jesus of Nazareth as God in the flesh. Jesus as God-man gave God concrete visibility. This in turn gave the New Testament reports of Jesus' life, death and resurrection great importance. All the literary production of Barth seems to be built on this approach to a system of theology. So the visible Jesus, and with Him as also Son of God and Second Person of the one triune God, become for the multi-volume *Church Dogmatics* the organizing structure and, by variegated lines of reasoning, the substance of all else.

The three Persons of the Godhead have served a few theologians as rubrics for arranging the topics of a theological system. Melchior Leydecker, professor of theology at Utrecht (b. 1679) and an ardent champion of the Reformed system and Hans L. Martensen, professor of theology at Copenhagen (1808–1884) and a somewhat mystical theologian, employed this arrangement. Barth not only makes a 'big deal' of putting the Trinity first in his order of treatment but as such carries his own construction of Trinitarian Christology throughout his system.

This God-as-Trinity meets individuals in an 'I-Thou confrontation' (also a Feuerbach notion) and these confrontations are revelation, personal events, from which theology is built. The Bible may be read as a somewhat factual report (if guided by sound critical procedures) of these confrontational revelatory events, hence of use for systematic theology.

But more: Feuerbach asserted that the presence of evil in the world, especially the extreme suffering of human beings, renders ridiculous the belief in a benevolent God of either theism or Scripture. Barth has deemed Feuerbach correct in this except that all three Persons of the immanent Trinity actually took human sufferings into themselves. Thus Barth thinks he captures Feuerbach's empiricism for Christian theology.

### **Twentieth-century Atheistic Pessimism**

At this point the reader should know that throughout the early and middle years of the twentieth century—especially after World War I—several forms of utterly pessimistic, atheistic philosophy gained great notice in intellectual circles. These entered university classrooms and the liberal seminaries as feasible outlooks on life. The 'beat generation' and the 'hippies' and other sad-faced subcultures of young people were only a few of the outrageous later outcomes.

The evils of the first half of the twentieth century seemed to highlight the perennial challenge pain and death make to the very existence of God on the one hand and to His benevolence and power on the other. A 'creation which includes such conditions is incomprehensible, but that there is a just God who would allow them to persist is a contradiction. For the sake of the human feeling for God, God must be rejected.'<sup>47</sup> This is the 'protest atheism' of F.W. Nietzsche (1844–1900) risen again in the writings of Ernst Block, Albert Camus and Max Horkheimer; of Karl Jaspers and Jean-Paul Sartre and the schools of existentialism they founded.

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<sup>47</sup> *ibid.*, p. 80.

The niceties of thought in these authors and the volume of literature they generated among themselves and inspired in others is unimportant here. It is important to know that Barth's Christological and Trinitarian theology was developed in the atmosphere of the challenges of 'protest atheism' and that he thought he provided an adequate 'dialectical' (which means a 'yes' and a 'no') answer in his doctrine of Christ, Trinity, covenant and incarnation.

Karl Barth closed his treatment of the incarnation and what is usually called the *Work of Christ* in 1955,<sup>48</sup> thirty-five years after he wrote his essay on Feuerbach. He is still concerned there with failures of the God of theism and the enigma of sin and suffering in God's world. He acknowledges still that 'we have been speaking in riddles' and though 'Paradox cannot be our final word in relation to Jesus Christ' he must retain, to the glory of God, this obscurity because he thinks the New Testament does so.<sup>49</sup> The whole Trinity is in the man Jesus, 'the elect' man in whom also is the entire human race, elect in Him in what appears to this reader a 'covenant of salvation' (Barth does not claim to speak perspicuously). He comes as near to clarity as anywhere in a passage in this section where he explains to his own satisfaction that the ancient Patristians just might have had it right.<sup>50</sup>

For what is represented and reflected in the humiliation of God is the mercy of the Father in which He too is not merely exalted but lowly with His Son, allowing Himself to be so affected by the misery of the creature, of man, that to save it, endow it with eternal life, He does not count it too high a cost to give and send His Son, to elect Him to take our place as the Rejected, and therefore to abase Him. It is not at all the case that God has no part in the suffering of Jesus Christ even in His mode of being [Barth prefers this expression to hypostasis, or person] as Father. No, there is a *particula veri* [a particle of truth] in the teaching of the early Patristians. This is that primarily it is God the Father who suffers in the offering and sending of His Son, in His abasement. The suffering is not His own, but the alien suffering of the creature, of man, which He takes to Himself in Him. But He does suffer it in the humiliation of His Son with a depth with which it never was or will be suffered by any man—apart from the One who is His Son. And He does it so in order that, having been born by Him in the offering and sending of His Son, it should not have to be suffered in this way by man. This fatherly fellow-suffering of God is the mystery, the basis, of the humiliation of His Son; the truth of that which takes place historically is His crucifixion.<sup>51</sup>

In this way the Father of neo-orthodoxy and the most dominant figure of left-of-centre Protestant theology of the twentieth century worked around simple acceptance of plain biblical facts. God planned a world in which He determined to permit the presence of moral evils and consequent physical evils. His reasons God has not seen fit to reveal. Faith is assured that God's reasons are sufficient and wise and good. Most Christian theologians have not thought it necessary to write twelve enormous volumes of theological literature to justify God in His decision, nor to torture

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<sup>48</sup> Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, iv, ed. G. W. Bromiley & T. F. Torrance (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1936), 2, p. xiii.

<sup>49</sup> *ibid.*, p. 348.

<sup>50</sup> In context Barth seeks to demonstrate the Holy Spirit also was involved in suffering.

<sup>51</sup> *ibid.*, /2, p. 357.

Scripture as Barth does in the process of creating his system. Several recent theologians, Protestant and Roman Catholic, have modified or rejected classical theism in the direction of divine participation in all the suffering, affecting the origins and form of the theology of the very influential Karl Barth, whose twelve volumes of *Church Dogmatics* still seem to demand attention.<sup>522</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Thirty years ago I wrote an essay on the problem of evil which appeared in *Bibliotheca Sacra* ('The Nature and Origin of Evil') and later under the same title in *Vital Apologetic Issues*, ed., Roy Zuck (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1995), pp. 10–18. Much of that essay is incorporated into this chapter.

<sup>2</sup> Robert Duncan Culver, *Systematic Theology: Biblical and Historical* (Ross-shire, UK: Mentor, 2005), 191-215.

# God's Providence

*If God controls all things, how can our actions have real meaning? What are the decrees of God?*

## EXPLANATION AND SCRIPTURAL BASIS

Once we understand that God is the all-powerful Creator (see chapter 15), it seems reasonable to conclude that he also preserves and governs everything in the universe as well. Though the term *providence* is not found in Scripture, it has been traditionally used to summarize God's ongoing relationship to his creation. When we accept the biblical doctrine of providence, we avoid four common errors in thinking about God's relationship to creation. The biblical doctrine is not *deism* (which teaches that God created the world and then essentially abandoned it), nor *pantheism* (which teaches that the creation does not have a real, distinct existence in itself, but is only part of God), but *providence* which teaches that though God is actively related to and involved in the creation at each moment, creation is distinct from him. Moreover, the biblical doctrine does not teach that events in creation are determined by *chance* (or randomness), nor are they determined by impersonal *fate* (or determinism), but by God, who is the personal yet infinitely powerful Creator and Lord.

We may define God's providence as follows: *God is continually involved with all created things in such a way that he (1) keeps them existing and maintaining the properties with which he created them; (2) cooperates with created things in every action, directing their distinctive properties to cause them to act as they do; and (3) directs them to fulfill his purposes.*

Under the general category of providence we have three subtopics, according to the three elements in the definition above: (1) Preservation, (2) Concurrence, and (3) Government.

We shall examine each of these separately, then consider differing views and objections to the doctrine of providence. It should be noted that this is a doctrine on which there has been substantial disagreement among Christians since the early history of the church, particularly with respect to God's relationship to the willing choices of moral creatures. In this chapter we will first present a summary of the position favored in this textbook (what is commonly called the "Reformed" or "Calvinist" position),<sup>1</sup> then consider arguments that have been made from another position (what is commonly called the "Arminian" position).

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<sup>1</sup> Though philosophers may use the term *determinism* (or *soft determinism*) to categorize the position I advocate in this chapter, I do not use that term because it is too easily misunderstood in everyday English: (1) It suggests a system in which human choices are not real and make no difference in the outcome of events; and (2) it suggests a system in which the ultimate cause of events is a mechanistic universe rather than a wise and personal God. Moreover, (3) it too easily allows critics to group the biblical view with non-Christian deterministic systems and blur the distinctions between them.

The view advocated in this chapter is also sometimes called "compatibilism," because it holds that absolute divine sovereignty is compatible with human significance and real human choices. I have no objection to the nuances of this term, but I have decided not to use it because (1) I want to avoid the proliferation of technical terms in studying theology, and (2) it seems preferable simply to call my

## A. Preservation

*God keeps all created things existing and maintaining the properties with which he created them.*

Hebrews 1:3 tells us that Christ is “upholding the universe by his word of power.” The Greek word translated “upholding” is φέρω (G5770) “carry, bear.” This is commonly used in the New Testament for carrying something from one place to another, such as bringing a paralyzed man on a bed to Jesus (Luke 5:18), bringing wine to the steward of the feast (John 2:8), or bringing a cloak and books to Paul (2 Tim. 4:13). It does not mean simply “sustain,” but has the sense of active, purposeful control over the thing being carried from one place to another. In Hebrews 1:3, the use of the present participle indicates that Jesus is “*continually* carrying along all things” in the universe by his word of power. Christ is actively involved in the work of providence.

Similarly, in Colossians 1:17, Paul says of Christ that “in him all things hold together.” The phrase “all things” refers to every created thing in the universe (see v. 16), and the verse affirms that Christ keeps all things existing—in him they continue to exist or “endure” (NASB mg.). Both verses indicate that if Christ were to cease his continuing activity of sustaining all things in the universe, then all except the triune God would instantly cease to exist. Such teaching is also affirmed by Paul when he says, “In him we live and move and *have our being*” (Acts 17:28), and by Ezra: “You are the LORD, you alone; you have made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth and all that is on it, the seas and all that is in them; *and you preserve all of them*; and the host of heaven worships you” (Neh. 9:6). Peter also says that “the heavens and earth that now exist” are “being *kept* until the day of judgment” (2 Peter 3:7).

One aspect of God’s providential preservation is the fact that he continues to give us breath each moment. Elihu in his wisdom says of God, “If he should take back his spirit to himself, and gather to himself his breath, all flesh would perish together, and man would return to dust” (Job 34:14–15; cf. Ps. 104:29).

God, in preserving all things he has made, also causes them to maintain the properties with which he created them. God preserves water in such a way that it continues to act like water. He causes grass to continue to act like grass, with all its distinctive characteristics. He causes the paper on which this sentence is written to continue to act like paper so that it does not spontaneously dissolve into water and float away or change into a living thing and begin to grow! Until it is acted on by some other part of creation and thereby its properties are changed (for instance, until it is burned with fire and it becomes ash), this paper will continue to act like paper so long as God preserves the earth and the creation that he has made.

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position a traditional Reformed view of God’s providence, and thereby to place myself within a widely understood theological tradition represented by John Calvin and the other systematic theologians listed in the “Reformed” category at the end of this chapter.

NASB NASB—New American Standard Bible

mg mg.—margin or marginal notes

cf cf.—compare

We should not, however, think of God's preservation as a continuous new creation: he does not continuously create new atoms and molecules for every existing thing every moment. Rather, he *preserves* what has already been created: he "carries along all things" by his word of power (Heb. 1:3, author's translation). We must also appreciate that created things are *real* and that their characteristics are *real*. I do not just imagine that the rock in my hand is hard—it is hard. If I bump it against my head, I do not just imagine that it hurts—it *does* hurt! Because God keeps this rock maintaining the properties with which he created it, the rock has been hard since the day it was formed, and (unless something else in creation interacts with it and changes it) it will be hard until the day God destroys the heavens and the earth (2 Peter 3:7, 10–12).

God's providence provides a basis for science: God has made and continues to sustain a universe that acts in predictable ways. If a scientific experiment gives a certain result today, then we can have confidence that (if all the factors are the same) it will give the same result tomorrow and a hundred years from tomorrow. The doctrine of providence also provides a foundation for technology: I can be confident that gasoline will make my car run today just as it did yesterday, not simply because "it has always worked that way," but because God's providence sustains a universe in which created things maintain the properties with which he created them. The *result* may be similar in the life of an unbeliever and the life of a Christian: we both put gasoline in our cars and drive away. But he will do so without knowing the ultimate reason why it works that way, and I will do so with knowledge of the actual final reason (God's providence) and with thanks to my Creator for the wonderful creation that he has made and preserves.

## B. Concurrence

*God cooperates with created things in every action, directing their distinctive properties to cause them to act as they do.*

This second aspect of providence, *concurrence* is an expansion of the idea contained in the first aspect, *preservation*. In fact, some theologians (such as John Calvin) treat the fact of concurrence under the category of preservation, but it is helpful to treat it as a distinct category.

In Ephesians 1:11 Paul says that God "accomplishes all things according to the counsel of his will." The word translated "accomplishes" (ἐνεργέω, G1919) indicates that God "works" or "brings about" *all things* according to his own will. No event in creation falls outside of his providence. Of course this fact is hidden from our eyes unless we read it in Scripture. Like preservation, God's work of concurrence is not clearly evident from observation of the natural world around us.

In giving scriptural proof for concurrence, we will begin with the inanimate creation, then move to animals, and finally to different kinds of events in the life of human beings.

**1. Inanimate Creation.** There are many things in creation that we think of as merely "natural" occurrences. Yet Scripture says that God causes them to happen. We read of "fire and hail, snow and frost, stormy wind fulfilling his command!" (Ps. 148:8). Similarly,

To the *snow* he says, "Fall on the earth";  
and to the shower and the *rain* "Be strong." ...  
By the breath of God *ice* is given,  
and the broad waters are frozen fast.  
He loads the thick cloud with moisture;  
the clouds scatter his *lightning*.

They turn round and round by his guidance,  
to accomplish all that he commands them  
on the face of the habitable world.

Whether for correction, or for his land,  
or for love, he causes it to happen. (Job 37:6–13; cf. similar statements in 38:22–30)

Again, the psalmist declares that “Whatever the LORD pleases he does, in heaven and on earth, in the seas and all deeps” (Ps. 135:6), and then in the next sentence he illustrates God’s doing of his will in the weather: “He it is who makes the clouds rise at the end of the earth, who makes lightnings for the rain and brings forth the wind from his storehouses” (Ps. 135:7; cf. 104:4).

God also causes the grass to grow: “*You cause the grass to grow* for the cattle, and plants for man to cultivate, that he may bring forth food from the earth” (Ps. 104:14). God directs the stars in the heavens, asking Job, “Can you bring forth the constellations in their seasons or lead out the Bear with its cubs?” (Job 38:32 NIV; “the Bear” or Ursa Major is commonly called the Big Dipper; v. 31 refers to the constellations Pleiades and Orion). Moreover, God continually directs the coming of the morning (Job 38:12), a fact Jesus affirmed when he said that God “*makes his sun rise* on the evil and on the good, and *sends rain* on the just and on the unjust” (Matt. 5:45).

**2. Animals.** Scripture affirms that God feeds the wild animals of the field, for, “These all look to you, to give them their food in due season. When you give to them, they gather it up; when you open your hand, they are filled with good things. When you hide your face, they are dismayed” (Ps. 104:27–29; cf. Job 38:39–41). Jesus also affirmed this when he said, “Look at the *birds* of the air ... your heavenly Father *feeds them*” (Matt. 6:26). And he said that not one sparrow “will fall to the ground without your Father’s will” (Matt. 10:29).

**3. Seemingly “Random” or “Chance” Events.** From a human perspective, the casting of lots (or its modern equivalent, the rolling of dice or flipping of a coin) is the most typical of random events that occur in the universe. But Scripture affirms that the outcome of such an event is from God: “The lot is cast into the lap, but the decision is wholly from the LORD” (Prov. 16:33).<sup>2</sup>

**4. Events Fully Caused by God and Fully Caused by the Creature as Well.** For any of these foregoing events (rain and snow, grass growing, sun and stars, the feeding of animals, or casting

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cf cf.—compare

cf cf.—compare

NIV NIV—New International Version

<sup>2</sup> It is true that Eccl. 9:11 says that “the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, nor bread to the wise, nor riches to the intelligent, nor favor to the men of skill; but time and *chance* happen to them all.” But Michael Eaton correctly observes, “On the lips of an Israelite ‘chance’ means what is unexpected, not what is random” (*Ecclesiastes TOTC* [Leicester and Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1983], p. 70). The rare word here translated “chance” (Heb., צְרָפָה, H7004) occurs only once more in the Bible (1 Kings 5:4[18], of an evil *event*).

of lots), we could (at least in theory) give a completely satisfactory “natural” explanation. A botanist can detail the factors that cause grass to grow, such as sun, moisture, temperature, nutrients in the soil, etc. Yet Scripture says that *God* causes the grass to grow. A meteorologist can give a complete explanation of factors that cause rain (humidity, temperature, atmospheric pressure, etc.), and can even produce rain in a weather laboratory. Yet Scripture says that *God* causes the rain. A physicist with accurate information on the force and direction a pair of dice was rolled could fully explain what caused the dice to give the result they did—yet Scripture says that *God* brings about the decision of the lot that is cast.

This shows us that it is incorrect for us to reason that if we know the “natural” cause of something in this world, then God did not cause it. Rather, if it rains we should thank him. If crops grow we should thank him. In all of these events, it is not as though the event was partly caused by God and partly by factors in the created world. If that were the case, then we would always be looking for some small feature of an event that we could not explain and attribute that (say 1 percent of the cause) to God. But surely this is not a correct view. Rather, these passages affirm that such events are entirely caused by God. Yet we know that (in another sense) they are entirely caused by factors in the creation as well.

The doctrine of concurrence affirms that God *directs*, and *works through* the distinctive properties of each created thing, so that these things themselves bring about the results that we see. In this way it is possible to affirm that in one sense events are fully (100 percent) caused by God and fully (100 percent) caused by the creature as well. However, divine and creaturely causes work in different ways. The divine cause of each event works as an invisible, behind-the-scenes, directing cause and therefore could be called the “primary cause” that plans and initiates everything that happens. But the created thing brings about actions in ways consistent with the creature’s own properties, ways that can often be described by us or by professional scientists who carefully observe the processes. These creaturely factors and properties can therefore be called the “secondary” causes of everything that happens, even though they are the causes that are evident to us by observation.

**5. The Affairs of Nations.** Scripture also speaks of God’s providential control of human affairs. We read that God “makes nations great, and he destroys them: he enlarges nations, and leads them away” (Job 12:23). “Dominion belongs to the LORD, and he rules over the nations” (Ps. 22:28). He has determined the time of existence and the place of every nation on the earth, for Paul says, “he made from one every nation of men to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their habitation” (Acts 17:26; cf. 14:16). And when Nebuchadnezzar repented, he learned to praise God,

For his dominion is an everlasting dominion,  
and his kingdom endures from generation to generation;  
all the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing;  
and *he does according to his will in the host of heaven  
and among the inhabitants of the earth;*  
and none can stay his hand or say to him,  
“What are you doing?” (Dan. 4:34–35)

**6. All Aspects of Our Lives.** It is amazing to see the extent to which Scripture affirms that God brings about various events in our lives. For example, our dependence on God to give us food each day is affirmed every time we pray, “Give us this day our daily bread” (Matt. 6:11), even

though we work for our food and (as far as mere human observation can discern) obtain it through entirely “natural” causes. Similarly, Paul, looking at events with the eye of faith, affirms that “my God will supply every need” of his children (Phil 4:19), even though God may use “ordinary” means (such as other people) to do so.

God plans our days before we are born, for David affirms, “In your book were written, every one of them, the days that were formed for me, when as yet there was none of them” (Ps. 139:16). And Job says that man’s “days are determined, and the number of his months is with you, and you have appointed his bounds that he cannot pass” (Job 14:5). This can be seen in the life of Paul, who says that God “had set me apart before I was born” (Gal. 1:15), and Jeremiah, to whom God said, “Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you; I appointed you a prophet to the nations” (Jer. 1:5).

All our actions are under God’s providential care, for “in him we live and *move*” (Acts 17:28). The individual steps we take each day are directed by the Lord. Jeremiah confesses, “I know, O LORD, that the way of man is not in himself, that it is not in man who walks to direct his steps” (Jer. 10:23). We read that “a man’s steps are ordered by the LORD” (Prov. 20:24), and that “a man’s mind plans his way, but the LORD directs his steps” (Prov. 16:9). Similarly, Proverbs 16:1 affirms, “The plans of the mind belong to man, but the answer of the tongue is from the LORD.”<sup>3</sup>

Success and failure come from God, for we read, “For not from the east or from the west and not from the wilderness comes lifting up; but it is God who executes judgment, putting down one and lifting up another” (Ps. 75:6–7). So Mary can say, “He has put down the mighty from their thrones, and exalted those of low degree” (Luke 1:52). The LORD gives children, for children “are a heritage from the LORD, the fruit of the womb a reward” (Ps. 127:3).

All our talents and abilities are from the Lord, for Paul can ask the Corinthians, “What have you that you did not receive? If then you received it, why do you boast as if it were not a gift?” (1 Cor. 4:7). David knew that to be true regarding his military skill, for, though he must have trained many hours in the use of a bow and arrow, he could say of God, “He trains my hands for war, so that my arms can bend a bow of bronze” (Ps. 18:34).

God influences rulers in their decisions, for “the king’s heart is a stream of water in the hand of the LORD; he turns it wherever he will” (Prov. 21:1). An illustration of this was when the Lord “turned the heart of the king of Assyria” to his people, “so that he aided them in the work of the house of God, the God of Israel” (Ezr. 6:22), or when “the LORD stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia” (Ezr. 1:1) to help the people of Israel. But it is not just the heart of the king that God influences, for he looks down “on all the inhabitants of the earth” and “fashions the hearts

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<sup>3</sup> David J.A. Clines, “Predestination in the Old Testament,” in *Grace Unlimited* ed. by Clark H. Pinnock (Minneapolis: Bethany House, 1975), pp. 116–17, objects that these verses simply affirm that “when it comes to conflict between God and man, undoubtedly it cannot be man who wins the day.” He says that these verses do not describe life in general, but describe unusual situations where God overcomes man’s will in order to bring about his special purposes. Clines denies that these verses mean that God always acts this way or that these verses represent God’s control of human conduct generally. Yet no such restriction is seen in these passages (see Prov. 16:1, 9). The verses do not say that God directs a man’s steps in rare instances where God needs to intervene to fulfill his purposes; they simply make general statements about the way the world works—God directs man’s steps in general, not simply when there is conflict between God and man.

of them all” (Ps. 33:14–15). When we realize that the heart in Scripture is the location of our inmost thoughts and desires, this is a significant passage. God especially guides the desires and inclinations of believers, working in us “both *to will* and to work for his good pleasure” (Phil. 2:13).

All of these passages, reporting both general statements about God’s work in the lives of all people and specific examples of God’s work in the lives of individuals, lead us to conclude that God’s providential work of concurrence extends to all aspects of our lives. Our words, our steps, our movements, our hearts, and our abilities are all from the Lord.

But we must guard against misunderstanding. Here also, as with the lower creation, God’s providential direction as an unseen, behind-the-scenes, “primary cause,” should not lead us to deny the reality of our choices and actions. Again and again Scripture affirms that we really do *cause* events to happen. We are significant and we are responsible. We *do have choices* and these are real choices that bring about real results. Scripture repeatedly affirms these truths as well. Just as a rock is *really hard* because God has made it with the property of hardness, just as water is *really wet* because God has made it with the property of wetness, just as plants are *really alive* because God has made them with the property of life, so our choices are *real choices* and do have significant effects, because God has made us in such a wonderful way that he has endowed us with the property of willing choice.

One approach to these passages about God’s concurrence is to say that if our choices are real, they *cannot* be caused by God (see below for further discussion of this viewpoint). But the number of passages that affirm this providential control of God is so considerable, and the difficulties involved in giving them some other interpretation are so formidable, that it does not seem to me that this can be the right approach to them. It seems better to affirm that God causes all things that happen, but that he does so in such a way that he somehow upholds our ability to make *willing, responsible choices* choices that have *real and eternal results* and for which we are *held accountable*. Exactly how God combines his providential control with our willing and significant choices, Scripture does not explain to us. But rather than deny one aspect or the other (simply because we cannot explain how both can be true), we should accept both in an attempt to be faithful to the teaching of all of Scripture.

The analogy of an author writing a play may help us to grasp how both aspects can be true. In the Shakespearean play *Macbeth* the character Macbeth murders King Duncan. Now (if we assume for a moment that this is a fictional account), we may ask, “Who killed King Duncan?” On one level, the correct answer is “Macbeth.” Within the play, he carried out the murder and he is rightly to blame for it. But on another level, a correct answer to the question, “Who killed King Duncan?” would be “William Shakespeare caused his death”: he wrote the play, he created all the characters in it, and he wrote the part where Macbeth killed King Duncan.

It would not be correct to say that because Macbeth killed King Duncan, William Shakespeare did not (somehow) cause his death. Nor would it be correct to say that because William Shakespeare caused King Duncan’s death, Macbeth did not kill him. Both are true. On the level of the characters in the play Macbeth fully (100%) caused King Duncan’s death, but on the level of the creator of the play, William Shakespeare fully (100%) caused King Duncan’s death. In similar fashion, we can understand that God fully causes things in one way (as Creator), and we fully cause things in another way (as creatures). (One word of caution however: The analogy of an author (= writer, creator) of a play should not lead us to say that God is the

“author” (= actor, doer, an older sense of “author”) of sin, for he never does sinful actions, nor does he ever delight in them.)<sup>4</sup>

Of course, characters in a play are not real persons—they are fictional characters. But God is infinitely greater and wiser than we are. While we can only create *fictional* characters in a play, our almighty God has created us as *real* persons who make willing choices. To say that God could not make a world in which he (somehow) *causes us to make willing choices* (as some would argue today; see discussion below), is limiting the power of God. It seems also to deny a large number of passages of Scripture.

**7. What About Evil?** If God does indeed cause, through his providential activity, everything that comes about in the world, then the question arises, “What is the relationship between God and evil in the world?” Does God actually cause the evil actions that people do? If he does, then is God not responsible for sin?

In approaching this question, it is best first to read the passages of Scripture that most directly address it. We can begin by looking at several passages that affirm that God did, indeed, cause evil events to come about and evil deeds to be done. But we must remember that in all these passages it is very clear that Scripture nowhere shows God as *directly doing anything evil* but rather as bringing about evil deeds through the willing actions of moral creatures. Moreover, *Scripture never blames God for evil or shows God as taking pleasure in evil* and Scripture never excuses human beings for the wrong they do. However we understand God’s relationship to evil, we must *never* come to the point where we think that we are not responsible for the evil that we do, or that God takes pleasure in evil or is to be blamed for it. Such a conclusion is clearly contrary to Scripture.

There are literally dozens of Scripture passages that say that God (indirectly) brought about some kind of evil. I have quoted such an extensive list (in the next few paragraphs) because Christians often are unaware of the extent of this forthright teaching in Scripture. Yet it must be

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<sup>4</sup> I. Howard Marshall, “Predestination in the New Testament” in *Grace Unlimited* by Clark H. Pinnock, pp. 132–33, 139, objects to the analogy of an author and a play because the actors “are bound by the characters assigned to them and the lines that they have learned” so that even if the dramatist “makes [the characters] say ‘I love my creator’ in his drama, this is not mutual love in the real sense.”

But Marshall limits his analysis to what is possible with human beings acting on a human level. He does not give consideration to the possibility (in fact, the reality!) that God is able to do far more than human beings are able to do, and that he can wonderfully create genuine human beings rather than mere characters in a play. A better approach to the analogy of an author and a play would be if Marshall would apply to this question a very helpful statement that he made in another part of the essay: “The basic difficulty is that of attempting to explain the nature of *the relationship between an infinite God and finite creatures*. Our temptation is to think of divine causation in much the same way as human causation, and this produces difficulties as soon as we try to relate divine causation and human freedom. It is beyond our ability to explain how God can cause us to do certain things (or to cause the universe to come into being and to behave as it does)” (pp. 137–38). I can agree fully with everything in Marshall’s statement at that point, and find that to be a very helpful way of approaching this problem.

remembered that in all of these examples, the evil is actually done not by God but by people or demons who choose to do it.

A very clear example is found in the story of Joseph. Scripture clearly says that Joseph's brothers were wrongly jealous of him (Gen. 37:11), hated him (Gen. 37:4, 5, 8), wanted to kill him (Gen. 37:20), and did wrong when they cast him into a pit (Gen. 37:24) and then sold him into slavery in Egypt (Gen. 37:28). Yet later Joseph could say to his brothers, "*God sent me before you to preserve life*" (Gen. 45:5), and "*You meant evil against me; but God meant it for good to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today*" (Gen. 50:20).<sup>5</sup> Here we have a combination of evil deeds brought about by sinful men who are rightly held accountable for their sin and the overriding providential control of God whereby God's own purposes were accomplished. Both are clearly affirmed.

The story of the exodus from Egypt repeatedly affirms that God hardened the heart of Pharaoh: God says, "I will harden his heart" (Ex. 4:21), "I will harden Pharaoh's heart" (Ex. 7:3), "the LORD hardened the heart of Pharaoh" (Ex. 9:12), "the LORD hardened Pharaoh's heart" (Ex. 10:20, repeated in 10:27 and again in 11:10), "I will harden Pharaoh's heart" (Ex. 14:4), and "the LORD hardened the heart of Pharaoh king of Egypt" (Ex. 14:8). It is sometimes objected that Scripture also says that Pharaoh hardened his own heart (Ex. 8:15, 32; 9:34), and that God's act of hardening Pharaoh's heart was only in response to the initial rebellion and hardness of heart that Pharaoh himself exhibited of his own free will. But it should be noted that God's promises that he would harden Pharaoh's heart (Ex. 4:21; 7:3) are made long before Scripture tells us that Pharaoh hardened his own heart (we read of this for the first time in Ex. 8:15). Moreover, our analysis of concurrence given above, in which both divine and human agents can cause the same event, should show us that both factors can be true at the same time: even when Pharaoh hardens his own heart, that is not inconsistent with saying that God is causing Pharaoh to do this and thereby God is hardening the heart of Pharaoh. Finally, if someone would object that God is just intensifying the evil desires and choices that were already in Pharaoh's heart, then this kind of action could still in theory at least cover all the evil in the world today, since all people have evil desires in their hearts and all people do in fact make evil choices.

What was God's purpose in this? Paul reflects on Exodus 9:16 and says, "For the scripture says to Pharaoh, 'I have raised you up for the very purpose of showing my power in you, so that my name may be proclaimed in all the earth'" (Rom. 9:17). Then Paul infers a general truth from this specific example: "So then he has mercy upon whomever he wills, and he hardens the heart of whomever he wills" (Rom. 9:18). In fact, God also hardened the hearts of the Egyptian people so that they pursued Israel into the Red Sea: "I will harden the hearts of the Egyptians so that they shall go in after them, and I will get glory over Pharaoh and all his host, his chariots, and his horsemen" (Ex. 14:17). This theme is repeated in Psalm 105:25: "He turned their hearts to hate his people."

Later in the Old Testament narrative similar examples are found of the Canaanites who were destroyed in the conquest of Palestine under Joshua. We read, "For it was the LORD's doing to harden their hearts that they should come against Israel in battle, in order that they should be utterly destroyed" (Josh. 11:20; see also Judg. 3:12; 9:23). And Samson's demand to marry an unbelieving Philistine woman "was from the LORD; for he was seeking an occasion against the Philistines. At that time the Philistines had dominion over Israel" (Judg. 14:4). We also read that the sons of Eli, when rebuked for their evil deeds, "would not listen to the voice of their father;

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<sup>5</sup> Ps. 105:17 says that God "had sent a man ahead of them, Joseph, who was sold as a slave."

for it was the will of the LORD to slay them” (1 Sam. 2:25). Later, “an evil spirit from the LORD” tormented King Saul (1 Sam. 16:14).

When David sinned, the LORD said to him through Nathan the prophet, “I will raise up evil against you out of your own house; and I will take your wives before your eyes, and give them to your neighbor, and he shall lie with your wives in the sight of this sun. For you did it secretly; but I will do this thing before all Israel, and before the sun” (2 Sam. 12:11–12; fulfilled in 16:22). In further punishment for David’s sin, “the LORD struck the child that Uriah’s wife bore to David, and it became sick” and eventually died (2 Sam. 12:15–18). David remained mindful of the fact that God could bring evil against him, because at a later time, when Shimei cursed David and threw stones at him and his servants (2 Sam. 16:5–8), David refused to take vengeance on Shimei but said to his soldiers, “Let him alone, and let him curse; for the LORD has bidden him” (2 Sam. 16:11).

Still later in David’s life, the Lord “incited”<sup>6</sup> David to take a census of the people (2 Sam. 24:1), but afterward David recognized this as sin, saying, “I have sinned greatly in what I have done” (2 Sam. 24:10), and God sent punishment on the land because of this sin (2 Sam. 24:12–17). However, it is also clear that “the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel” (2 Sam. 24:1), so God’s inciting of David to sin was a means by which he brought about punishment on the people of Israel. Moreover, the means by which God incited David is made clear in 1 Chronicles 21:1: “Satan stood up against Israel, and *incited* David to number Israel.” In this one incident the Bible gives us a remarkable insight into the three influences that contributed in different ways to one action: God, in order to bring about his purposes, worked through Satan to incite David to sin, but Scripture regards David as being responsible for that sin. Again, after Solomon turned away from the Lord because of his foreign wives, “the LORD raised up an adversary against Solomon, Hadad the Edomite” (1 Kings 11:14), and “God also raised up as an adversary to him, Rezon the son of Eliada” (1 Kings 11:23). These were evil kings raised up by God.

In the story of Job, though the LORD gave Satan permission to bring harm to Job’s possessions and children, and though this harm came through the evil actions of the Sabaeans and the Chaldeans, as well as a windstorm (Job 1:12, 15, 17, 19), yet Job looks beyond those secondary causes and, with the eyes of faith, sees it all as from the hand of the Lord: “the LORD gave, and the LORD has taken away; *blessed be the name of the LORD*” (Job 1:21). The Old Testament author follows Job’s statement immediately with the sentence, “In all this Job did not sin or charge God with wrong” (Job 1:22). Job has just been told that evil marauding bands had destroyed his flocks and herds, yet with great faith and patience in adversity, he says, “*The LORD* has taken away.” Though he says that the LORD had done this, yet he does not blame God for the evil or say that God had done wrong: he says, “Blessed be the name of the LORD.” To *blame* God for evil that he had brought about through secondary agents would have been to sin. Job does not do this, Scripture never does this, and neither should we.

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<sup>6</sup> The Hebrew word used when 2 Sam. 24:1 says that the Lord *incited* David against Israel is סִיטָה, H6077, “to incite, allure, instigate” (BDB, p. 694). It is the same word used in 2 Chron. 21:1 to say that Satan *incited* David to number Israel, in 1 Kings 21:25 to say that Jezebel *incited* Ahab to do evil, in Deut. 13:6(7) to warn against a loved one *enticing* a family member secretly to serve other gods, and in 2 Chron. 18:31 to say that God *moved* the Syrian army to withdraw from Jehoshaphat.

Elsewhere in the Old Testament we read that the Lord “put a lying spirit in the mouth” of Ahab’s prophets (1 Kings 22:23) and sent the wicked Assyrians as “the rod of my anger” to punish Israel (Isa. 10:5). He also sent the evil Babylonians, including Nebuchadnezzar, against Israel, saying, “I will bring them against this land and its inhabitants” (Jer. 25:9). Then God promised that later he would punish the Babylonians also: “I will punish the king of Babylon and that nation, the land of the Chaldeans, for their iniquity, says the LORD, making the land an everlasting waste” (Jer. 25:12). If there is a deceiving prophet who gives a false message, then the Lord says, “if the prophet be deceived and speak a word, I, the LORD, have deceived that prophet, and I will stretch out my hand against him, and will destroy him from the midst of my people Israel” (Ezek. 14:9, in the context of bringing judgment on Israel for their idolatry). As the culmination of a series of rhetorical questions to which the implied answer is always “no,” Amos asks, “Is a trumpet blown in a city, and the people are not afraid? Does evil befall a city, unless the LORD has done it?” (Amos 3:6). There follows a series of natural disasters in Amos 4:6–12, where the LORD reminds the people that he gave them hunger, drought, blight and mildew, locusts, pestilence, and death of men and horses, “yet you did not return to me” (Amos 4:6, 8, 9, 10, 11).

In many of the passages mentioned above, God brings evil and destruction on people in judgment upon their sins: They have been disobedient or have strayed into idolatry, and then the LORD uses evil human beings or demonic forces or “natural” disasters to bring judgment on them. (This is not always said to be the case—Joseph and Job come to mind—but it is often so.) Perhaps this idea of judgment on sin can help us to understand, at least in part, how God can righteously bring about evil events. All human beings are sinful, for Scripture tells us that “all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Rom. 3:23). None of us deserves God’s favor or his mercy, but only eternal condemnation. Therefore, when God brings evil on human beings, whether to discipline his children, or to lead unbelievers to repentance, or to bring a judgment of condemnation and destruction upon hardened sinners, none of us can charge God with doing wrong. Ultimately all will work in God’s good purposes to bring glory to him and good to his people. Yet we must realize that in punishing evil in those who are not redeemed (such as Pharaoh, the Canaanites, and the Babylonians), God is also glorified through the demonstration of his justice, holiness, and power (see Ex. 9:16; Rom. 9:14–24).

Through the prophet Isaiah God says, “I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil:<sup>7</sup> I the LORD do all these things” (Isa. 45:7 KJV; the Hebrew word for “create”

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<sup>7</sup> Other translations render the Hebrew word רָעַ, H8273, “evil,” as “disaster” (NIV) or “woe” (RSV) or “calamity” (NASB), and indeed the word can be used to apply to natural disasters such as these words imply. But it may have a broader application than to natural disasters, for the word is an extremely common word used of evil generally: It is used of the tree of the knowledge of good and *evil* (Gen. 2:9), of the *evil* among mankind that brought the judgment of the flood (Gen. 6:5), and of the *evil* of the men of Sodom (Gen. 13:13). It is used to say, “Depart from *evil* and do good” (Ps. 34:14), and to speak of the wrong of those who call *evil* good and good *evil* (Isa. 5:20), and of the sin of those whose “feet run to *evil*” (Isa. 59:7; see also 47:10, 11; 56:2; 57:1; 59:15; 65:12; 66:4). Dozens of other times throughout the Old Testament it refers to moral evil or sin. The contrast with “peace” (שָׁלוֹם, H8934) in the same phrase in Isa. 45:7 might argue that only “calamity” is in view, but not necessarily so, for moral evil and wickedness is certainly also the opposite of the wholeness of God’s “shalom” or peace. (In Amos 3:6,

here is אָרָא, H1343, the same word used in Gen. 1:1). In Lamentations 3:38 we read, “Is it not from the mouth of the Most High that good and evil come?”<sup>8</sup> The people of Israel, in a time of heartfelt repentance, cry out to God and say, “O LORD, why do you make us err from your ways and harden our heart, so that we fear you not?” (Isa. 63:17).<sup>9</sup>

The life of Jonah is a remarkable illustration of God’s concurrence in human activity. The men on board the ship sailing to Tarshish threw Jonah overboard, for Scripture says, “So *they* took up Jonah and threw him into the sea; and the sea ceased from its raging” (Jonah 1:15). Yet only five verses later Jonah acknowledges God’s providential direction in their act, for he says to God, “*You* cast me into the deep, into the heart of the seas” (Jonah 2:3). Scripture simultaneously affirms that the men threw Jonah into the sea and that God threw him into the sea. The providential direction of God did not force the sailors to do something against their will, nor were they conscious of any divine influence on them—indeed, they cried to the Lord for forgiveness as they threw Jonah overboard (Jonah 1:14). What Scripture reveals to us, and what Jonah himself realized, was that God was bringing about his plan through the willing choices of real human beings who were morally accountable for their actions. In a way not understood by us and not revealed to us, God *caused* them to make a *willing choice* to do what they did.

The most evil deed of all history, the crucifixion of Christ, was ordained by God—not just the fact that it would occur, but also all the individual actions connected with it. The church at Jerusalem recognized this, for they prayed:

For truly in this city there were gathered together against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, to do whatever your hand and your plan had predestined to take place. (Acts 4:27)

All the actions of all the participants in the crucifixion of Jesus had been “predestined” by God. Yet the apostles clearly attach no moral blame to God, for the actions resulted from the willing choices of sinful men. Peter makes this clear in his sermon at Pentecost: “this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, *you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men*” (Acts 2:23). In one sentence he links God’s plan and foreknowledge with the moral blame that attaches to the actions of “lawless men.” They were not forced by God to act against their wills; rather, God brought about his plan *through their willing choices* for which they were nevertheless responsible.

In an example similar to the Old Testament account of God sending a lying spirit into the mouth of Ahab’s prophets, we read of those who refuse to love the truth, “Therefore God sends upon them a strong delusion, to make them believe what is false, so that all may be condemned

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אָרָא, H8288, is a different but related word and has a similar range of meanings.) But Isa. 45:7 does not say that God *does evil* (see discussion below).

KJV KJV—King James Version (Authorized Version)

<sup>8</sup> The Hebrew for “evil” here is אָרָא, H8288, as in Amos 3:6.

<sup>9</sup> Another kind of evil is physical infirmity. With regard to this, the Lord says to Moses, “Who has made man’s mouth? Who makes him dumb, or deaf, or seeing, or blind? Is it not I, the LORD?” (Ex. 4:11).

who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness” (2 Thess. 2:11–12). And Peter tells his readers that those who oppose them and persecute them, who reject Christ as Messiah, “stumble because they disobey the word, as they were destined to do” (1 Peter 2:8).<sup>10</sup>

**8. Analysis of Verses Relating to God and Evil.** After looking at so many verses that speak of God’s providential use of the evil actions of men and demons, what can we say by way of analysis?

**a. God Uses All Things to Fulfill His Purposes and Even Uses Evil for His Glory and for Our Good:** Thus, when evil comes into our lives to trouble us, we can have from the doctrine of providence a deeper assurance that “God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to his purpose” (Rom. 8:28 NASB). This kind of conviction enabled Joseph to say to his brothers, “You meant evil against me; but *God meant it for good*” (Gen. 50:20).

We can also realize that God is glorified even in the punishment of evil. Scripture tells us that “the LORD has made everything for its purpose, even the wicked for the day of trouble” (Prov. 16:4).<sup>11</sup> Similarly, the psalmist affirms, “Surely the wrath of men shall praise you” (Ps. 76:10). And the example of Pharaoh (Rom. 9:14–24) is a clear example of the way God uses evil for his own glory and for the good of his people.

**b. Nevertheless, God Never Does Evil, and Is Never to Be Blamed for Evil:** In a statement similar to those cited above from Acts 2:23 and 4:27–28, Jesus also combines God’s predestination of the crucifixion with moral blame on those who carry it out: “For the Son of man goes *as it has been determined*; but woe to that man by whom he is betrayed!” (Luke 22:22;

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<sup>10</sup> The “destining” in this verse is best taken to refer to both the stumbling and the disobedience. It is incorrect to say that God only destined the fact that those who disobey would stumble, because it is not a fact but persons (“they”) who are said to be “destined” in this case. (See discussion in Wayne Grudem, *The First Epistle of Peter* TNTC [Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, and Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988], pp. 106–10.)

NASB NASB—New American Standard Bible

<sup>11</sup> David J.A. Clines, “Predestination in the Old Testament,” p. 116, retranslates this, “The Lord has made everything with its counterpart, so the wicked will have his day of doom.” He does this in order to avoid the conclusion that the Lord has made some wicked people for the day of evil. But his translation is not convincing. The Hebrew word translated “purpose” in the RSV (רָצוֹן, H5102) occurs only eight times in the Old Testament and usually refers to an “answer” to a question or a statement. So it means something like “appropriate response” or “corresponding purpose.” But the preposition לְ, H4200, is much more accurately translated “for” (not “with”), so in either case the sentence affirms that the Lord has made everything for its appropriate purpose or the response appropriate to it. Therefore, whether we translate “purpose” or “counterpart,” the verse affirms that even the wicked have been made by the Lord “for [Heb. לְ] the day of evil.”

cf. Matt. 26:24; Mark 14:21). And in a more general statement about evil in the world, Jesus says, “Woe to the world for temptations to sin! For it is necessary that temptations come, but woe to the man by whom the temptation comes!” (Matt. 18:7).

James speaks similarly in warning us not to blame God for the evil we do when he says, “Let no one say when he is tempted, “I am tempted by God”; for God cannot be tempted with evil and he himself tempts no one; but each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire” (James 1:13–14). The verse does not say that God never causes evil; it affirms that we should never think of him as the personal agent who is tempting us or who is to be held accountable for the temptation. We can never blame God for temptation or think that he will approve of us if we give in to it. We are to resist evil and always blame ourselves or others who tempt us, but we must never blame God. Even a verse such as Isaiah 45:7, which speaks of God “creating evil,” does not say that God himself *does* evil, but should be understood to mean that God ordained that evil would come about through the willing choices of his creatures.

These verses all make it clear that “secondary causes” (human beings, and angels and demons) are *real* and that human beings do cause evil and are responsible for it. Though God ordained that it would come about, both in general terms and in specific details, yet *God is removed from actually doing evil* and his bringing it about through “secondary causes” does not impugn his holiness or render him blameworthy. John Calvin wisely says:

Thieves and murderers and other evildoers are the instruments of divine providence, and the Lord himself uses these to carry out the judgments that he has determined with himself. Yet I deny that they can derive from this any excuse for their evil deeds. Why? Will they either involve God in the same iniquity with themselves, or will they cloak their own depravity with his justice? They can do neither.<sup>12</sup>

A little later, Calvin heads a chapter, “God So Uses the Works of the Ungodly, and So Bends Their Minds to Carry Out His Judgments, That He Remains Pure From Every Stain.”<sup>13</sup>

We should notice that the alternatives to saying that God *uses evil for his purposes* but that *he never does evil* and is *not to be blamed* for it, are not desirable ones. If we were to say that God himself does evil, we would have to conclude that he is not a good and righteous God, and therefore that he is not really God at all. On the other hand, if we maintain that God does not use evil to fulfill his purposes, then we would have to admit that there is evil in the universe that God did not intend, is not under his control, and might not fulfill his purposes. This would make it very difficult for us to affirm that “all things” work together for good for those who love God and are called according to his purpose (Rom. 8:28). If evil came into the world in spite of the fact that God did not intend it and did not want it to be there, then what guarantee do we have that there will not be more and more evil that he does not intend and that he does not want? And what guarantee do we have that he will be able to use it for his purposes, or even that he can triumph over it? Surely this is an undesirable alternative position.

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cf cf.—compare

<sup>12</sup> John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* Library of Christian Classics, ed. by John T. McNeill and trans. by F.L. Battles, 2 vols. (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1960), 1:217 (1.16.5).

<sup>13</sup> John Calvin, *Institutes* 1:228 (1.18.title).

**c. God Rightfully Blames and Judges Moral Creatures for the Evil They Do:** Many passages in Scripture affirm this. One is found in Isaiah: “These have *chosen* their own ways, and their soul *delights* in their abominations; I also will choose affliction for them, and bring their fears upon them; because, when I called, no one answered, when I spoke they did not listen; but they did what was evil in my eyes, and *chose* that in which I did not delight” (Isa. 66:3–4). Similarly, we read, “God made man upright, but they have sought out many devices” (Eccl. 7:29). *The blame for evil is always on the responsible creature* whether man or demon, who does it, and *the creature who does evil is always worthy of punishment*. Scripture consistently affirms that God is righteous and just to punish us for our sins. And if we object that he should not find fault with us because we cannot resist his will, then we must ponder the apostle Paul’s own response to that question: “You will say to me then, “Why does he still find fault? For who can resist his will?” But who are you, a man, to answer back to God? Will what is molded say to its molder, “Why have you made me thus?”” (Rom. 9:19–20). In every case where we do evil, we know that we *willingly* choose to do it, and we realize that we are rightly to be blamed for it.

**d. Evil Is Real, Not an Illusion, and We Should Never Do Evil, for It Will Always Harm Us and Others:** Scripture consistently teaches that we never have a right to do evil, and that we should persistently oppose it in ourselves and in the world. We are to pray, “Deliver us from evil” (Matt. 6:13), and if we see anyone wandering from the truth and doing wrong, we should attempt to bring him back. Scripture says, “If any one among you wanders from the truth and someone brings him back, let him know that whoever brings back a sinner from the error of his way will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins” (James 5:19–20). We should never even *will* evil to be done, for entertaining sinful desires in our minds is to allow them to “wage war” against our souls (1 Peter 2:11) and thereby to do us spiritual harm. If we are ever tempted to say, “Why not do evil that good may come?” as some people were slanderously charging Paul with teaching, we should remember what Paul says about people who teach that false doctrine: “Their condemnation is just” (Rom. 3:8).

In thinking about God using evil to fulfill his purposes, we should remember that there are things that are *right* for God to do but *wrong* for us to do: He requires others to worship him, and he accepts worship from them. He seeks glory for himself. He will execute final judgment on wrongdoers. He also uses evil to bring about good purposes, but he does not allow us to do so. Calvin quotes a statement of Augustine with approval: “There is a great difference between what is fitting for man to will and what is fitting for God ... For through the bad wills of evil men God fulfills what he righteously wills.”<sup>14</sup> And Herman Bavinck uses the analogy of a parent who will himself use a very sharp knife but will not allow his child to use it, to show that God himself uses evil to bring about good purposes but never allows his children to do so. Though we are to imitate God’s moral character in many ways (cf. Eph. 5:1), this is one of the ways in which we are not to imitate him.

**e. In Spite of All of the Foregoing Statements, We Have to Come to the Point Where We Confess That We Do Not Understand How It Is That God Can Ordain That We Carry Out Evil Deeds and Yet Hold Us Accountable for Them and Not be Blamed Himself:** We can

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<sup>14</sup> John Calvin, *Institutes* 1:234 (1.18.3).

cf cf.—compare

affirm that all of these things are true, because Scripture teaches them. But Scripture does *not* tell us exactly *how* God brings this situation about or how it can be that God holds us accountable for what he ordains to come to pass. Here Scripture is silent, and we have to agree with Berkhof that ultimately “the problem of God’s relation to sin remains a mystery.”<sup>15</sup>

**9. Are We “Free”? Do We Have “Free Will”?** If God exercises providential control over all events are we in any sense free? The answer depends on what is meant by the word *free*. In some senses of the word *free* everyone agrees that we are free in our will and in our choices. Even prominent theologians in the Reformed or Calvinistic tradition concur. Both Louis Berkhof in his *Systematic Theology* (pp. 103, 173) and John Calvin in his *Institutes of the Christian Religion*<sup>16</sup> are willing to speak *in some sense* of the “free” acts and choices of man. However, Calvin explains that the term is so subject to misunderstanding that he himself tries to avoid using it. This is because “free will is not sufficient to enable man to do good works, unless he be helped by grace.”<sup>17</sup> Therefore, Calvin concludes:

Man will then be spoken of as having this sort of free decision, not because he has free choice equally of good and evil, but because he acts wickedly by will, not by compulsion. Well put, indeed, but what purpose is served by labeling with a proud name such a slight thing?

Calvin continues by explaining how this term is easily misunderstood:

But how few men are there, I ask, who when they hear free will attributed to man do not immediately conceive him to be master of both his own mind and will, able of his own power to turn himself toward either good or evil ... If anyone, then, can use this word without understanding it in a bad sense, I shall not trouble him on this account ... I’d prefer not to use it myself, and I should like others, if they seek my advice, to avoid it.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* p. 175.

<sup>16</sup> *Institutes* 1:296 (2.3.5), quoting St. Bernard with approval: “Among all living beings man alone is free ... For what is voluntary is also free.” Later in the same passage he quotes St. Bernard with approval again, where he admits that the will is in bondage to sin and therefore sins of necessity, but then says that “this necessity is as it were voluntary ... Thus the soul ... is at the same time enslaved and free: enslaved because of necessity; free because of will.” A little later Calvin himself says that “man, while he sins of necessity, yet sins no less voluntarily” (1:309 [2.4.1]). Calvin clearly says that Adam, before there was sin in the world, “by free will had the power, if he so willed, to attain eternal life ... Adam could have stood if he wished, seeing that he fell solely by his own will ... His choice of good and evil was free” (1:195 [1.15.8]). So Calvin can use the term *free will* if it means “voluntary, willing,” and he can use it of Adam before the fall. Yet he carefully avoids applying the term *free will* to sinful human beings if by it people mean “able to do good in one’s own strength” (see text above).

<sup>17</sup> *Institutes* 1:262 (2.2.6).

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 1:264, 266 (2.2.7–8).

Thus, when we ask whether we have “free will,” it is important to be clear as to what is meant by the phrase. Scripture nowhere says that we are “free” in the sense of being outside of God’s control<sup>19</sup> or of being able to make decisions that are not caused by anything. (This is the sense in which many people seem to assume we must be free; see discussion below.) Nor does it say we are “free” in the sense of being able to do right on our own apart from God’s power. But we are nonetheless free in the greatest sense that any creature of God could be free—we make *willing* choices, choices that have *real effects*.<sup>20</sup> We are aware of no restraints on our will from God when we make decisions.<sup>21</sup> We must insist that we have the power of *willing* choice; otherwise we will fall into the error of fatalism or determinism and thus conclude that our choices do not matter, or that we cannot really make willing choices. On the other hand, the kind of freedom that is demanded by those who deny God’s providential control of all things, a freedom to be outside of God’s sustaining and controlling activity, would be impossible if Jesus Christ is indeed “continually carrying along things by his word of power” (Heb. 1:3, author’s translation). If this is true, then to be outside of that providential control would simply be not to exist! An absolute “freedom,” totally free of God’s control, is simply not possible in a world providentially sustained and directed by God himself.

## C. Government

**1. Scriptural Evidence.** We have discussed the first two aspects of providence, (1) preservation and (2) concurrence. This third aspect of God’s providence indicates that *God has a purpose in all that he does in the world and he providentially governs or directs all things in order that they accomplish his purposes*. We read in the Psalms, “His kingdom rules over all” (Ps. 103:19). Moreover, “he does according to his will in the host of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can stay his hand or say to him, “What are you doing?”” (Dan. 4:35). Paul affirms that “from him and through him and to him are all things” (Rom. 11:36), and that “God has put all things in subjection under his feet” (1 Cor. 15:27). God is the one who “accomplishes *all things* according to the counsel of his will” (Eph. 1:11), so that ultimately “at the name of Jesus” every knee will bow “in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (Phil. 2:10–11). It is because Paul knows that God is sovereign over all and works his purposes in every event that happens

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<sup>19</sup> In fact, our ability to make willing choices at all is simply a created reflection of God’s will and his ability to make willing choices. However, if we were to be *totally* free in our choices, we would be equal to God in our will, and that is something we may never expect either in this life or in the one to come.

<sup>20</sup> Arminian theologians dissent from this understanding of free will and argue for a freedom that means our decisions are not caused by anything outside ourselves (see discussion of Jack Cottrell’s objection that freedom must mean more than willing choices on pp. 340–47, below).

<sup>21</sup> John Feinberg says, “If the act is according to the agent’s *desires* then even though the act is causally determined, it is free and the agent is morally responsible” (“God Ordains All Things,” in *Predestination and Free Will: Four Views of Divine Sovereignty and Human Freedom* ed. by David Basinger and Randall Basinger [Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1986], p. 37).

that he can declare that “God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to his purpose” (Rom. 8:28 NASB).

**2. Distinctions Concerning the Will of God.** Though *in God* his will is unified, and not divided or contradictory, we cannot begin to understand the depths of God’s will, and only in a small part is it revealed to us. For this reason, as we saw in chapter 13,<sup>22</sup> two aspects of God’s will appear to us. On the one hand, there is God’s *moral will* (sometimes called his “revealed” will). This includes the moral standards of Scripture, such as the Ten Commandments and the moral commands of the New Testament. God’s moral commands are given as descriptions of how *we* should conduct ourselves if we would act rightly before him. On the other hand, another aspect of God’s will is his *providential government* of all things (sometimes called his “secret will”). This includes all the events of history that God has ordained to come about, for example, the fact that Christ would be crucified by “lawless men” (Acts 2:23). It also includes all the other evil acts that were mentioned in the preceding section.

Some have objected to this distinction between two aspects of the will of God, arguing that it means there is a “self-contradiction” in God.<sup>23</sup> However, even in the realm of human experience, we know that we can will and carry out something that is painful and that we do not desire (such as punishing a disobedient child or getting an inoculation that temporarily makes us ill) in order to bring about a long-term result that we desire more than the avoidance of short-term pain (to bring about the obedience of the child, for example, or to prevent us from getting a more serious illness). And God is infinitely greater and wiser than we are. Certainly it is possible for him to will that his creatures do something that in the short term displeases him in order that in the long term he would receive the greater glory. To say that this is a “self-contradiction” in God is to fail to understand the distinctions that have been made so that this explanation is not contradictory.<sup>24</sup>

## D. The Decrees of God

The decrees of God are *the eternal plans of God whereby, before the creation of the world, he determined to bring about everything that happens*. This doctrine is similar to the doctrine of providence, but here we are thinking about God’s decisions *before the world was created* rather than his providential actions in time. His providential actions are the outworking of the eternal decrees that he made long ago. (See chapter 2, p. 47, for “decree” used in a somewhat different sense.)

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<sup>22</sup> See pp. 213–16 for a further discussion of God’s secret and revealed will.

<sup>23</sup> This is the objection of I. Howard Marshall, “Predestination in the New Testament,” p. 173.

<sup>24</sup> John Calvin says of those who object to two senses of the will of God, “Let them tell me, I pray, whether he exercises his judgments willingly or unwillingly ... When we do not grasp how God wills to take place what he forbids to be done, let us recall our mental incapacity.” He also quotes with approval the statement of Augustine: “There is a great difference between what is fitting for man to will and what is fitting for God ... for through the bad wills of evil men God fulfills what he righteously wills” (*Institutes* 1:233–34 [1.18.3]).

David confesses, “in your book were written, every one of them, the days that were formed for me, when as yet there was none of them” (Ps. 139:16; cf. Job 14:5: the days, months, and bounds of man are determined by God). There was also a “definite *plan* and foreknowledge of God” (Acts 2:23) by which Jesus was put to death, and the actions of those who condemned and crucified him were “predestined” (Acts 4:28) by God. Our salvation was determined long ago because God “chose us in him (Christ) *before the foundation of the world* that we should be holy and blameless before him” (Eph. 1:4). Our good works as believers are those “which God *prepared beforehand* that we should walk in them” (Eph. 2:10; cf. Jude 4).

These examples take in many diverse aspects of human activity. It seems appropriate to conclude from these examples that all that God does he has planned before the creation of the world—in fact, these things have been an *eternal plan* with him. The benefit of an emphasis on God’s decrees is that it helps us to realize that God does not make up plans suddenly as he goes along. He knows the end from the beginning, and he will accomplish all his good purposes. This should greatly increase our trust in him, especially in difficult circumstances.

## E. The Importance of Our Human Actions

We may sometimes forget that God works *through human actions* in his providential management of the world. If we do, then we begin to think that our actions and our choices do not make much difference or do not have much effect on the course of events. To guard against any misunderstanding of God’s providence we make the following points of emphasis.

**1. We Are Still Responsible for Our Actions.** God has made us *responsible* for our actions, which have *real and eternally significant results*. In all his providential acts God will preserve these characteristics of responsibility and significance.

Some analogies from the natural world might help us understand this. God has created a rock with the characteristic of being *hard* and so it is. God has created water with the characteristic of being *wet* and so it is. God has created plants and animals with the characteristic of being *alive* and so they are. Similarly, God has created us with the characteristic of being *responsible for our actions* and so we are! If we do right and obey God, he will reward us and things will go well with us both in this age and in eternity. If we do wrong and disobey God, he will discipline and perhaps punish us, and things will go ill with us. The realization of these facts will help us have pastoral wisdom in talking to others and in encouraging them to avoid laziness and disobedience.

The fact that we are responsible for our actions means that we should never begin to think, “God made me do evil, and therefore I am not responsible for it.” Significantly, Adam began to make excuses for the very first sin in terms that sounded suspiciously like this: “The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit of the tree, and I ate” (Gen. 3:12). Unlike Adam, Scripture *never* blames God for sin. If we ever begin to *think* that God is to blame for sin, we have thought *wrongly* about God’s providence, for it is always the creature, not God who is to be blamed. Now we may object that it is not right for God to hold us responsible if he has in fact ordained all things that happen, but Paul corrects us: “You will say to me then, “Why does he still find fault? For who can resist his will?” But who are you, a man, to answer back to God?”

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cf cf.—compare

cf cf.—compare

(Rom. 9:19–20). We must realize and settle in our hearts that it is *right* for God to rebuke and discipline and punish evil. And, when we are responsible to do so, it is right for us to rebuke and discipline evil in our families, in the church, and even, in some ways, in the society around us. We should never say about an evil event, “God willed it and therefore it is good,” because we must recognize that some things that God’s will of decree has planned are not in themselves good, and should not receive our approval, just as they do not receive God’s approval.

**2. Our Actions Have Real Results and Do Change the Course of Events.** In the ordinary working of the world, if I neglect to take care of my health and have poor eating habits, or if I abuse my body through alcohol or tobacco, I am likely to die sooner. God has ordained that our *actions* do have effects. God has ordained that *events* will come about *by our causing them*. Of course, we do not know what God has planned even for the rest of this day, to say nothing of next week or next year. But we *do* know that if we trust God and obey him, we will discover that he has planned *good things* to come about through that obedience! We cannot simply disregard others whom we meet, for God brings many people across our paths and gives *us* the responsibility to act toward them in eternally significant ways—whether for good or ill.

Calvin wisely notes that to encourage us to use ordinary caution in life and to plan ahead, “God is pleased to hide all future events from us, in order that we should resist them as doubtful, and not cease to oppose them with ready remedies, until they are either overcome or pass beyond all care ... God’s providence does not always meet us in its naked form, but God in a sense clothes it with the means employed.”<sup>25</sup>

By contrast, if we anticipate that some dangers or evil events may come in the future, and if we do not use reasonable means to avoid them, then we may in fact discover that our lack of action was the means that God used to allow them to come about!

**3. Prayer Is One Specific Kind of Action That Has Definite Results and That Does Change the Course of Events.** God has also ordained that prayer is a very significant means of bringing about results in the world.<sup>26</sup> When we earnestly intercede for a specific person or situation, we will often find that God had ordained that our prayer would be a *means* he would use to bring about the changes in the world. Scripture reminds us of this when it tells us, “You do not have, because you do not ask” (James 4:2). Jesus says, “Hitherto you have asked nothing in my name; ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full” (John 16:24).

**4. In Conclusion, We Must Act!** The doctrine of providence in no way encourages us to sit back in idleness to await the outcome of certain events. Of course, God may impress on us the need to wait on him before we act and to trust in him rather than in our own abilities—that is certainly not wrong. But simply to say that we are trusting in God *instead of* acting responsibly is sheer laziness and is a distortion of the doctrine of providence.

In practical terms, if one of my sons has school work that must be done the next day, I am right to make him complete that work before he can go out to play. I realize that his grade is in God’s hands, and that God has long ago determined what it would be, but I do not know what it

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<sup>25</sup> John Calvin, *Institutes* 1:216 (1.17.4).

<sup>26</sup> See chapter 18 for a more extensive discussion of prayer.

will be, and neither does he. What I do know is that if he studies and does his school work faithfully, he will receive a good grade. If he doesn't, he will not. So Calvin can say:

Now it is very clear what our duty is: Thus, if the Lord has committed to us the protection of our life, our duty is to protect it; if he offers helps to us, to use them; if he forewarns us of dangers, not to plunge headlong; if he makes remedies available, not to neglect them. But no danger will hurt us, say they, unless it is fatal, and in this case it is beyond remedies. But what if the dangers are not fatal, because the Lord has provided you with remedies for repulsing and overcoming them?<sup>27</sup>

One good example of vigorous activity combined with trust in God is found in 2 Samuel 10:12, where Joab says, "*Be strong* and let us show ourselves courageous for the sake of our people and for the cities of our God," but then adds immediately in the same sentence, "*and may the Lord do what is good in His sight*" (NASB). Joab will both fight and trust God to do what he thinks to be good.

Similar examples are found in the New Testament. When Paul was in Corinth, in order to keep him from being discouraged about the opposition he had received from the Jews, the Lord appeared to him one night in a vision and said to him, "Do not be afraid, but speak and do not be silent; for I am with you, and no man shall attack you to harm you; for *I have many people in this city*" (Acts 18:9–10). If Paul had been a fatalist with an improper understanding of God's providence, he would have listened to God's words, "I have many people in this city," and concluded that God had determined to save many of the Corinthians, and that therefore it did not matter whether Paul stayed there or not: God had already chosen many people to be saved! Paul would have thought that he may as well pack his bags and leave! But Paul does not make that mistake. He rather concludes that if God has chosen many people, then it will probably be through the *means* of Paul's preaching the gospel that those many people would be saved. Therefore Paul makes a wise decision: "*And he stayed a year and six months teaching the word of God among them*" (Acts 18:11).

Paul put this kind of responsible action in the light of God's providence into a single sentence in 2 Timothy 2:10, where he said, "I endure everything *for the sake of the elect* that they also may obtain salvation in Christ Jesus with its eternal glory." He did not argue from the fact that God had chosen some to be saved that nothing had to be done; rather, he concluded that *much* had to be done in order that God's purposes might come about by the *means* that God had also established. Indeed, Paul was willing to endure "everything," including all kinds of hardship and suffering, that God's eternal plans might come about. A hearty belief in God's providence is not a discouragement but a spur to action.

A related example is found in the story of Paul's journey to Rome. God had clearly revealed to Paul that no one on the ship would die from the long storm they had endured. Indeed, Paul stood before the passengers and crew and told them to take heart,

for there will be no loss of life among you, but only of the ship. For this very night there stood by me an angel of the God to whom I belong and whom I worship, and he said, "Do not be afraid, Paul; you must stand before Caesar; and lo, God has granted you all

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<sup>27</sup> John Calvin, *Institutes* 1:216 (1.17.4).

those who sail with you.” So take heart, men, for I have faith in God that it will be exactly as I have been told. But we shall have to run on some island. (Acts 27:22–26)

But shortly after Paul had said this, he noticed that the sailors on board the ship were secretly trying to lower a lifeboat into the sea, “seeking to escape from the ship” (Acts 27:30). They were planning to leave the others helpless with no one who knew how to sail the ship. When Paul saw this, he did not adopt an erroneous, fatalistic attitude, thinking that God would miraculously get the ship to shore. Rather, he immediately went to the centurion who was in charge of the sailors and “Paul said to the centurion and the soldiers, “Unless these men stay in the ship, you cannot be saved” ’ (Acts 27:31). Wisely, Paul knew that God’s providential oversight and even his clear prediction of what would happen still involved the use of ordinary human *means* to bring it about. He was even so bold to say that those means were *necessary*: “Unless these men stay in the ship, *you cannot be saved*” (Acts 27:31). We would do well to imitate his example, combining complete trust in God’s providence with a realization that the use of ordinary means is necessary for things to come out the way God has planned them to come out.

**5. What If We Cannot Understand This Doctrine Fully?** Every believer who meditates on God’s providence will sooner or later come to a point where he or she will have to say, “I cannot understand this doctrine fully.” In some ways that must be said about every doctrine, since our understanding is finite, and God is infinite (see chapter 1, pp. 34–35; cf. p. 150). But particularly is this so with the doctrine of providence: we should believe it because Scripture teaches it even when we do not understand fully how it fits in with other teachings of Scripture. Calvin has some wise advice:

Let those for whom this seems harsh consider for a little while how bearable their squeamishness is in refusing a thing attested by clear Scriptural proofs because it exceeds their mental capacity, and find fault that things are put forth publicly, which if God had not judged useful for men to know, he would never have bidden his prophets and apostles to teach. For our wisdom ought to be nothing else than to embrace with humble teachableness, and at least without finding fault, whatever is taught in sacred Scripture.<sup>28</sup>

## F. Further Practical Application

Although we have already begun to speak of the practical application of this doctrine, three additional points should be made.

**1. Do Not Be Afraid, but Trust in God.** Jesus emphasizes the fact that our sovereign Lord watches over us and cares for us as his children. He says, “Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? ... Therefore do not be anxious, saying, “What shall we eat?” or “What shall we drink?” or “What shall we wear?” ’ (Matt. 6:26, 31). If God feeds the birds and clothes the grass of the field, he will take care of us. Similarly, Jesus says, “Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? And not one of them will fall to the ground without your Father’s will ... Fear not, therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows” (Matt. 10:29–31).

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<sup>28</sup> *Institutes* 1:237 (1.18.4).

David was able to sleep in the midst of his enemies, because he knew that God’s providential control made him “dwell in safety,” and he could say, “In peace I will both lie down and sleep” (Ps. 4:8). Many of the psalms encourage us to trust God and not to fear, because the LORD keeps and protects his people—for example, Psalm 91 (“He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High . . .”) or Psalm 121 (“I lift up my eyes to the hills . . .”). Because of our confidence in God’s providential care, we need not fear any evil or harm, even if it does come to us—it can only come by God’s will and ultimately for our good. Thus Peter can say that “now for a little while you may have to suffer various trials, so that the genuineness of your faith, more precious than gold . . . may redound to praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ” (1 Peter 1:6–7). In all of this we need not worry about the future but trust in God’s omnipotent care.

**2. Be Thankful for All Good Things That Happen.** If we genuinely believe that all good things are caused by God, then our hearts will indeed be full when we say, “Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits” (Ps. 103:2). We will thank him for our daily food (cf. Matt. 6:11; 1 Tim. 4:4–5); indeed, we will “give thanks in all circumstances” (1 Thess. 5:18).

**3. There Is No Such Thing as “Luck” or “Chance.”** All things come to pass by God’s wise providence. This means that we should adopt a much more “personal” understanding of the universe and the events in it. The universe is not governed by impersonal fate or luck, but by a personal God. Nothing “just happens—we should see God’s hand in events throughout the day, causing all things to work together for good for those who love him.

This confidence in God’s wise providence certainly does not equal superstition, for that is a belief in impersonal or demonic control of circumstances, or control by a capricious deity concerned for meaningless ritual rather than obedience and faith. A deepened appreciation for the doctrine of providence will not make us more superstitious; it will make us trust in God more and obey him more fully.

## G. Another Evangelical View: the Arminian Position

There is a major alternative position held by many evangelicals, which for convenience we shall call the “Arminian” view.<sup>29</sup> Among denominations in contemporary evangelicalism,

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<sup>29</sup> The term *Arminianism* was recently chosen in the title of a responsible series of essays representing this position: See Clark H. Pinnock, ed., *The Grace of God, The Will of Man: A Case for Arminianism* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1989). In the following section I quote extensively from this book and from an earlier book edited by Pinnock, *Grace Unlimited*. These two books are excellent recent defenses of the Arminian position.

Jacob Arminius (1560–1609) was a Dutch theologian who differed with the predominant Calvinism of his day. Though he is not personally quoted or referred to very often by Arminians today, his name has become attached to a range of positions that have in common the fact that they differ from the Calvinist position on the question of man’s free will, both with respect to God’s providence in general (the subject of this chapter) and with respect to predestination or election in specific (the subject of chapter 32).

Methodists and Nazarenes tend to be thoroughly Arminian, whereas Presbyterians and the Christian Reformed tend to be thoroughly Reformed (at least by denominational statement of faith). Both views are found among Baptists, Episcopalians (though the Thirty-Nine Articles have a clearly Reformed emphasis), Dispensationalists, Evangelical Free Churches, Lutherans (though Martin Luther was in the Reformed camp on this issue), the Churches of Christ, and most charismatic and Pentecostal groups (though Pentecostal denominations such as the Assemblies of God have been predominantly Arminian).

Those who hold an Arminian position maintain that in order to preserve the *real human freedom* and *real human choices* that are necessary for genuine human personhood, God cannot cause or plan our voluntary choices. Therefore they conclude that God's providential involvement in or control of history must *not* include *every specific detail* of every event that happens, but that God instead simply *responds* to human choices and actions as they come about and does so in such a way that his purposes are ultimately accomplished in the world.

Those who hold this position argue that God's purposes in the world are more general and could be accomplished through many different kinds of specific events. So God's purpose or plan for the world "is not a blueprint encompassing all future contingencies" but "a dynamic program for the world, the outworking of which depends in part on man."<sup>30</sup> Cottrell says, "God does not have a specific, unconditional purpose for each discrete particle, object, person, and event within the creation."<sup>31</sup> Arminians believe that God achieves his overall goal by responding to and utilizing the free choices of human beings, whatever they may be.<sup>32</sup> Pinnock says that "predestination does not apply to every individual activity, but is rather the comprehensive purpose of God which is *the structural context* in which history moves."<sup>33</sup>

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The term *Arminian* should be distinguished from the term *Armenian* which refers to people who live in or descend from inhabitants of the ancient country of Armenia in western Asia (now part of Turkey, Iran, and the CIS).

<sup>30</sup> Clark Pinnock, "Responsible Freedom in the Flow of Biblical History," in *Grace Unlimited* p. 18.

<sup>31</sup> Jack Cottrell, "The Nature of the Divine Sovereignty," in *The Grace of God, the Will of Man* p. 107. Cottrell's essay is, in my view, the most comprehensive and persuasive of the many excellent Arminian essays in this book—the book as a whole is responsibly done and is probably the best recent representation of Arminian thinking. Cottrell does not deny divine omniscience regarding future events as do the essays by Clark Pinnock and Richard Rice in the same volume, and this places him closer to the intuitive Arminianism that seems right to many evangelical laypersons today.

<sup>32</sup> I. Howard Marshall claims this at several points in "Predestination in the New Testament," *Grace Unlimited* pp. 127–43. Marshall uses the analogy of a jazz band where individual players can improvise freely but the overall goal and unity of the piece are preserved nonetheless (p. 133). Thus, "the Bible has the picture of a God deciding fresh measures in history and interacting with the wills of men alongside the picture of a God planning things in eternity past, and both pictures are equally valid" (Marshall, p. 141).

<sup>33</sup> Pinnock, "Responsible Freedom," p. 102.

Moreover, advocates of the Arminian position maintain that God's will cannot include evil. Pinnock says, "The fall of man is an eloquent refutation to the theory that God's will is always done."<sup>34</sup> He states that it "is not the case" that God's will "is also accomplished in the lostness of the lost."<sup>35</sup> And I. Howard Marshall quite clearly affirms, "It is not true that everything that happens is what God desires."<sup>36</sup> These statements make it clear that the differences between the Reformed and Arminian positions are not merely differences in terminology: there is a real disagreement in substance. Several arguments are advanced in defense of the Arminian position. I have attempted to summarize them in the four major points that follow.

**1. The Verses Cited as Examples of God's Providential Control Are Exceptions and Do Not Describe the Way That God Ordinarily Works in Human Activity.** In surveying the Old Testament passages referring to God's providential involvement in the world, David J.A. Clines says that God's predictions and statements of his purposes refer to limited or specific events:

Almost all of the specific references to God's plans have in view a particular event or a limited series of events, for example, "his purposes against the land of the Chaldeans" (Jer. 50:45). Furthermore, it is not a matter of a *single* divine plan; various passages speak of various intentions, and some references are in fact to God's plans in the plural ... [The passages are] an assertion that within history God is working his purposes out.<sup>37</sup>

Jack Cottrell agrees that in some cases God intervenes in the world in an uncommon way, using "subtle manipulation of such [natural] laws and of mental states." But he calls these unusual events "special providence," and says, "It is natural that the Old Testament teems with accounts of special providence. But we have no reason to assume that God was working in Australia and South America in such ways at the same time."<sup>38</sup>

**2. The Calvinist View Wrongly Makes God Responsible for Sin.** Those who hold an Arminian position ask, "How can God be holy if he decrees that we sin?" They affirm that God is not the "author of sin," that "God cannot be tempted with evil and he himself tempts no one" (James 1:13), that "God is light and in him is no darkness at all" (1 John 1:5), and that "the LORD is upright ... and there is no unrighteousness in him" (Ps. 92:15).

The view of God's providence advocated above, they would say, makes us into puppets or robots who cannot do anything other than what God causes us to do. But this brings moral

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid., p. 102.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., p. 106.

<sup>36</sup> Marshall, "Predestination in the New Testament," p. 139.

<sup>37</sup> David J.A. Clines, "Predestination in the Old Testament," p. 122; see also pp. 116–17. Similarly, James D. Strauss, "God's Promise and Universal History," *Grace Unlimited* p. 196, says that the example of Jacob and Esau that Paul mentions in Rom. 9:9–13 refers to God's corporate plans for the descendants of Jacob and Esau and should not be taken as an illustration of how God works in people's lives or hearts generally.

<sup>38</sup> Jack Cottrell, "The Nature of the Divine Sovereignty," pp. 112–13.

reproach on God, for Marshall says, “I am responsible for what my agent does.”<sup>39</sup> Pinnock affirms that “it is simply blasphemous to maintain, as this theory does, that man’s rebellion against God is *in any sense* the product of God’s sovereign will or primary causation.”<sup>40</sup>

**3. Choices Caused by God Cannot Be Real Choices.** When the Calvinist claims that God causes us to choose things voluntarily, those who hold an Arminian position would respond that any choices that are ultimately caused by God cannot be real choices, and that, if God really causes us to make the choices we make, then we are not real persons. Cottrell says that the Calvinist view of God as the primary cause and men as secondary causes really breaks down so there is only one cause, God. If a man uses a lever to move a rock, he argues, “the lever is not a true second cause but is only an instrument of the real cause of the movement ... In my judgment the concept of cause has no real significance when used in this sense. In such a system man contributes only what has been predetermined.”<sup>41</sup>

Pinnock writes:

Personal fellowship of the kind envisioned in the Gospel only exists where consummated in a free decision. If we wish to understand God’s grace as personal address to his creatures, we must comprehend it in dynamic, non-manipulative, non-coercive terms, as the Bible does.<sup>42</sup>

He also says:

If the world were a completely determined structure on which no decision of man’s would have any effect, that basic intuition of man’s that he is an *actor* and a *free agent* would be nonsensical: There would then be no point to his making plans or exerting efforts intended to transform the world ... Human freedom is the precondition of moral and intellectual responsibility.<sup>43</sup>

Why then, in the Arminian view, did the fall and sin come about? Pinnock answers that “they occur because God refuses to mechanize man or to force his will upon him.”<sup>44</sup> And Marshall says, with respect to the “possibility of my predetermining a course of action involving myself and another subject,” that “on the level of free agents it is impossible.”<sup>45</sup> He objects that the

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<sup>39</sup> Marshall, “Predestination,” p. 136.

<sup>40</sup> Pinnock, “Responsible Freedom,” p. 102.

<sup>41</sup> Jack Cottrell, “The Nature of the Divine Sovereignty,” pp. 104–5.

<sup>42</sup> Pinnock, *Grace Unlimited* p. 15.

<sup>43</sup> Pinnock, “Responsible Freedom,” p. 95.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 108.

<sup>45</sup> Marshall, “Predestination,” p. 132. Similarly, he says, “When we try to think of a person foreordaining the course of a relationship between himself and another person ... *this concept is logically self-contradictory*” (p. 135).

analogy of God and world as being like an author and a play is unhelpful because if we ask whether the characters are indeed free, “this is an unreal question.”<sup>46</sup>

However, it should be noted that Arminian theologians are certainly willing to allow some kinds of influence by God on human beings. Marshall says, “Prayer also influences men ... The wills of men can thus be affected by prayer or else we would not pray for them. *To believe in prayer is thus to believe in some kind of limitation of human freedom, and in some kind of incomprehensible influence upon the wills of men.*”<sup>47</sup>

To drive home their point about the essential freedom of the human will, advocates of an Arminian position draw attention to the frequency of the free offer of the gospel in the New Testament. They would say that these invitations to people to repent and come to Christ for salvation, if *bona fide* must imply the *ability* to respond to them. Thus, all people without exception have the ability to respond, not just those who have been sovereignly given that ability by God in a special way.

In further support of this point, Arminians would see 1 Corinthians 10:13 as clearly affirming our ability not to sin. Paul says to the Corinthians, “No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your strength, but with the temptation will also provide the way of escape, *that you may be able to endure it.*” But, it is said, this statement would be false if God sometimes ordains that we sin, for then we would not be “able” to escape from temptation without sinning.

**4. The Arminian View Encourages Responsible Christian Living, While the Calvinistic View Encourages a Dangerous Fatalism.** Christians who hold an Arminian position argue that the Calvinist view, when thoroughly understood, destroys motives for responsible Christian behavior. Randall Basinger says that the Calvinist view “establishes that what is ought to be and rules out the consideration that things could and/or should have been different.”<sup>48</sup> Basinger continues by saying that Christians

who evoke and act on the basis of God’s sovereignty are guilty of an arbitrary, unlivable, and dangerous fatalism ... In contrast to this, the Arminian believes that what actually occurs in the world is, to an extent, consequent on the human will; God’s exhaustive control over the world is denied. This means that things can occur that God does not will or want; things not only *can* be different but often *should* be different. And from all this follows our responsibility to work with God to bring about a better world.<sup>49</sup>

However, Basinger goes on to make a further point: Calvinists, in practice, often avoid such fatalism and “live and talk like Arminians.”<sup>50</sup> Thus, on the one hand, Basinger’s challenge is a

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid., p. 133.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., pp. 139–40 (emphasis in original text).

<sup>48</sup> Randall G. Basinger, “Exhaustive Divine Sovereignty: A Practical Critique,” in *The Grace of God, the Will of Man: A Case for Arminianism* ed. Clark H. Pinnock, p. 94.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., p. 196.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., p. 204.

warning against the practical extremes to which he claims Calvinism should logically drive Christians. On the other hand, his objection claims that when Calvinists live the way they know they must live, in responsible obedience to God, they are either inconsistent with their view of divine sovereignty or else not allowing their view of God's sovereign control to affect their daily lives.

## H. Response to the Arminian Position

Many within the evangelical world will find these four Arminian arguments convincing. They will feel that these arguments represent what they intuitively know about themselves, their own actions, and the way the world functions, and that these arguments best account for the repeated emphasis in Scripture on our responsibility and the real consequences of our choices. However, there are some answers that can be given to the Arminian position.

**1. Are These Scripture Passages Unusual Examples, or Do They Describe the Way God Works Ordinarily?** In response to the objection that the examples of God's providential control only refer to limited or specific events, it may be said first that the examples are so numerous (see above, pp. 317–27) that they seem to be designed to describe to us the ways in which God works all the time. God does not just cause *some* grass to grow; he causes all grass to grow. He does not just send *some* rain; he sends all the rain. He does not just keep *some* sparrows from falling to the ground without his will; he keeps all sparrows from falling to the ground without his will. He does not just know every word on David's tongue before he speaks it; he knows the words on all our tongues before we speak them. He has not just chosen Paul and the Christians in the Ephesian churches to be holy and blameless before him; he has chosen all Christians to be holy and blameless before him. This is why Cottrell's claim, that God was working differently in Australia and South America than in the Old Testament,<sup>51</sup> is so unconvincing: Scripture is given to tell us the ways of God, and when we have dozens of examples throughout Old and New Testaments where there is such clear teaching on this, it is appropriate for us to conclude that this is the way in which God *always* works with human beings. By contrast, there seems to be nothing in Scripture that would indicate that some things are outside God's providential control, or that these ways of God's acting are unusual or unrepresentative of the ways in which he acts generally.

Moreover, many of the verses that speak of God's providence are very general: Christ "continually carries along *all things* by his word of power" (Heb. 1:3, author's translation), and "in him all things hold together" (Col. 1:17). "In him we live and move and have our being" (Acts 17:28). He "accomplishes *all things* according to the counsel of his will" (Eph. 1:11).<sup>52</sup> He

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<sup>51</sup> Jack Cottrell, "The Nature of the Divine Sovereignty," p. 113.

<sup>52</sup> Jack Cottrell, "The Nature of the Divine Sovereignty," argues that the context of Eph. 1:11 shows that it does not include all things in the universe but is restricted to a specific focus: "This focus is 'the mystery of his will' (1:9), which is the uniting of Jews and Gentiles together into one body, the church (3:6)." Thus, he says, the verse only "refers to 'all things' required for uniting Jews and Gentiles under one Head in one body" (p. 116).

provides our food (Matt. 6:11), supplies all our needs (Phil. 4:19), directs our steps (Prov. 20:24) and works in us to will and to do his good pleasure (Phil. 2:13). Such Scripture passages have in view more than exceptional examples of an unusual intervention by God in the affairs of human beings; they describe the way God always works in the world.

## **2. Does the Calvinistic Doctrine of God's Providence Make God Responsible for Sin?**

Against the Calvinistic view of God's providence (which allows that he decrees to permit sin and evil) Arminians would say that God is not responsible for sin and evil *because he did not ordain them or cause them in any way*. This is indeed *one way* of absolving God from responsibility and blame for sin, but is it the biblical way?

The problem is whether the Arminian position can really account for many texts that clearly say that God ordains that some people sin or do evil (see Section B.7, above, pp. 322–27). The death of Christ is the prime example of this, but there are many others in Scripture (Joseph's brothers, Pharaoh, the Egyptians, the Canaanites, Eli's sons, David's census, and the Babylonians, to mention a few). The response could be made that these were unusual events, exceptions to God's ordinary way of acting. But it does not solve the problem, for, on the Arminian view, how can God be holy if he ordains even one sinful act?

The Calvinist position seems preferable: God himself never sins but always brings about his will *through secondary causes*; that is, through personal moral agents who voluntarily, willingly do what God has ordained. These personal moral agents (both human beings and evil angels) are to blame for the evil they do. While the Arminian position objects that, on a human level, people are also responsible for *what they cause others to do* we can answer that Scripture is not willing to apply such reasoning to God. Rather, Scripture repeatedly gives examples where God in a mysterious, hidden way somehow ordains that people do wrong, but continually places the blame for that wrong on the individual human who does wrong and never on God himself. The Arminian position seems to have failed to show why God *cannot* work in this way in the world, preserving both his holiness and our individual human responsibility for sin.

## **3. Can Choices Ordained by God Be Real Choices?** In response to the claim that choices ordained by God cannot be real choices, it must be said that this is simply an assumption based

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But this argument is not convincing. Cottrell must skip over to Eph. 3:6 to get the contextual restriction he seeks for the "all things" in 1:11. In doing this he ignores the clearly cosmic scope of the context as defined in the immediately preceding verse, a verse that is in the same sentence in the Greek text: "as a plan for the fulness of time, to unite *all things* [τὰ πάντα] in him, *things in heaven and things on earth*" (Eph. 1:10). All things in heaven and on earth includes the whole universe. Eph. 1:21–22 further explains that God has exalted Christ "far above all rule and authority and power and dominion ... and he has put *all things* under his feet and has made him the head over *all things* for the church." Once again the scope is universal. The "mystery" of God's will mentioned in Eph. 1:9 is not limited to the uniting of Jews and Gentiles (as in 3:6) but is defined by 1:10 as a plan to unite all things in Christ. The term *mystery* (Gk. μυστήριον, G3696) in Paul means something previously hidden but now made known by revelation, and it can refer to different things in different contexts: in Eph. 5:32 it refers to marriage as a symbol of the union between Christ and the church; in 1 Cor. 15:51 it refers to the resurrection body; etc.

once again on human experience and intuition, not on specific texts of Scripture.<sup>53</sup> Yet Scripture does not indicate that we can extrapolate from our human experience when dealing with God's providential control of his creatures, especially human beings. Arminians have simply not answered the question, Where does Scripture say that a choice ordained by God is not a real choice?<sup>54</sup> When we read passages indicating that God works through our will, our power to choose, and our personal volition, on what basis can we say that a choice brought about by God through these means is not a real choice? It seems better to affirm that God *says* that our choices are real and to conclude that therefore they *are real*. Scripture repeatedly affirms that our choices are genuine choices, that they have *real* results, and that those results last for eternity. "Do this, and you will live" (Luke 10:28). "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that *whoever believes in him* should not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16).

This causes us to conclude that God has made us in such a way that (1) he ordains all that we do, and (2) we exercise our personal will and make real, voluntary choices. Because we cannot understand this should we therefore reject it? We cannot understand (in any final sense) how a plant can live, or how a bumblebee can fly, or how God can be omnipresent or eternal. Should we therefore reject those facts? Should we not rather simply accept them as true either because we see that plants in fact do live and bumblebees in fact do fly, or because Scripture itself teaches that God is omnipresent and eternal?

Calvin several times distinguishes between "necessity" and "compulsion" with regard to our will: unbelievers necessarily sin, but no compulsion forces them to sin against their will.<sup>55</sup> In response to the objection that an act cannot be willing or voluntary if it is a necessary act, Calvin points to both the good deeds of God (who *necessarily* does good) and the evil deeds of the Devil (who *necessarily* does evil):

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<sup>53</sup> This is the case with Cottrell's analogy of the man who uses a lever to move a rock. He says the lever "is not a true second cause, but only an instrument of the real cause" ("The Nature of the Divine Sovereignty," p. 104). But here Cottrell makes a common mistake, assuming that analogies from human experience, rather than the testimony of Scripture itself, can determine what is a real cause and what is not. The analogy of a man using a lever to move a rock does not fit, because God is far greater than any man, and we as real persons are far greater than any lever.

<sup>54</sup> The lack of scriptural support for this fundamental Arminian idea is evident in Jack Cottrell's discussion of free will. After accurately explaining that Calvinists say we are free only in the sense of making voluntary, willing choices, Cottrell says, "*In my judgment* however, the mere ability to act in accord with one's desires is not a sufficient criterion of freedom" ("The Nature of the Divine Sovereignty," p. 103, emphasis mine). He then gives no evidence from Scripture to show why this is his judgment (pp. 103–4). I would respond that Cottrell has simply imported into the discussion a nonbiblical *assumption* about the nature of human freedom and then has pronounced Calvinism incapable of meeting his (nonbiblical) criterion.

<sup>55</sup> See *Institutes* 1:294–96 (2.3.5).

If the fact that he must do good does not hinder God's free will in doing good; if the Devil, who can only do evil, yet sins with his will—who shall say that man therefore sins less willingly because he is subject to the necessity of sinning?<sup>56</sup>

Who are we to say that choices somehow caused by God *cannot* be real? On what basis can we prove that? God in Scripture tells us that he ordains all that comes to pass. He also tells us that our choices and actions are significant *in his sight* and that we are responsible *before him* for our actions. We need simply to believe these things and to take comfort in them. After all, *he alone* determines what is significant, what is real, and what is genuine personal responsibility in the universe.

But do our actions have any effect on God? At this point Arminians will object that while Calvinists may *say* that a choice caused by God is a real choice, it is not real in any ultimate sense, because, on a Calvinist view, nothing that God does can ever be a response to what we do. Jack Cottrell says:

Calvinism is still a theology of determinism as long as it declares that nothing God does can be conditioned by man or can be a reaction to something in the world. The idea that a sovereign God must always *act* and never *react* is a point on which almost all Calvinists seem to agree ... Reformed theologians agree that the eternal decree is unconditional or absolute ... "Decretal theology" decrees that "God cannot be affected by, nor respond to, anything external to him," says Daane.<sup>57</sup>

But here Cottrell has misunderstood Reformed theology for two reasons. First, he has quoted James Daane, who, though he belongs to the Christian Reformed Church, has written as an opponent, not a defender, of classical Reformed theology, and his statement does not represent a position Reformed theologians would endorse. Second, Cottrell has confused God's decrees before creation with God's actions in time. It is true that Calvinists would say that God's eternal decrees were not influenced by any of our actions and cannot be changed by us, since they were made *before creation*.<sup>58</sup> But to conclude from that that Calvinists think God does not react *in time* to anything we do, or is not influenced by anything we do, is simply false. No Calvinist theologian known to me has ever said that God is not influenced by what we do or does not react to what we do. He is grieved at our sin. He delights in our praise. He answers our prayers. To say that God does not react to our actions is to deny the whole history of the Bible from Genesis to Revelation.

Now a Calvinist would add that God has eternally decreed that he would respond to us as he does. In fact, he has decreed that we would act as we do and he would respond to our actions. But his responses are still genuine responses, his answers to prayers are still genuine answers to prayer, his delight in our praise is still genuine delight. Cottrell may of course object that a response that God has planned long ago is not a real response, but this is far different from saying that Calvinists believe God does not respond to what we do. Moreover, we return to the

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<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 295 (2.3.5).

<sup>57</sup> Jack Cottrell, "The Nature of the Divine Sovereignty," pp. 102–3. The quotation at the end is from James Daane, *The Freedom of God* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1973), p. 160.

<sup>58</sup> See above, pp. 332–33, on God's decrees.

same unsupported assumption underlying this objection: on what scriptural basis can Cottrell say that a response God has planned long ago is not a real response?<sup>59</sup>

Here it is helpful for us to realize that there is no other reality in the universe except what God himself has made. Is a thunderstorm caused by God a *real* thunderstorm? Is a king that God establishes on a throne a *real* king? Is a word that God causes me to speak (Ps. 139:4; Prov. 16:1) a *real* word? Of course they are real! There *is* no other reality than that which God brings about! Then is a human choice that God somehow causes to happen a *real* choice? Yes, it is, in the same way that a thunderstorm or a king is real according to their own characteristics and properties. The choice that I make is not a “forced” or “involuntary” choice—we make choices all the time, and we have absolutely no sense of being forced or compelled to choose one thing rather than another.

Now some may object that this view makes us mere “puppets” or “robots.” But we are not puppets or robots; we are *real persons*. Puppets and robots do not have the power of personal choice or even individual thought. We, by contrast, think, decide, and choose. Again the Arminian wrongly takes information from our situation as human beings and then uses that information to place limitations on what God *can* or *cannot* do. All of these analogies from human experience fail to recognize that God is far greater than our limited human abilities. Moreover, we are far more real and complex than any robot or puppet would ever be—we are real persons created by an infinitely powerful and infinitely wise God.

Much of our difficulty in understanding how God can cause us to choose something willingly comes from the finite nature of our creaturely existence. In a hypothetical world where all living things created by God were plants rooted in the ground, we might imagine one plant arguing to another that God *could not* make living creatures who could move about on the earth, for how could they carry their roots with them? And if their roots were not in the ground, how could they receive nourishment? An “Arminian” plant might even argue, “In order for God to create a world with living things, he *had to* create them with roots and with the characteristic of living all their lives in a single place. To say that God *could not* create living things that move about on the earth does not challenge God’s omnipotence, for that is simply to say that he cannot do things that logically cannot be done. Therefore it is impossible that God could create a world where living things also have the capacity of moving about on the earth.” The problem with this plant is that it has limited God’s power by virtue of its own “plant-like” experience.

On a higher level, we could imagine a creation that had both plants and animals but no human beings. In that creation, we can imagine an argument between a “Calvinist” dog and a “Arminian” dog, where the “Calvinist” dog would argue that it *is* possible for God to create creatures that not only can communicate by barking to one another but also can record their

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<sup>59</sup> I am not sure if Cottrell would be able to object that a response planned by God long ago is not a real response, because he himself talks about God foreknowing our actions and then planning how he will respond to them. He says, “Even before the creation God foreknew every free-will act ... Nothing takes God by surprise ... God knew, even before creation, when and how he would have to intervene in his world to accomplish his purposes ... God’s foreknowledge also enables him to plan his own responses to and uses of human choices even before they are made” (“The Nature of the Divine Sovereignty,” p. 112). But if Cottrell is willing to say that God planned long ago how he would respond to human choices, it is hard to see how he can object to the Calvinist position that God decreed long ago how he would respond when we pray or act.

barks in marks on paper and can send them silently to be understood by other creatures many days' journey distant, creatures who have never been seen by the sending creature who first marked his barks down on paper. The "Arminian" dog would reply that God *cannot* do such a thing, because *essential* to the idea of creaturely communication is *hearing* and *seeing* (and usually *smelling!*) the creature from whom one receives the communication. To say that there can be communication without ever hearing or seeing or smelling the other creature is an absurd idea! It is beyond the range of possible occurrences and is logically inconceivable. Therefore it is impossible to think that God could create a creature with such communicating abilities.

In both cases the "Arminian" plant and the "Arminian" dog are in the wrong, because they have incorrectly limited the kind of thing God could create by deriving what was possible for God (in their opinion) from their own finite creaturely existence. But this is very similar to the Arminian theologian who simply asserts (on the basis of his own perception of human experience) that God *cannot* create a creature who makes willing, voluntary, meaningful choices, and that those choices are nonetheless ordained by God. Similarly, the Arminian theologian who argues that God *cannot* ordain that evil come about and not yet himself be responsible for evil, is limiting God based merely on observation of finite human experience.

**4. Does a Calvinistic View of Providence Encourage Either a Dangerous Fatalism or a Tendency to "Live Like Arminians"?** The view of providence presented above emphasizes the need for responsible obedience, so it is not correct to say that it encourages the kind of fatalism that says that whatever is, should be. Those who accuse Reformed writers of believing this have simply not understood the Reformed doctrine of providence.

But do Calvinists "live like Arminians" anyway? Both Calvinists and Arminians believe that our actions have real results and that they are eternally significant. Both agree that we are responsible for our actions and that we make voluntary, willing choices. Both groups will agree that God answers prayer, that proclaiming the gospel results in people being saved, and that obedience to God results in blessing in life, while disobedience results in lack of God's blessing.

But the differences are very significant. Calvinists when true to their doctrine will live with a far more comprehensive trust in God in all circumstances and a far greater freedom from worry about the future, because they are convinced, not just that God will somehow cause his major purposes to work out right in the end, but that *all things* work together for good for those who love God and are called according to his purpose (Rom. 8:28). They will also be thankful to God for *all* the benefits that come to us from whatever quarter, for the one who believes in providence is assured that the ultimate reason for all things that happen is not some chance occurrence in the universe, nor is it the "free will" of another human being, but it is ultimately the goodness of God himself. They will also have great patience in adversity, knowing that it has not come about because God was unable to prevent it, but because it, too, is part of his wise plan. So the differences are immense. Calvin says:

Gratitude of mind for the favorable outcome of things, patience in adversity, and also incredible freedom from worry about the future all necessarily follow upon this knowledge ... Ignorance of providence is the ultimate of all miseries; the highest blessedness lies in the knowledge of it.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> Calvin, *Institutes* 1:219–25 (1.17.7, 11).

**5. Additional Objections to the Arminian Position.** In addition to responding to the four specific Arminian claims mentioned above some remaining objections to it need to be considered.

**a. On an Arminian View, How Can God Know the Future?:** According to the Arminian view, our human choices are not caused by God. They are totally free. But Scripture gives many examples of God predicting the future and of prophecies being fulfilled exactly. How can God predict the future in this way if it is not certain what will happen?

In response to this question, Arminians give three different kinds of answer. Some say that God is not able to know details about the future; specifically, they deny that God is able to know what choices individual human beings will make in the future.<sup>61</sup> This seems to me to be the most consistent Arminian position, but the result is that, while God may be able to make some fairly accurate predictions based on complete knowledge of the present, these cannot be certain predictions. Ultimately it also means that God is ignorant of *all future human choices* which means that he does not even know what the stock market will do tomorrow, or who will be elected as the next president of the United States, or who will be converted. On this view, what event of human history *could* God know with certainty in advance? No event. This is a radical revision of the idea of omniscience and seems to be clearly denied by the dozens of examples of unfailing predictive prophecy in Scripture, the fulfillment of which demonstrates that God is the true God in opposition to false gods.<sup>62</sup>

Other Arminians simply affirm that God *knows* everything that will happen, but this does not mean that he has *planned* or *caused* what will happen—it simply means that he has the ability to see into the future. (The phrase sometimes used to express this view is “Foreknowledge does not imply foreordination.”) This is probably the most common Arminian view, and it is ably

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<sup>61</sup> Richard Rice, “Divine Foreknowledge and Free-Will Theism,” in *The Grace of God, the Will of Man* pp. 121–39, takes this position (see esp. pp. 129, 134–37). Rice says, “God knows a great deal about what will happen ... All that God does not know is the content of future free decisions, and this is because decisions are not there to know until they occur” (p. 134). In order to take this position and maintain God’s omniscience, Rice redefines omniscience: “An omniscient being knows everything logically knowable” (p. 128), and then he defines “logically knowable” to exclude future human choices. On this basis, Rice argues that God does not know the results of future free decisions of human beings, since these are not logically knowable.

Clark Pinnock also explains how he came to this position: “I knew the Calvinist argument that exhaustive foreknowledge was tantamount to predestination because it implies the fixity of all things from ‘eternity past,’ and I could not shake off its logical force” (“From Augustine to Arminius: A Pilgrimage in Theology,” in *The Grace of God, the Will of Man* p. 25). He rejected exhaustive foreknowledge and decided that “*God knows everything that can be known* but that free choices would not be something that can be known even by God because they are not yet settled in reality. Decisions not yet made do not exist anywhere to be known even by God ... God too moves into a future not wholly known because not yet fixed” (ibid., pp. 25–26, emphasis mine).

<sup>62</sup> See chapter 11, pp. 171–72, also p. 190, on God’s knowledge of the future.

expressed by Jack Cottrell: “I affirm that God has a true foreknowledge of future free-will choices without himself being the agent that causes them or renders them certain.”<sup>63</sup>

The problem with this position is that, even if God did not plan or cause things to happen, the fact that they are foreknown means that they will *certainly come about*. And this means that our decisions are predetermined *by something* (whether fate or the inevitable cause-and-effect mechanism of the universe), and they still are not free in the sense the Arminian wishes them to be free. If our future choices are known, then they are fixed. And if they are fixed, then they are not “free” in the Arminian sense (undetermined or uncaused).

A third Arminian response is called “middle knowledge.” Those who take this view would say that the future choices of people are not determined by God, but that God knows them anyway, because he knows *all future possibilities* and he knows how each free creature will respond in any set of circumstances that might occur.<sup>64</sup> William Craig says:

God’s insight into the will of a free creature is of such a surpassing quality that God knows exactly what the free creature would do were God to place him in a certain set of circumstances ... By knowing what every possible free creature would do in any possible situation, God can by bringing about that situation know what the creature will freely do ... Thus he foreknows with certainty everything that happens in the world.<sup>65</sup>

But Craig’s view does not sustain a view of freedom in the sense Arminians usually maintain: that no cause or set of causes made a person choose the way he or she did. On Craig’s view, the surrounding circumstances and the person’s own disposition *guarantee* that a certain choice will be made—otherwise, God could not know what the choice would be from his exhaustive knowledge of the person and the circumstances. But if God knows what the choice will be, and if that choice is guaranteed, then it could not be otherwise. Moreover, if both the person and the circumstances have been created by God, then ultimately the outcome has been determined by God. This sounds very close to freedom in a Calvinist sense, but it is certainly not the kind of freedom that most Arminians would accept.

**b. On an Arminian View, How Can Evil Exist If God Did Not Want It?:** Arminians quite clearly say that the entrance of evil into the world was not according to the will of God. Pinnock says, “The fall of man is an eloquent refutation to the theory that God’s will is always done.”<sup>66</sup> But how can evil exist if God did not want it to exist? If evil happens in spite of the fact that God does not want it to happen, this seems to deny God’s omnipotence: he wanted to prevent evil, but he was unable to do so. How then can we believe that this God is omnipotent?

The common Arminian response is to say that God was *able* to prevent evil but he chose to *allow for the possibility* of evil in order to guarantee that angels and humans would have the

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<sup>63</sup> Jack Cottrell, “The Nature of the Divine Sovereignty,” p. 111.

<sup>64</sup> See William L. Craig, “Middle Knowledge, a Calvinist-Arminian Rapprochement?” in *The Grace of God, the Will of Man* pp. 141–64. See also his book *The Only Wise God: The Compatibility of Divine Foreknowledge and Human Freedom* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1987).

<sup>65</sup> Craig, “Middle Knowledge,” pp. 150–51.

<sup>66</sup> Pinnock, “Responsible Freedom,” p. 102.

freedom necessary for meaningful choices. In other words, God *had to* allow for the possibility of sinful choices in order to allow genuine human choices. Cottrell says, “This God-given freedom includes human freedom to rebel and to sin against the Creator himself. By creating a world in which sin was possible, God thereby bound himself to *react* in certain specific ways should sin become a reality.”<sup>67</sup>

But this is not a satisfactory response either, for it implies that God will have to allow for the possibility of sinful choices in heaven eternally. On the Arminian position, if any of our choices and actions in heaven are to be genuine and real, then they will *have to* include the possibility of sinful choices. But this implies that even in heaven, for all eternity, we will face the real possibility of choosing evil—and therefore the possibility of rebelling against God and losing our salvation and being cast out of heaven! This is a terrifying thought, but it seems a necessary implication of the Arminian view.

Yet there is an implication that is more troubling: If *real* choices have to allow for the possibility of choosing evil, then (1) God’s choices are not real, since he cannot choose evil, or (2) God’s choices are real, and there is the genuine possibility that God might someday choose to do evil—perhaps a little, and perhaps a great deal. If we ponder the second implication it becomes terrifying. But it is contrary to the abundant testimony of Scripture.<sup>68</sup> On the other hand, the first implication is clearly false: God is the definition of what is real, and it is clearly an error to say that his choices are not real. Both implications therefore provide good reason for rejecting the Arminian position that real choices must allow the possibility of choosing evil. But this puts us back to the earlier question for which there does not seem to be a satisfactory answer from the Arminian position: How can evil exist if God did not want it to exist?

**c. On an Arminian View, How Can We Know That God Will Triumph Over Evil?:** If we go back to the Arminian assertion that evil is *not* according to the will of God, another problem arises: if all the evil now in the world came into the world even though God did not want it, how can we be sure that God will triumph over it in the end? Of course, God *says* in Scripture that he will triumph over evil. But if he was unable to keep it out of his universe in the first place and it came in against his will, and if he is unable to predict the outcome of any future events that involve free choices by human, angelic, and demonic agents, how then can we be sure that God’s declaration that he will triumph over all evil is in itself true? Perhaps this is just a hopeful prediction of something that (on the Arminian viewpoint) God simply cannot know. Far from the “incredible freedom from worry about the future” which the Calvinist has because he knows that an omnipotent God makes “all things work together for good” (Rom. 8:28 KJV), the Arminian position seems logically to drive us to a deep-seated anxiety about the ultimate outcome of history.

Both of these last two objections regarding evil make us realize that, while we may have difficulties in thinking about the Reformed view of evil as ordained by God and completely

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<sup>67</sup> Cottrell, “The Nature of Divine Sovereignty,” p. 109.

<sup>68</sup> See chapter 13, pp. 197–98, 201–2, 203–5, for scriptural testimony to God’s goodness, holiness, and righteousness, and chapter 11, pp. 163–68, on God’s unchangeableness.

under the control of God, there are far more serious difficulties with the Arminian view of evil as not ordained or even willed by God, and therefore not assuredly under the control of God.

**d. The Difference in the Unanswered Questions:** Since we are finite in our understanding, we inevitably will have some unanswered questions about every biblical doctrine. Yet on this issue the questions that Calvinists and Arminians must leave unanswered are quite different. On the one hand, Calvinists must say that they do not know the answer to the following questions:

1. Exactly how God can ordain that we do evil willingly, and yet God not be blamed for evil.
2. Exactly how God can cause us to choose something willingly.

To both, Calvinists would say that the answer is somehow to be found in an awareness of God's infinite greatness, in the knowledge of the fact that he can do far more than we could ever think possible. So the effect of these unanswered questions is to increase our appreciation of the greatness of God.

On the other hand, Arminians must leave unanswered questions regarding God's knowledge of the future, why he would allow evil when it is against his will, and whether he will certainly triumph over evil. Their failure to resolve these questions tends to diminish the greatness of God—his omniscience, his omnipotence, and the absolute reliability of his promises for the future. And these unanswered questions tend to exalt the greatness of man (his freedom to do what God does not want) and the power of evil (it comes and remains in the universe even though God does not want it). Moreover, by denying that God can make creatures who have real choices that are nevertheless caused by him, the Arminian position diminishes the wisdom and skill of God the Creator.

## QUESTIONS FOR PERSONAL APPLICATION

1. Has thinking about the doctrine of providence increased your trust in God? How has it changed the way you think about the future? Are there difficulties or hardships in your life at this time? Give an example of a specific difficulty that you are now facing and explain how the doctrine of providence will help you in the way you think about it.
2. Can you name five good things that have happened to you so far today? Were you thankful to God for any of them?
3. Do you sometimes think of luck or chance as causing events that happen in your life? If you ever feel that way, does it increase or decrease your anxiety about the future? Now think for a moment about some events that you might have attributed to luck in the past. Instead, begin to think about those events as under the control of your wise and loving heavenly Father. How does that make you feel differently about them and about the future generally?
4. Do you ever fall into a pattern of little "superstitious" actions or rituals that you think will bring good luck or prevent bad luck (such as not walking under a ladder, being afraid when a black cat walks across your path, not stepping on cracks on a sidewalk, carrying a certain item "just for good luck," etc.)? Do you think those actions tend to increase or decrease your trust in God during the day and your obedience to him?

5. Explain how a proper understanding of the doctrine of providence should lead a Christian to a more active prayer life.
6. What has been the overall effect of this chapter on how you think and feel about God and the events of your life?

## **SPECIAL TERMS**

Arminian  
 Calvinist  
 concurrence  
 decrees of God  
 free choices  
 free will  
 government  
 middle knowledge  
 preservation  
 primary cause  
 providence  
 Reformed  
 secondary cause  
 voluntary choices  
 willing choices

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## SCRIPTURE MEMORY PASSAGE

**Romans 8:28:** *We know that in everything God works for good with those who love him, who are called according to his purpose.*

## HYMN

### “GOD MOVES IN A MYSTERIOUS WAY”

God moves in a mysterious way  
 his wonders to perform;  
 He plants his footsteps in the sea,  
 and rides upon the storm.

Deep in unfathomable mines  
 of never-failing skill  
 He treasures up his bright designs,  
 and works his sovereign will.

Ye fearful saints, fresh courage take;  
 the clouds ye so much dread  
 Are big with mercy, and shall break  
 in blessings on your head.

Judge not the Lord by feeble sense,  
 but trust him for his grace;  
 Behind a frowning providence  
 he hides a smiling face.

His purposes will ripen fast,  
 unfolding every hour;  
 The bud may have a bitter taste,  
 but sweet will be the flow'r.

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Blind unbelief is sure to err,  
and scan his work in vain;  
God is his own interpreter,  
and he will make it plain.

Author: William Cowper, 1774<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Wayne A. Grudem, *Systematic Theology : An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Leicester, England; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Inter-Varsity Press; Zondervan Pub. House, 1994), 315-54.

# The Divine Decrees

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## Preliminary Considerations

The consideration of the divine decrees naturally follows that of divine attributes because the decrees regulate the operation of the attributes. God's acts agree with God's determination. Hence Westminster Shorter Catechism Q. 7 defines the decrees of God to be "his eternal purpose according to the counsel of his own will, whereby he has foreordained whatsoever comes to pass." God does not act until he has decided to act, and his decision is free and voluntary. Hence, the actions of God can no more be separated from the decrees of God than the actions of a man can be from his decisions.

The divine decree relates only to God's *opera ad extra* or transitive acts. It does not include those immanent activities which occur within the essence and result in the three trinitarian distinctions. All this part of divine activity is excluded from the divine decree because it is necessary and not optional. God the Father did not decree the eternal generation of the Son, nor did the Father and Son decree the spiration of the Holy Spirit. The triune God could no more decide after the counsel of his own will to be triune, than he could decide in the same manner to be omnipotent or omniscient. The divine decree, consequently, comprehends only those events that occur in time. God foreordains "whatsoever comes to pass" in space and time. That which comes to pass in the eternity of the uncreated essence forms no part of the contents of God's decree.

The divine decree is formed in eternity, but executed in time. There are sequences in the execution, but not in the formation of God's eternal purpose. In his own mind and consciousness, God's simultaneously because eternally decrees all that occurs in space and time; but the effects and results corresponding to the decree occur successively—not simultaneously. There were thirty-three years between the actual incarnation and the actual crucifixion, but not between the decree that the Logos should be incarnate and the decree that he should be crucified. In the divine decree, Christ was simultaneously because eternally incarnate and crucified: "The Lamb was slain from the foundation of the world" (Rev. 14:8). Hence divine decrees, in reference to God, are one single act only. The singular number is employed in Scripture when the divine mind and nature are considered: "All things work together for good to them who are called according to his purpose (*prothesin*)"<sup>1</sup> (8:28); "according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ" (Eph. 3:11).

God's consciousness differs from that of his rational creatures in that there is no succession in it. This is one of the differentia between the infinite and the finite mind. For God there is no series of decrees each p 312 separated from the others by an interval of time. God is omniscient,

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<sup>1</sup> 1. πρόθεσιν

possessing the whole of his plans and purposes simultaneously: “All things are naked and opened” to his view, in one intuition. God is immutable, and therefore there are no sequences and changes of experience in him. Consequently, the determinations of his will, as well as the thoughts of his understanding, are simultaneous, not successive. In the formation of the divine decree, there are no intervals; but only in the execution of it. Christ, the atoning lamb, “was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifested in these last times” (1 Pet. 1:20). The decree that Christ should die for sin was eternal; the actual death of Christ was in time. There was an interval of four thousand years between the creation of Adam and the birth of Christ; but there was no such interval between the decree to create Adam and the decree that Christ should be born in Bethlehem. Both decrees are simultaneous because both are eternal decisions of the divine will: “We speak of the divine decrees as many, because of the many objects which the decreeing act of God respects. The things decreed are many, but the act decreeing is but one only” (Fisher, *On the Catechism* Q. 7). The things decreed come to pass in time and in a successive series; but they constitute one great system which as one whole and a unity was comprehended in the one eternal purpose of God. Augustine (*Confessions* 12.15) says, “God wills not one thing now and another anon; but once and at once and always, he wills all things that he wills; not again and again, nor now this, now that; nor wills afterward what before he willed not, nor wills not before he willed; because such a will is mutable; and no mutable thing is eternal.”

The divine decree is a divine idea or thought, and it is peculiar to a divine thought that it is equal to the thing produced by it. This earthly globe was decreed from eternity, but it did not actually exist from eternity. It was from eternity a divine thought, but not a historical thing. But this divine thought, unlike a human thought, is not in any particular inferior to the thing. Hence, though the thing is not yet actually created and is only an idea, yet God is not for this reason ignorant in respect to the thing, as man is in respect to a plan which he has not yet executed. A man knows more about his work after he has finished it, than he did before. But God knows no more about the planet earth when his decree to create it is executed, than he did prior to its execution. In the case of the finite mind, the thought is always unequal to the thing; but in the case of the infinite intelligence, the thought is always coequal with the thing: “Your eyes did see my substance, yet being imperfect; and in your book all my members were written, which in continuance were fashioned when as yet there was none of them” (Ps. 139:16). God knew what would be created before it was actually created. This knowledge was perfect. The actual creation did not add anything to it. God knew the whole universe in his eternal decree before it was an actual universe in time, with the same perfect omniscience with which he knew it after the decree was executed in space and time:

Did not God know what would be created by him before it was created by him? Did he create he knew not what, and knew not beforehand what he should create? Was he ignorant before he acted, and in his acting, what his operation would tend to? or did he not know the nature of things and the ends of them till he had produced them and saw them in being? Creatures must be known by God before they were made and not known because they were made; he knew them to make them and did not make [p 313](#) them to know them. By the same reason that he knew what creatures should be before they were, he knew still what creatures shall be before they are.

—Charnock, *God’s Knowledge*, 276  
(See supplement 3.6.1)

The divine decree is the necessary condition of divine foreknowledge. If God does not first decide what shall come to pass, he cannot know what will come to pass. An event must be made certain before it can be known as a certain event. In order that a man may foreknow an act of his own will, he must first have decided to perform it. So long as he is undecided about a particular volition, he cannot foreknow this volition. Unless God had determined to create a world, he could not know that there would be one. For the world cannot create itself, and there is but one being who can create it. If therefore this being has not decided to create a world, there is no certainty that a world will come into existence; and if there is no certainty of a world, there can be no certain foreknowledge of a world. So long as anything remains undecreed, it is contingent and fortuitous. It may or may not happen. In this state of things, there cannot be knowledge of any kind. If a man had the power to cause an eclipse of the sun and had decided to do this, he could then foreknow that the event would occur. But if he lacks the power or, if having the power, he has not formed the purpose, he can have no knowledge of any kind respecting the imagined event. He has neither knowledge nor foreknowledge because there is nothing to be known. Blank ignorance is the mental condition (see Smith, *Theology*, 119n).

In respect to this point, the Socinian is more logical than the Arminian. Both agree that God does not decree those events which result from the action of the human will. Voluntary acts are not predetermined, but depend solely upon human will. Whether they shall occur rests ultimately upon man's decision, not upon God's. Hence human volitions are uncertainties for God, in the same way that an event which does not depend upon a man's decision is an uncertainty for him. The inference that the Socinian drew from this was that foreknowledge of such events as human volitions is impossible to God. God cannot foreknow a thing that may or may not be a thing, an event that may or may not be an event. The Arminian, shrinking from this limitation of divine omniscience, asserts that God can foreknow an uncertainty, that is, that he can have foreknowledge without foreordination. But in this case, there is in reality nothing to be foreknown; there is no object of foreknowledge. If the question be asked "what does God foreknow?" and the answer be that he foreknows that a particular volition will be a holy one, the reply is that so far as the divine decree is concerned the volition may prove to be a sinful one. In this case, God's foreknowledge is a conjecture only, not knowledge. It is like a man's guess. If, on the contrary, the answer be that God foreknows that the volition will be a sinful one, the reply is that it may prove to be a holy one. In this case, also, God's foreknowledge is only a conjecture. To know or to foreknow an uncertainty is a solecism. For in order to either knowledge or foreknowledge, there must be only one actual thing to be known or foreknown. But in the supposed case of contingency and uncertainty, there are two possible things, either of which may turn out to be an object of knowledge, but neither of which is the one certain and definite object required. There is, [p 314](#) therefore, nothing knowable in the case. To know or foreknow an uncertainty is to know or foreknow a nonentity. If it be objected, that since God, as eternal, decrees all things simultaneously and consequently there is really no foreordination for him, it is still true that in the logical order an event must be a certainty before it can be known as such. Though there be no order of time and succession, yet in the order of nature, a physical event or a human volition must be decreed and certain for God that it may be cognized by him as an event or a volition.

The most important aspect of the divine decree is that it brings all things that come to pass in space and time into a plan. There can be no system of the universe, if there be no one divine purpose that systematizes it. Schemes in theology which reject the doctrine of the divine decree necessarily present a fractional and disconnected view of God, man, and nature.

## Characteristics of the Divine Decree

The following characteristics mark the divine decree:

1. The divine decree is founded in wisdom. This is implied in saying that God's purpose is "according to the counsel (*boulēn*)<sup>2</sup> of his will" (Eph. 1:11). There is nothing irrational or capricious in God's determination. There may be much in it that passes human comprehension and is inexplicable to the finite mind, because the divine decree covers infinite space and everlasting time; but it all springs out of infinite wisdom. The "counsel" of the divine mind does not mean any reception of knowledge *ab extra*,<sup>3</sup> by observation or comparison or advisement with others; but it denotes God's wise insight and knowledge, in the light of which he forms his determination. It is possible, also, that there is a reference in the language to the intercommunion and correspondence of the three persons in the Godhead: "The counsel of the Lord stands forever" (Ps. 33:11); "with him is wisdom and strength; he has counsel and understanding" (Job 12:13); "the counsel of the Lord, that shall stand" (Prov. 19:21); "he has done all things well" (Mark 7:37); "God saw everything that he had made, and behold it was very good" (Gen. 1:31).
2. The divine decree is eternal: "Known unto God are all his works from the beginning" (Acts 15:18); "the kingdom was prepared from the foundation of the world" (Matt. 25:34); "he has chosen us in him before the foundation of the world" (Eph. 1:4); "God has from the beginning chosen you to salvation" (2 Thess. 2:13; 2 Tim. 1:9; 1 Cor. 2:7); "the Lamb was slain from the foundation of the world" (Rev. 13:8); Christ as a sacrifice "was foreordained before the foundation of the world" (1 Pet. 1:20). This characteristic has been defined in what has been said under attributes respecting the simultaneousness and successionlessness of the eternal, as distinguished from the gradations and sequences of the temporal. [p 315](#)
3. The divine decree is universal. It includes "whatsoever comes to pass," be it physical or moral, good or evil: "He works all things after the counsel of his own will" (Eph. 1:10–11); "known unto God are all his works from the beginning" (Acts 15:18; Prov. 16:33; Dan. 4:34–35; Matt. 10:29–30; Acts 17:26; Job 14:5; Isa. 46:10): (a) The good actions of men: "Created unto good works, which God has before ordained that we should walk in them" (Eph. 2:10); (b) the wicked actions of men: "Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, you have crucified and slain" (Acts 2:23; 4:27–28; Ps. 76:10; Prov. 16:4); (c) so-called accidental events: "The lot is cast into the lap, but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord" (Prov. 16:33; Gen. 45:8; 50:20); "a bone of him shall not be broken" (John 20:36; Ps. 34:20; Exod. 12:46; Num. 9:12); (d) the means as well as the end: "God has chosen you to salvation, through sanctification (*en hagiasmō*)<sup>4</sup> of the Spirit" (2 Thess. 2:13); "he has chosen us that we should be holy" (Eph. 1:4; 1 Pet. 1:2); "elect through sanctification of the Spirit" (Acts 27:24, 31):

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<sup>2</sup> 2. βουλήν

<sup>3</sup> 3. from the outside

<sup>4</sup> 4. ἐν ἁγιασμῷ

The same divine purpose which determines any event determines that event as produced by its causes, promoted by its means, depending on its conditions, and followed by its results. Things do not come to pass in a state of isolation; neither were they predetermined so to come to pass. In other words, God's purpose embraces the means along with the end, the cause along with the effect, the condition along with the result or issue suspended upon it; the order, relations, and dependences of all events, as no less essential to the divine plan than the events themselves. With reference to the salvation of the elect, the purpose of God is not only that they shall be saved, but that they shall believe, repent, and persevere in faith and holiness in order to salvation.  
—Crawford, *Fatherhood of God*, 426

(e) the time of every man's death: "his days are determined" (Job 14:5); "the measure of my days" (Ps. 39:4); the Jews could not kill Christ "because his hour was not yet come" (John 7:30). It is objected that fifteen years were added to Hezekiah's life after the prophet had said, "Set your house in order, for you shall die and not live" (Isa. 38:1, 5). But this assertion of the prophet was not a statement of the divine decree, but of the nature of his disease, which was mortal had not God miraculously interposed.

4. The divine decree is immutable. There is no defect in God in knowledge, power, and veracity. His decree cannot therefore be changed because of a mistake of ignorance or of inability to carry out his decree or of unfaithfulness to his purpose: "He is in one mind, and who shall turn him?" (Job 23:13); "my counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure" (Isa. 46:10). The immutability of the divine decree is consistent with the liberty of man's will: "God ordains whatsoever comes to pass; yet so as thereby neither is God the author of sin; nor is violence offered to the will of the creature; nor is the liberty, or contingency, of second causes taken away, but rather established" (Westminster Confession 3.1). This is the doctrine of Christ. He asserts that his own crucifixion was a p 316 voluntary act of man and also decreed by God: "They have done unto Elijah whatsoever they pleased (*hosa ēthelēsan*):<sup>5</sup> likewise shall the Son of Man suffer them" (Matt. 17:12); "the Son of Man goes as it was determined (*hōrismenon*),<sup>6</sup> but woe unto that man by whom he is betrayed" (Luke 22:22). In Acts 2:23 it is said that Christ was "delivered by the determinate counsel of God" and "by wicked hands was crucified and slain."

Respecting the alleged contradiction between the divine decree and human freedom, the following particulars are to be noticed. (a) The inspired writers are not conscious of a contradiction, because they do not allude to any or make any attempt to harmonize the two things. If a self-contradiction does not press upon them, it must be because there is no real contradiction. Revelation presents that view of truth which is afforded from a higher point of view than that occupied by the finite mind. Revealed truth is truth as perceived by the infinite intelligence. If no contradiction is perceived by God in a given case, there really is none. The mind of Christ evidently saw no conflict between his assertion that he was to be crucified in accordance with the divine decree and his assertion that Judas was a free and guilty agent in fulfilling this decree. (b) There is no contradiction between the divine decree and human liberty,

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<sup>5</sup> 5. ὅσα ἠθέλησαν

<sup>6</sup> 6. ὠρισμένον

provided the difference between an infinite and a finite being is steadily kept in mind. There would be a contradiction if it were asserted that an event is both certain and uncertain for the same being. But to say that it is certain for one being and uncertain for another is no contradiction. The difference between the omniscience of an infinite being and the fractional knowledge of a finite being explains this. For the divine mind, there is, in reality, no future event because all events are simultaneous, owing to that peculiarity in the cognition of an eternal being whereby there is no succession in it. All events thus being present to him are of course all of them certain events. But for a finite mind, events come before it in a series. Hence there are future events for the finite mind; and all that is future is uncertain. Again, it would be self-contradictory to say that an act of the human will is free for man and necessitated for God. But this is not said by the predestinarian. He asserts that an act of human will is free for both the divine and the human mind, but certain for the former and uncertain for the latter. God as well as man knows that the human will is self-moved and not forced from without. But this knowledge is accompanied with an additional knowledge on the part of God that is wanting upon the part of man. God, while knowing that the human will is free in every act, knows the whole series of its free acts in one intuition. Man does not. This additional element in divine knowledge arises from that peculiarity in divine consciousness just alluded to. All events within the sphere of human freedom, as well as that of physical necessity, are simultaneous to God. Man's voluntary acts are not a series for the divine mind, but are all present at once and therefore are all of them certain to God. From the viewpoint of divine eternity and omniscience, there is no foreknowledge of human volitions. There is simply knowledge of all of them at once. (c) The alleged contradiction arises from assuming that there is only one way in which divine omnipotence can make an event certain. The predestinarian [p 317](#) maintains that the certainty of all events has a relation to divine omnipotence as well as to divine omniscience. God not only knows all events, but he decrees them. He makes them certain by an exercise of power, but not by the same kind of power in every case. God makes some events certain by physical power; and some he makes certain by moral and spiritual power. Within the physical sphere, the divine decree makes certain by necessitating; within the moral sphere, the divine decree makes certain without necessitating. To decree is to bring within a plan. There is nothing in the idea of planning that necessarily implies compulsion. The operations of mind, as well as those of matter, may constitute parts of one great system without ceasing to be mental operations. God decrees phenomena in conformity with the nature and qualities which he has himself given to creatures and things. God's decrees do not unmake God's creation. He decrees that phenomena in the material world shall occur in accordance with material properties and laws, and phenomena in the moral world in accordance with moral faculties and properties. Within the sphere of matter, he decrees necessitated facts; within the sphere of mind, he decrees self-determined acts; and both alike are certain for God. Westminster Confession 3.1 affirms that "the liberty or contingency of second causes is not taken away, but rather established" by the divine decree. If God has decreed men's actions to be free actions, then it is impossible that they should be necessitated actions. His decree makes the thing certain in this case, as well as in every other. The question how God does this cannot be answered by man because the mode of divine agency is a mystery to him. The notion of a decree is not contradictory to that of free agency, unless decree is defined as compulsion and it be assumed that God executes all his decrees by physical means and methods. No one can demonstrate that it is beyond the power of God to make a voluntary act of man an absolutely certain event. If he could, he would disprove divine omnipotence: "God, the first cause, orders all things to come to pass according to the nature of second causes, either necessarily, or freely

and contingently” (Westminster Confession 5.2; Turretin 6.6.6). The self-determination of the human will is the action of a free second cause. It is therefore decreed self-determination. In the instance of holiness, the certainty of the self-determination is explicable by the fact that God works in man “to will and to do.” In the instance of sin, the certainty of the self-determination is inexplicable, because we cannot say in this case that God works in man “to will and to do.” (See supplements 3.6.2 and 3.6.3.)

The divine decree is unconditional or absolute. This means that its execution does not depend upon anything that has not itself been decreed. The divine decree may require means or conditions in order to its execution, but these means or conditions are included in the decree. For illustration, God decreed the redemption of sinners through the death of Jesus Christ. If he had not also decreed the manner of that death the time of its occurrence and the particular persons who were to bring it about, but had left all these means of attaining the end he had proposed to an undecreed act of man that was uncertain for himself, then the success of his purpose of redemption would have depended upon other beings than himself and upon other wills than his own. Consequently, his decree of redemption included the means as well as the end, and Jesus Christ was “by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God taken and by wicked hands crucified and slain” (Acts 2:23). Again, God decrees the salvation of a particular sinner. One of the means or [p 318](#) conditions of salvation is faith in Christ’s atonement. This faith is decreed: “Elected unto sprinkling of the blood of Christ” (1 Pet. 1:1); “the faith of God’s elect” (Titus 1:1); “faith is the gift of God” (Eph. 2:8). But if faith depends upon the undecreed action of the sinner’s will, divine predestination to faith is dependent for success upon the sinner’s uncertain action and is conditioned by it. The means to the decreed end, in this case, are left outside of the decree. The same remark applies to prayer as a means of obtaining a decreed end, like the forgiveness of sins. If the forgiveness of his sins has been decreed to a person, his prayer for forgiveness has also been decreed. (See supplement 3.6.4.)

The reasons why the divine decree is independent of everything finite are the following: (a) It is eternal and therefore cannot depend upon anything in time; but everything finite is in time; (b) the decree depends upon God’s good pleasure (*eudokia*)<sup>7</sup> (Matt. 11:26; Eph. 1:5; Rom. 9:11); therefore it does not depend upon the creature’s good pleasure; (c) the divine decree is immutable (Isa. 46:10; Rom. 9:11), but a decree conditioned upon the decision of the finite will must be mutable because the finite will is mutable; (d) a conditional decree is incompatible with divine foreknowledge; God cannot foreknow an event unless it is certain, and it cannot be certain if it ultimately depends upon finite will. (See supplement 3.6.5.)

## **Efficacious and Permissive Decrees**

The divine decrees are divided into efficacious and permissive (cf. Turretin 3.12.21–25).

The efficacious decree determines the event: (a) by physical and material causes; such events are the motions of the heavenly bodies and the phenomena of the material world generally: “He made a decree for the rain and a way for the lightning of the thunder” (Job 28:26); (b) by an immediate spiritual agency of God upon the finite will in the origin and continuance of holiness: “For it is God, who works in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure” (Phil. 2:13); “faith

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<sup>7</sup> 7. εὐδοκία

is the gift of God” (Eph. 2:8); “if God peradventure will give them repentance” (2 Tim. 2:25); “created in Christ Jesus unto good works” (Eph. 2:10); “the new man is created in righteousness” (4:24).

The permissive decree relates only to moral evil. Sin is the sole and solitary object of this species of decree. It renders the event infallibly certain, but not by immediately acting upon and in the finite will, as in the case of the efficacious decree. God does not work in man or angel “to will and to do,” when man or angel wills and acts antagonistically to him: “Who in times past suffered (*eiase*)<sup>8</sup> all nations to walk in their own ways” (Acts 14:16); “the times of this ignorance God overlooked (*hyperidōn*)”<sup>9</sup> (17:30); “he gave them their own desire” (Ps. 78:18); “he gave them their own request” (106:15) (Shedd, *History of Doctrine* 2.135–38). As sin constitutes only a small sphere in comparison with the whole universe, the scope of the permissive decree is very limited compared with that of the efficient decree. Sin is an endless evil, but fills p 319 only a corner of the universe. Hell (*Hölle*) is a hole or “pit.” It is deep but not wide, bottomless but not boundless. (See supplement 3.6.6.)

The permissive decree is a decree (a) not to hinder the sinful self-determination of the finite will and (b) to regulate and control the result of the sinful self-determination. “God’s permissive will,” says Howe (*Decrees*, lect. 1), “is his will to permit whatsoever he thinks fit to permit or not to hinder; while what he so wills or determines so to permit, he intends also to regulate and not to behold as an idle unconcerned spectator, but to dispose all those *permissa*<sup>10</sup> unto wise and great ends of his own.” It should be observed that in permitting sin, God permits what he forbids. The permissive decree is not indicative of what God approves and is pleasing to him. God decrees what he hates and abhors when he brings sin within the scope of his universal plan (Calvin 1.18.3–4). The “good pleasure” (*eudokia*)<sup>11</sup> in accordance with which God permits sin must not be confounded with the pleasure or complacency (*agapē*)<sup>12</sup> in accordance with which he promulgates the moral law forbidding sin. The term *good pleasure* has the meaning of *pleasure* in the phrase *be pleased* or *please to do me this favor*. What is asked for is a decision to do the favor. The performance of the favor may involve pain, not pleasure; it may require a sacrifice of pleasure on the part of the one who is to “be pleased” to do it. Again, when the permissive decree is denominated the divine will, the term *Will* is employed in the narrow sense of volition, not in the wide sense of inclination. The will of God, in this case, is only a particular decision in order to some ulterior end. This particular decision, considered in itself, may be contrary to the abiding inclination and desire of God as founded in his holy nature; as when a man by a volition decides to perform a particular act which in itself is unpleasant in order to attain an ulterior end that is agreeable. Again, in saying that sin is in accordance with the divine will, the term *Will* implies “control.” As when we say of a physician, “the disease is wholly at his will.” This does not mean that the physician takes pleasure in willing the disease, but that he can cure it.

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<sup>8</sup> 8. εἴασε

<sup>9</sup> 9. ὑπεριδών

<sup>10</sup> 10. permitted things

<sup>11</sup> 11. εὐδοκία

<sup>12</sup> 12. ἀγάπη

This brings to notice the principal practical value of the doctrine that God decrees sin. It establishes divine sovereignty over the entire universe. By reason of his permissive decree, God has absolute control over moral evil, while yet he is not the author of it and forbids it. Unless he permitted sin, it could not come to pass. Should he decide to preserve the will of the holy angel or the holy man from lapsing, the man or the angel would persevere in holiness. Sin is preventable by almighty God, and therefore he is sovereign over sin and hell, as well as over holiness and heaven. This is the truth which God taught to Cyrus to contradict the Persian dualism: “I form the light and create darkness; I make peace and create evil. I, the Lord, do all these things” (Isa. 45:7); “shall there be evil in a city, and the Lord has not done it?” (Amos 3:6); “I withheld you from sinning against me” (Gen. 20:6). To deny this truth logically leads to the doctrine of the independence of evil, and the doctrine of the independence of evil is dualism and irreconcilable with monotheism. Evil becomes like the *hylē*<sup>13</sup> in the ancient physics, a limitation of the p 320 infinite being. The truth respecting the efficacious and the permissive decree is finely expressed in the verse of George Herbert:

We all acknowledge both thy power and love  
 To be exact, transcendent, and divine;  
 Who dost so strongly and so sweetly move,  
 While all things have their will—yet none but thine.  
 For either thy command, or thy permission  
 Lays hands on all; they are thy right and left.  
 The first puts on with speed and expedition;  
 The other curbs sin’s stealing pace and theft.  
 Nothing escapes them both; all must appear,  
 And be disposed, and dressed, and tuned by thee,  
 Who sweetly temper’st all. If we could hear  
 Thy skill and art, what music it would be.

In purposing to permit sin, God purposes to overrule it for good: “Surely the wrath of man shall praise you; the remainder of wrath shall you restrain” (Ps. 76:10); “you thought evil against me, but God meant it unto good” (Gen. 45:8). This part of the doctrine of the permissive decree may be overlooked or denied, and an inadequate statement result. The Council of Trent asserted that sin arises from the “mere permission” of God. The Reformers were not satisfied with this phraseology, because they understood it to mean that in respect to the fall of angels and men, God is an idle spectator (*deo otioso spectante*) and that sin came into the universe because he cannot prevent it and has no control over it. This kind of permission is referred to in Westminster Confession 5.4: “The almighty power, wisdom, and goodness of God extends even to the sins of angels and men; and this not by a bare permission, but such as has joined with it a most wise and powerful bounding and otherwise ordering and governing of them, in a manifold dispensation, to his own holy ends; yet so that the sinfulness thereof proceeds only from the creature and not from God.”<sup>14</sup> Anselm (*Why the God-Man?* 1.15) illustrates this truth in the following manner:

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<sup>13</sup> 13. ὕλη = matter

<sup>14</sup> 14. WS: Calvin is sometimes represented as differing from Augustine and teaching that God decrees sin as he does holiness by an efficacious decree. Möhler so asserts in his *Symbolics*, but Baur (*Gegensatz*, 744–45) shows that this is a mistake. Modern Lutheran theologians often make the

If those things which are held together in the circuit of the heavens should desire to be elsewhere than under the heavens or to be further removed from the heavens, there is no place where they can be but under the p 321 heavens; nor can they fly from the heavens without also approaching them. For whence and whither and in what way they go, they still are under the heavens; and if they are at a greater distance from one part of them, they are only so much nearer to the opposite part. And so, though man or evil angel refuse to submit to the divine will and appointment, yet he cannot escape it; for if he wishes to fly from a will that commands, he falls into the power of a will that punishes. (See supplement 3.6.7.)

Man may not permit sin because he is under a command that forbids him to commit it, either in himself or in others. But God is not thus obliged by the command of a superior to hinder the created will from self-determining to evil. He was bound by his own justice and equity to render it possible that man should not self-determine to evil; and he did this in creating man in holiness and with plenary power to continue holy. But he was not bound in justice and equity to make it infallibly certain that man would not self-determine to evil. He was obliged by his own perfection to give man so much spiritual power that he might stand if he would, but not obliged to give so much additional power as to prevent him from falling by his own decision. Mutable perfection in a creature was all that justice required. Immutable perfection was something more (cf. Charnock, *Holiness of God*, 496). We cannot infer that because it is the duty of a man to keep his fellowman from sinning, if he can, it is also the duty of God to keep man from sinning. A man is bound to exert every influence in his power to prevent the free will of his fellow creature from disobeying God, only because God has commanded him to do so, not because the fellowman is entitled to it. A criminal cannot demand upon the ground of justice that his fellowman keep him from the commission of crime; and still less can he make this demand upon God. The criminal cannot say to one who could have prevented him from the transgression, but did not: “You are to blame for this crime, because you did not prevent me from perpetrating it.”

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same assertion. Fisher (*Reformation*, 202) says that in his *Institutes* Calvin “makes the primal transgression the object of an efficient decree,” but “in the *Consensus Genevensis* confines himself to the assertion of a permissive decree in the case of the first sin.” But Calvin 3.23.8 affirms that “the perdition of the wicked depends upon divine predestination in such a manner that the cause and matter of it are found in themselves. Man falls according to the appointment of divine providence, but he falls by his own fault (*suo vitio cadit*).” Calvin, it is true, asserts (2.4.3–5) that “prescience or permission” is not the whole truth respecting God’s relation to sin, because he is said in Scripture “to blind and harden the reprobate and to turn, incline, and influence their hearts.” But the accompanying explanation shows that he has in mind the notion of permission in the case of an idle spectator who cannot prevent an action and can do nothing toward controlling it after it has occurred—the same notion that is alluded to in the Westminster Confession and other Calvinistic creeds. The “blinding, hardening, turning,” etc., Calvin describes as the consequence of divine desertion, not causation. Some of his phraseology in this place is harsh, but should be interpreted in harmony with his explicit teaching in 3.23.8. One proof that Calvinism does not differ from Augustinianism on the subject of the origin of sin under the divine decree is the fact that the Dort Canons, which are a very strict statement of Calvinism, reject supralapsarianism and assert infralapsarianism/sublapsarianism. This means that the relation of God to the origin of sin is not efficacious, but permissive, which was Augustine’s view.

Nonprevention of crime is not the authorship of crime. No free agent can demand as something due to him that another free agent exert an influence to prevent the wrong use of his own free agency. The only reason, therefore, why one is obligated to prevent another from sinning is the command of one who is superior to them both. God has made every man his “brother’s keeper.” And if God were man’s fellow creature, he also would be his brother’s keeper and would be obligated to prevent sin. In creating man holy and giving him plenary power to persevere in holiness, God has done all that equity requires in reference to the prevention of sin in a moral agent.

How the permissive decree can make the origin of sin a certainty is an inscrutable mystery. God is not the author of sin, and hence, if its origination is a certainty for him, it must be by a method that does not involve his causation. There are several attempts at explanation, but they are inadequate:

1. God exerts positive efficiency upon the finite will, as he does in the origination of holiness. He makes sin certain by causing it. But this contradicts the following texts: “Neither tempts he any man” (James 1:13); “God is light, and in him is no darkness at all” (1 John 1:5); “God made man upright, but they have sought out many inventions” (Eccles. 7:29). It also contradicts the Christian consciousness. In the instance of holiness, the soul says, “Not unto [p 322](#) me, but unto you be the glory”; but in the instance of sin, it says, “Not unto you, but unto me be the guilt and shame.” “By the grace of God, I am what I am” in respect to holiness; “by the fault of free will, I am what I am” in respect to sin.
2. God places the creature in such circumstances as render his sinning certain. But the will of the creature is not subject to circumstances. It can resist them. Circumstances act only *ab extra*.<sup>15</sup> The conversion of the will cannot be accounted for by circumstances, and neither can its apostasy.
3. God presents motives to the will. But a motive derives its motive power from the existing inclination or bias of the will. There is no certainty of action in view of a motive, unless the previous inclination of the will agrees with the motive; and the motive cannot produce this inclination or bias.
4. God decides not to bestow that special degree of grace which prevents apostasy. But this does not make apostasy certain, because holy Adam had power to stand with that degree of grace with which his Creator had already endowed him. It was, indeed, not certain that he would stand; but neither was it certain that he would fall, if reference be had only to the degree of grace given in creation. When God decides not to hinder a holy being from sinning, he is inactive in this reference; and inaction is not causative.
5. God causes the matter but not the form of sin. There is a difference between the act and the viciousness of the act. The act of casting stones when Achan was slain was the same act materially as when Stephen was martyred; but the formal element, namely, the intention, was totally different. God concurs with the act and causes it, but not with the intent or viciousness of the act. But the form or “viciousness” of the act is the whole of the sin; and God’s concursus does not extend to this (cf. Charnock’s *Holiness of God* on

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<sup>15</sup> 15. from the outside

the divine concursus). Charnock regards it as a valid explanation of the permissive decree.<sup>16</sup>

## Fate, Certainty, Compulsion, and Necessity

The divine decree differs from the heathen fate.<sup>17</sup> (a) Decree is the determination of a personal being; fate is merely the connection (*nexus*) of impersonal causes and effects. The divine decree includes causes, effects, and their nexus. (b) The divine decree has respect to the nature of beings and things, bringing about a physical event by physical means and a moral event by moral means; fate brings about all events in the same way. (c) The divine decree proceeds from a wise insight and knowledge. It adapts means to ends. Fate is fortuitous. It is only another word for chance, and there is no insight or foresight or adaptive intelligence in mere chance. (d) God, according to the heathen view, is subject to fate: *tēn peprōmenēn moiran adynaton esti apophygein kai theō*<sup>18</sup> p 323 (Herodotus 1). Says Plato (*Laws* 5.741), “Even God is said not to be able to fight against necessity.” But the divine decree is subject to God:

Necessity and chance  
Approach not me, and what I will is fate.  
—Milton (See supplement 3.6.8)

To predestinate voluntary action is to make it certain. If it meant, as it is sometimes asserted, to force voluntary action, it would be a self-contradiction. To make certain is not the same as to compel or necessitate, because there are different ways of making certain, but only one way of necessitating. An event in the material world is made certain by physical force; this is compulsory. An event in the moral world is made certain by spiritual operation; this is voluntary and free. The lines of Pope express this:

[God] binding nature fast in fate,  
Left free the human will.

The distinction between compulsion and certainty is a real one, and if observed prevents the misrepresentation of the doctrine of predestination.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> 16. WS: Alexander in the 1831 *Princeton Repertory* makes the same objection as above to the doctrine of the concursus.

<sup>17</sup> 17. WS: On fate as presented in the pagan writers, see the appendix to Toplady’s translation of Zanchi, *On Predestination*.

<sup>18</sup> 18. τὴν πεπρωμένην μοιράν ἀδυνάτον ἐστὶ ἀποφυγεῖν καὶ θεῷ = no one can escape his appointed fate, not even a god

<sup>19</sup> 19. WS: On this point, see Clarke, *Demonstration*, prop. 20, who contends, however, only that foreknowledge does not necessitate, not that foreordination does not. He is Arminian on the subject of decrees.

The following objection is made against certainty, namely, that it is equivalent to necessity:

If all future events are foreknown, they will occur in that order in which they are foreknown to come about. Now if they will occur in that order, the order of things is certain to God who foreknows them. And if the order of things is certain, the order of their causes is certain; indeed, nothing can occur which some efficient cause has not preceded. But if the order of causes is certain, by which everything happens that comes to pass, then all things that come to pass happen by fate. Now if that is so, then we are powerless.<sup>20</sup>

There is something like this in Cicero's *Concerning Fate* 14. But it is not the opinion of Cicero, but of certain philosophers whose views he criticizes. He mentions two theories: (1) that all things happen by fate or necessity (he attributes this view to Democritus, Heraclitus, Empedocles, and Aristotle) and (2) that the voluntary movements of the human soul do not happen by fate or necessity. Cicero favors the latter theory (*Concerning Fate* 17–18). His view of the relation of human actions to the divine will was what would now be called the general providence of God. He did not maintain particular providence: "The gods are concerned with weighty matters and ignore what is inconsequential"<sup>21</sup> (*Concerning the Nature of the Gods* 2.66). The fallacy in the above extract consists in assuming that a "certain and fixed order" is identical with fate. This depends upon how the order is fixed. If it is fixed in accordance [p 324](#) with physical laws, it would be fate; but if fixed in accordance with the nature of mind and free will, it is not fate, but certainty only.

Certainty may or may not denote necessity. It denotes necessity when a physical event is spoken of, as when it is said that it is certain that a stone unsupported will fall to the ground. It does not denote necessity, when a mental or voluntary act is said to be certain: "If a man should be informed by prophecy that he would certainly kill a fellow creature the next day or year and that in perpetrating this act he would be actuated by malice, it would not enter his mind that he would not be guilty of any crime because the act was certain before it was committed. But if the terms were changed and he were informed that he would be necessitated to commit the act, it would enter his mind" (*Princeton Repertory* 1831: 159).

## Predestination

Predestination is the divine decree or purpose (*prothesis*;<sup>22</sup> Rom. 8:28) so far as it relates to moral agents, namely, angels and men. The world of matter and irrational existence is more properly the object of the divine decree than of divine predestination. God decreed rather than

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<sup>20</sup> 20. Si praescita sunt omnia futura, hoc ordine venient, quo ventura esse praescita sunt. Et si hoc ordine venient, certus est ordo rerum praescienti deo. Et si est certus ordo rerum, est certus ordo causarum; non enim aliquid fieri potest, quod non aliqua efficiens causa praecesserit. Si autem certus est ordo causarum quo fit omne quod fit, fato fiunt omnia quae fiunt. Quod si ita est, nihil est in nostra potestate.

<sup>21</sup> 21. magna dii curant, parva negligunt

<sup>22</sup> 22. πρόθεσις

predestinated the existence of the material universe. Again a decree relates to a thing or fact; predestination to a person. Sin is decreed; the sinner is predestinated. In 1 Cor. 2:7, however, the gospel is described as predestinated: “The hidden wisdom which God foreordained (*proōrisen*)<sup>23</sup> unto our glory.” This is explained by the fact that the gospel relates eminently to persons, not to things.

Predestination is denoted in the New Testament by two words: *proorizein*<sup>24</sup> and *progignōskein*.<sup>25</sup> The former signifies “to circumscribe or limit beforehand.” The word *horizein*<sup>26</sup> is transferred in English *horizon*, which denotes the dividing line that separates the earth from the sky. *Proorizein*<sup>27</sup> occurs in Acts 4:28: “To do whatsoever your hand and your counsel determined before (*proōrise*)<sup>28</sup> to be done.” Pilate and the Gentiles and the people of Israel were the agents under this predestination. This is predestination to sin. Examples of predestination to holiness are the following: “Whom he did foreknow (*proegnō*),<sup>29</sup> he also did predestinate (*proōrise*)<sup>30</sup> to be conformed to the image of his son” (Rom. 8:29); “whom he did predestinate (*proōrisen*),<sup>31</sup> them he also called” (8:30); “having predestinated (*proorisas*)<sup>32</sup> us unto the adoption of children” (Eph. 1:5); being predestinated (*prooristhentes*)<sup>33</sup> according to the purpose of him who works all things after the counsel of his own will” (1:11); “the hidden wisdom which God ordained before (*proōrisen*)<sup>34</sup> unto our glory” (1 Cor. 2:7). p 325

The word *progignōskein*<sup>35</sup> (to foreknow) occurs in several texts: “Whom he did foreknow (*proegnō*),<sup>36</sup> he also did predestinate” (Rom. 8:29); “God has not cast away his people, whom he

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<sup>23</sup> 23. προώρισεν

<sup>24</sup> 24. προορίζειν = to circumscribe or limit beforehand

<sup>25</sup> 25. προγιγνώσκειν = to foreknow

<sup>26</sup> 26. ὀρίζειν = to divide, define

<sup>27</sup> 27. προορίζειν = to determine before

<sup>28</sup> 28. προώρισε

<sup>29</sup> 29. προέγνω

<sup>30</sup> 30. προώρισε

<sup>31</sup> 31. προώρισεν

<sup>32</sup> 32. προορίσας

<sup>33</sup> 33. προορισθέντες

<sup>34</sup> 34. προώρισεν

<sup>35</sup> 35. προγιγνώσκειν

<sup>36</sup> 36. προέγνω

foreknew (*proegnō*)<sup>37</sup> (11:2); Christ “verily was foreknown (*proegnōsmenos*)<sup>38</sup> before the foundation of the world” (1 Pet. 1:20). The noun *prognōsis*<sup>39</sup> occurs in two texts: “Delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God” (Acts 2:23); “elect according to the foreknowledge of God” (1 Pet. 1:2). The terms *foreknow* and *predestinate* denote two aspects of the same thing. Romans 11:2, might read, “God has not cast away his people whom he predestinated.” When one is distinguished from the other, as in 8:29, to “foreknow” means to “choose” or “single out” for the purpose of predestinating. Foreknowledge, in this use of the word, is election. It is the first part of the total act of predestinating. The word *know* in this connection has the Hebraistic not the classical signification. To know in the Hebrew sense means to regard with favor, denoting not mere intellectual cognition, but some kind of interested feeling or affection toward the object (cf. Gen. 18:19; Ps. 1:6; 36:10; 144:3; Hos. 8:4; Amos 3:2; Nah. 1:7; Matt. 7:23; John 10:14; 1 Cor. 8:3; 16:18; 2 Tim. 2:19; 1 Thess. 5:12; Shedd on Rom. 7:15). Traces of this use of *gignōskein*<sup>40</sup> are seen in the earlier Greek usage: *gnōtos*<sup>41</sup> = *gnōstos*<sup>42</sup> signifies a kinsman or a friend (*Iliad* 15.350; Aeschylus, *Choephoroi* 702). With this signification may be compared still another Hebraistic use of the word *know*, namely, “to make known”: “Now I know that you fear God” (Gen. 22:12); “I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ” (1 Cor. 2:2).

It is to be carefully observed that foreknowledge in the Hebraistic sense of election means a foreknowledge of the person simply, not of the actions of the person. “Whom he foreknew” (Rom. 8:29) does not mean “whose acts he foreknew,” but “whose person he foreknew.” It signifies that God fixes his eye upon a particular sinful man and selects him as an individual to be predestinated to holiness in effectual calling. This is proved by the remainder of the verse: “Whom he foreknew, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son.” The holy actions of the elect are the effect, not the cause, of their being foreknown and predestinated. In 1 Pet. 1:2 believers are “elected unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Christ,” that is, unto justification and sanctification. In 2 Tim. 1:9 “God has called us, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began”—and certainly, therefore, before any obedience, either partial or total, could be rendered to be the ground of the calling. In Rom. 11:2 St. Paul affirms that “God has not cast away his people whom he foreknew.” It would be nonsense even to suppose that God has cast away a people whom he foreknew would keep his commandments. This, therefore, cannot be the sense of *proegnō*.<sup>43</sup> The ground of predestination is God’s foreknowledge; and this foreknowledge is not a foresight that a particular individual will believe and repent, but a simple

<sup>37</sup> 37. προέγνω

<sup>38</sup> 38. προεγνωσμένος

<sup>39</sup> 39. πρόγνωσις = was foreknown

<sup>40</sup> 40. γινώσκειν = to know

<sup>41</sup> 41. γνωτός

<sup>42</sup> 42. γνωστός

<sup>43</sup> 43. προέγνω = to foreknow

prerecognition of him as a person to whom God in his sovereign [p 326](#) mercy has determined to “give repentance” (2 Tim. 2:25) and faith, since “faith is the gift of God” (Eph. 2:8) and since “as many as were ordained to eternal life believed” (Acts 13:48). In making the choice, God acts “according to the good pleasure (*eudokian*)<sup>44</sup> of his will” (Eph. 1:5) and not according to any good action of the creature, so “that the purpose of God according to election might stand not of works, but of him that calls” (Rom. 9:11).

Foreknowledge in the Hebraistic use of the word is prior in the order to predestination, because it means electing compassion and persons are referred to; but foreknowledge in the classical sense is subsequent in the order to decree, because it denotes cognition and events are referred to. God foreknows, that is, elects those persons whom he predestinates to life. God decrees the creation of the world and thereby foreknows with certainty the fact.

Predestination makes the number of the predestinated “so certain and definite, that it cannot be either increased or diminished” (Westminster Confession 3.4); “the Lord knows them that are his” (2 Tim. 2:19); “I know whom I have chosen” (John 13:18); “I know you by name” (Exod. 33:17); “your names are written in heaven” (Luke 10:20); “before you came forth out of the womb, I sanctified you, and I ordained you a prophet unto the nations” (Jer. 1:5); “God separated me from my mother’s womb and called me by his grace” (Gal. 1:15); “I know my sheep” (John 10:14). (See supplement 3.6.9.)

## Election

The decree of predestination is divided into the decrees of election and reprobation. God’s decree of election respects angels: “I charge you before God and the Lord Jesus Christ and the elect angels” (1 Tim. 5:21); “the angels which kept not their first estate” (Jude 6). It is not, in this case, a decree to deliver from sin but to preserve from sinning. Those whom God determined to keep from apostasy by bestowing upon them an additional degree of grace above what had been given them in creating them in holiness are the elect angels. Those whom he determined to leave to their own will and thus to decide the question of apostasy for themselves with that degree of grace with which they were endowed by creation are the nonelect or reprobate angels. A nonelect angel is one who is holy by creation and has ample power to remain holy, but is not kept by extraordinary grace from an act of sinful self-determination. The perseverance of the nonelect angel is left to himself; that of the elect angel is not: “The first object of the permissive will of God was to leave nonelect angels to their own liberty and the use of their free will, which was natural to them, not adding that supernatural grace which was necessary, not that they should not sin, but that they should infallibly not sin. They had a strength sufficient to avoid sin, but not sufficient infallibly to avoid sin; a grace sufficient to preserve them, but not sufficient to confirm them” (Charnock, *Holiness of God*).

Reprobation in the case of an unfallen angel does not suppose sin, but in the case of fallen man it does. A holy angel is nonelect or reprobate in respect to persevering grace, and the consequence is that he may [p 327](#) or may not persevere in holiness. He may continue holy, or he may apostatize. The decision is left wholly to himself. This is not the case with the elect angel.

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<sup>44</sup> 44. εὐδοκίαν

He is kept from falling. A sinful man, on the other hand, is nonelect or reprobate in respect to regenerating grace. It is not bestowed upon him, and his voluntariness in sin continues.

Election in reference to the angels implies (a) mutable holiness: angelic holiness is not self-originated, hence not self-subsistent and unchangeable: "Behold he put no trust in his servants, and his angels he charged with folly" (Job 4:18); (b) the operation of the Holy Spirit upon the finite will in all grades of being, and this in different degrees of efficiency; and (c) that a part, only, of the angels were placed upon probation; the perseverance in holiness of the elect angels was secured to them by electing grace.

The fall of the angels is the very first beginning of sin and presents a difficulty not found in the subsequent fall of man, namely, a fall without an external tempter. This has been discussed in the profound treatise of Anselm, *On the Fall of the Devil*. So far as God is concerned, the clue to the fall of a holy angel is in his decree not to hinder the exercise of angelic self-determination to evil. This, however, does not fully account for the origin of angelic sin. When God placed some of the holy angels on probation and decided not to prevent their apostasy by extraordinary grace, they might, nevertheless, have continued in holiness, had they so willed. The origin of their sin is not, therefore, fully accounted for by the merely negative permission of God. A positive act of angelic self-determination is requisite; and how this is made certain by God is the difficulty. For it must be remembered that in permitting some of the angels to fall, God did not withdraw from them any power or grace which was bestowed in creation. Nothing that was given in creation was withdrawn from Satan until after he had transgressed. This remark is true also of holy Adam and his apostasy. How the fall of a holy will can be made a certainty by a merely permissive decree of God is inexplicable, as has already been observed. Neither temptation nor the circumstances in which the creature is placed make the event of apostasy infallibly certain. The will of the holy angel or man can resist both temptation and circumstances and is commanded by God to do so. Nothing but the spontaneity of will can produce the sin; and God does not work in the will to cause evil spontaneity. The certainty of sin by a permissive decree is an insoluble mystery for the finite mind. The certainty of holiness in the elect by an efficacious decree is easily explicable. God, in this case, works in the elect "to will and to do." The efficient decree realizes itself by positive action upon the creature; but the permissive decree does not realize itself in this manner. God is the efficient author of holiness, but not of sin. The conviction that God is not the author of sin is innate and irrepressible. Socrates gives expression to it in the *Republic* 2.377, but he does so somewhat from the viewpoint of dualism. While evil in his view does not originate in God and is punished by God, it is not, as in revelation, under the absolute control of God, in such sense that it could be prevented by him. (See supplement 3.6.10.)

The power to prevent sin is implied in its permission. No one can be said to permit what he cannot prevent. Sin is preventable by the exercise of a greater degree of that same spiritual efficiency by which the will was inclined to holiness in creation. God did not please to exert this degree in the instance of the fallen angels and man, and thus sin was possible. God's power to prevent sin without forcing the will is illustrated by the [p 328](#) Christian experience. The mind can be so illuminated and filled with a sense of divine things by the Holy Spirit as to deaden lust and temptation. Compare the temptability of such believers as Leighton and Baxter with that of an ordinary Christian. Afflictions sometimes cause the common temptations of life to lose almost all their force. Now, carry this mental illumination and this cooperation of the divine Spirit with the human spirit to an extraordinary degree, and it is easy to see how God can keep a soul already holy from falling, and yet the process be, and be felt to be, spontaneous and willing. Only the first cause can work internally and directly upon the finite will. Second causes cannot so operate.

No man can incline another man; but God the Holy Spirit can incline any man to good, however wickedly inclined he may already be. This is a revealed truth, not a psychological one. It could not be discovered by the examination of the self-consciousness, for this does not give a report of a divine agent as distinct from the human. Hence the doctrine of spiritual operation in the soul is not found in natural religion. The “demon” of Socrates is the only thing resembling it; but this, probably, was only the personification of conscience. (See supplement 3.6.11.)

The reason for the permission of sin was the manifestation of certain divine attributes which could not have been manifested otherwise. These attributes are mercy and compassion, with their cognates. The suffering of God incarnate and vicarious atonement, with all their manifestation of divine glory, would be impossible in a sinless universe. The “intent” was “that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God” (Eph. 3:10). The attributes of justice and holiness, also, though exhibited in natural religion, yet obtain a far more impressive display in the method of redemption. The glory of God, not the happiness of the creature, is the true theodicy of sin. As the mineral kingdom is for the vegetable, the vegetable for the animal, and the animal for man, so all are for God. The inferior grade of being in each instance justifies the subservience. This is not egotism or selfishness, because of the superior dignity in each case.

The position that sin is necessary to the best possible universe is objectionable, unless by the best possible universe be meant the universe best adapted to manifest divine attributes. If the happiness of the creature be the criterion of the best possible universe, then sin is not necessary to the best possible world. Sin brings misery, and the best possible world, looking at the happiness of the creature alone, would have no sin in it. Sin is very limited in comparison with holiness in the universe of God. The earth is a mote in astronomy. The number of the lost angels and men is small compared with the whole number of rational creatures. Sin is a speck upon the infinite azure of eternity. Hell is a corner of the universe; it is a hole or “pit,” not an ocean. It is “bottomless,” but not boundless. The dualistic and gnostic theory, which makes God and Satan or the demiurge nearly equal in sway, is not that of revelation. Because holiness and sin have thus far been so nearly balanced here on earth, it is not to be inferred that this will be the final proportion at the end of human history or that it is the same throughout the universe. That sin is the exception and not the rule in the rational universe is evinced by the fact that the angelic world was not created by species. Apostasy there is individual, not universal. The Scriptures denominate the good the heavenly “host” and allude to it as vast beyond computation; but no such description is given of the evil. [p 329](#)

God’s decree of election respects man: “You have not chosen me, but I have chosen you” (John 15:16); “God has chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise” (1 Cor. 1:27–28); “according as he has chosen us in him before the foundation of the world” (Eph. 1:4); “has not God chosen the poor of this world, rich in faith?” (James 2:5; Matt. 13:11; 20:23; 22:14; 24:22, 40; 25:34; Mark 4:11; Luke 10:20; 12:32; 17:34; John 6:37; Acts 13:48; Rom. 8:28–33; 9–11; Gal. 1:15; Eph. 1; 2 Thess. 2:13; 2 Tim. 1:9; Isa. 42:1; 45:4; 65:9, 22). Human election differs from angelic in that it is election to holiness from a state of sin, not to perseverance in a state of holiness. It supposes the fall of man. Men are chosen out of a state of sin: “They who are elected, being fallen in Adam, are redeemed by Christ” (Westminster Confession 3.6). Human election is both national and individual. National election relates to the means of grace, namely, the revealed word and the ministry of the word. Individual election relates to grace itself, namely, the bestowment of the regenerating power of the Holy Spirit. National election is the outward call: “many are called” (Matt. 20:16). Individual election is the inward or effectual call:

“few are chosen.” This statement of our Lord that few are individually elected in comparison with the many who are nationally elected refers to the state of things at the time of his speaking. Christ was rejected by the majority of that generation to which he himself belonged, but this does not mean that he will prove to have been rejected by the majority of all the generations of mankind. (See supplement 3.6.12.)

The following characteristics of the decree of election are to be noticed:

1. God’s decree of election originates in compassion, not complacency; in pity for the sinner’s soul, not delight in the sinner’s character and conduct. Election does not spring out of the divine love (*agapē*)<sup>45</sup> spoken of in John 14:23, but out of the divine goodness and kindness (*chrēstotēs*)<sup>46</sup> spoken of in Rom. 11:22. God sees no holiness in either the elect or the nonelect and hence feels no complacent love toward either, yet compassion toward both. He has a benevolent and merciful feeling toward the fallen human spirit (a) because it is his own handiwork: “You will have a desire to the work of your hands” (Job 14:15); “should I not spare Nineveh, that great city, wherein are more than six score thousand persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand?” (Jon. 4:11); “as I live, says the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live” (Ezek. 33:11); “the Lord is full of compassion; slow to anger and of great mercy” (Ps. 145:8; 103:8; 86:15); “God delights in mercy” (Mic. 7:18); “the Lord passed by and proclaimed, The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin” (Exod. 34:6); and (b) because of its capacity for holiness and worship toward the nonelect; this compassionate feeling exists in the divine mind, because they, like the elect, are the creatures of God and have the same capacities; but the expression of this compassion is restrained for reasons p 330 sufficient for God and unknown to the creature. It appears strange that God should feel benevolent compassion toward the souls of all men alike and yet not manifest saving compassion to all of them, that he should convert Paul and leave Judas in sin. Yet there is no contradiction or impossibility in it. We can conceive of the existence of pity, without its actual exercise in some instances. We can conceive that there may be some men whose persistence in sin and obstinate resistance of common grace God decides for reasons sufficient to him not to overcome by the internal operation of his Spirit, while yet his feeling toward them as his creatures is that of profound and infinite compassion. Why he does not overcome their self-will by the actual exercise of his compassion, as he does that of others equally or perhaps even more impenitent and obstinate, is unknown and perhaps unknowable. “Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in your sight” (Matt. 11:26) is all the reason that our Lord assigns.
2. God’s decree of election is not chargeable with partiality, because this can obtain only when one party has a claim upon another. If God owed forgiveness and salvation to all mankind, it would be partiality should he save some and not others. Partiality is injustice. A parent is partial and unjust if he disregards the equal rights and claims of all his children. A debtor is partial and unjust if in the payment of his creditors he favors some at

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<sup>45</sup> 45. ἀγάπη

<sup>46</sup> 46. χρηστότης

the expense of others. In these instances, one party has a claim upon the other. But it is impossible for God to show partiality in the bestowment of salvation from sin, because the sinner has no right or claim to it. Says Aquinas (*Summa* 2.63.1):

There is a twofold giving: the one a matter of justice, whereby a man is paid what is due to him. Here, it is possible to act partially and with respect of persons. There is a second kind of giving, which is a branch of mere bounty or liberality, by which something is bestowed that is not due. Such are the gifts of grace whereby sinners are received of God. In this case, respect of persons, or partiality, is absolutely out of the question, because anyone, without the least shadow of injustice, may give of his own as he will and to whom he will: according to Matt. 20:14–15, “Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with my own?”

A man cannot be charged with unjust partiality in the bestowment of alms because giving alms is not paying a debt. He may give to one beggar and not to another, without any imputation upon his justice, because he owes nothing to either of them. In like manner, God may overcome the resisting will of one man and not of another, without being chargeable with unjust partiality, because he does not owe this mercy to either of them. This truth is taught in Rom. 9:14–15: “What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid. For he says to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.” Although feeling compassion toward all sinners in the universe because they are his creatures, God does not save all sinners in the universe. He does not redeem any of the fallen angels; and he does not redeem all of fallen mankind. He deals justly with both fallen angels and lost men; and justice cannot be charged with <sup>p 331</sup> partiality: “Behold therefore the goodness (*chrēstotēta*)<sup>47</sup> and severity (*apotomian*)<sup>48</sup> of God; on them which fell, severity (strict justice); but toward you, goodness (mercy)” (Rom. 11:22). Under an economy of grace, there can be, from the nature of the case, no partiality. Only under an economy of justice and of legal claims is it possible. The charge of partiality might with as much reason be made against the gifts of providence as against the gifts of grace. Health, wealth, and high intellectual power are not due to men from God. They are given to some and denied to others; but God is not therefore partial in his providence. The assertion that God is bound, either in this life or the next, to tender a pardon of sin through Christ to every man not only has no support in Scripture, but is contrary to reason, for it transforms grace into debt and involves the absurdity that if the judge does not offer to pardon the criminal whom he has sentenced he does not treat him equitably.

3. The decree of election is immutable and the salvation of the elect is certain because God realizes his decree, in this instance, by direct efficiency. He purposes that a certain individual shall believe and persevere to the end and secures this result by an immediate operation upon him. The conversion of St. Paul is an example: “The gifts and calling of God are without repentance” (Rom. 11:22); “whom he predestinated them he glorified” (8:32). “Let us not imagine,” says St. Augustine on Ps. 68, “that God puts down any man in his book, and then erases him: for if Pilate could say ‘What I have written, I have

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<sup>47</sup> 47. χρηστότητα

<sup>48</sup> 48. ἀποτομίαν

written, ' how can it be thought that the great God would write a person's name in the book of life and then blot it out again?" The elect are not saved in sin, but from sin. Sanctification is as much an effect of the purpose of election, as justification. Christians are "elect unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Christ" (1 Pet. 1:2). This accords with the previous statement that the divine decree is universal, including the means as well as the end. Says Milton,

Prediction, still,  
In all things and all men, supposes means;  
Without means used, what it predicts, revokes.  
—*Paradise Regained* 3.364

They who are predestinated to life are predestinated to the means and conditions: "As many as were ordained to eternal life believed" (Acts 13:48); "he has chosen us in him that we should be holy" (Eph. 1:4); "we are his workmanship created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God has foreordained that we should walk in them" (2:10). Says Augustine (*Concerning Rebuke* 7.13), "those who are made the objects of divine grace are caused to hear the gospel, and when (it is) heard (they are caused) to believe it and are made to endure to the end in faith that works by love; and should they at any time go astray, they are recovered." Says Luther (*Romans*, preface), "God's decree of predestination is firm and certain; and the necessity resulting from it is in like manner immovable and cannot but take place. For we ourselves are so [p 332](#) feeble, that if the matter were left in our hands, very few, or rather none, would be saved; but Satan would overcome us all." (See supplement 3.6.13.)

4. The grace of God manifested in the purpose of election is irresistible—not in the sense that it cannot be opposed in any degree, but in the sense that it cannot be overcome. In the same sense, the power of God is irresistible; a man may resist omnipotence, but he cannot conquer it. The army of Napoleon at Austerlitz was irresistible, though fiercely attacked. God can exert such an agency upon the human spirit as to incline or make willing: "Your people shall be willing in the day of your power" (Ps. 110:3); "it is God who works in you to will and to do of his good pleasure" (Phil. 2:13). The doctrine of the internal operation of the Holy Spirit is the clue to this. The finite will cannot be made willing or inclined by (a) external force, (b) human instruction, or (c) human persuasion. But it can be, by the immediate operation of the Holy Spirit upon the human will as spirit. This divine agency is described in John 3:8. Because this action of the infinite spirit upon the finite spirit is in accordance with the voluntary nature of spirit, it is not compulsory. The creature is spontaneous and free in every act performed under the actuation of God, because God is the Creator of the will and never works in a manner contrary to its created qualities. God never undoes in one mode of his agency what he has done in another mode. Having made the human spirit voluntary and self-moving, he never influences it in a manner that destroys its voluntariness. "God," says Howe (*Oracles* 1.20), "knows how to govern his creatures according to their natures and changes the hearts of men according to that natural way wherein the human faculties are wont to work; a thing that all the power of the whole world could not do."
5. The decree of election is unconditional. It depends upon the sovereign pleasure of God, not upon the foreseen faith or works of the individual. Romans 9:11 asserts "that the purpose of God according to election does not stand of works, but of him that calls."

Romans 9:11–12 teaches that the election of Jacob and rejection of Esau was not founded upon the works of either: “The children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, it was said, the elder shall serve the younger.” First Pet. 1:2 asserts that believers are “elected unto obedience,” consequently, not because of obedience. Second Tim. 1:9 affirms that “God has called us, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose.” Romans 8:29 teaches that “whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his son.” If God foreknew these persons as conformed to the image of his Son, he would have no need to predestinate them to this conformity. Acts 13:48 declares that “as many as were ordained to eternal life, believed.” This shows that faith is the result, not the reason of foreordination.

If it be objected that election does not “stand of works,” but that it stands of faith, the reply is the following. (a) Faith is an inward work: “This is the work of God, that you believe” (John 6:29). Consequently, election does not rest upon faith as a foreseen inward work, any more p 333 than upon a foreseen outward work. (b) Faith is a gift of God to man (Eph. 1:8); therefore it cannot first be a gift of man to God, as the ground and reason of his electing act. (c) If election depends upon foreseen faith, God does not first choose man, but man first chooses God; which is contrary to John 15:16. (d) If election depends upon foreseen faith, there would be no reason for the objection in Rom. 9:19: “You will say then, Why does he yet find fault?” or for the exclamation “O the depth!” (11:33). If it be said that election depends upon the right use of common grace by the sinner, this would make “the purpose of God according to election” to stand partly of works and not solely “of him that calls.” Faith in this case is partly “the gift of God” and partly the product of the sinful will. This is contrary to those Scriptures which represent God as the alone author of election, regeneration, faith, and repentance (Rom. 9:16; 8:7; John 1:12–13; 3:5; 6:44, 65).<sup>49</sup>

## Reprobation

Reprobation is the antithesis to election and necessarily follows from it. If God does not elect a person, he rejects him. If God decides not to convert a sinner into a saint, he decides to let him remain a sinner. If God decides not to work in a man to will and to do according to God’s will, he decides to leave the man to will and to do according to his own will. If God purposes not to influence a particular human will to good, he purposes to allow that will to have its own way. When God effectually operates upon the human will, it is election. When God does not effectually operate upon the human will, it is reprobation. And he must do either the one or the other. The logical and necessary connection between election and reprobation is seen also by considering the two divine attributes concerned in each. Election is the expression of divine mercy, reprobation of divine justice. God must manifest one or the other of these two attributes toward a transgressor. St. Paul teaches this in Rom. 11:22: “Behold the goodness and severity of God (divine compassion and divine justice) on them which fell severity; but toward you goodness.”

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<sup>49</sup> 49. WS: On this point, see Hodge, *Theology* 2.639–710; Dabney, *Theology*, 580–81; Watson, *Institutes* 2.395–96.

Consequently, whoever holds the doctrine of election must hold the antithetic doctrine of reprobation. A creed that contains the former logically contains the latter, even when it is not verbally expressed (e.g., Augsburg Confession 1.5; First Helvetic Confession 9; Heidelberg Catechism 54). Ursinus, who drew up the Heidelberg Catechism, discusses reprobation in his system of theology founded upon it. The Thirty-nine Articles mention election and not reprobation. The following Reformed creeds mention both doctrines:

Second Helvetic Confession 10.4: “And although God has known those who are his and mention is made somewhere of the small number of the elect, nevertheless we ought to hope the best for all people, nor fear that someone is numbered among the reprobate.”<sup>50</sup> p 334

Second Helvetic Confession 10.6: “Others say, ‘But if I am numbered among the reprobate.’”<sup>51</sup>

French Confession 12: “We believe that God removes the elect from this condemnation, leaving the others”<sup>52</sup> etc.

Belgic Confession 16: “We believe that God has shown himself as he is, that is, merciful and just. He is shown to be merciful in delivering and saving those who in his eternal counsel he has elected. He is shown to be just in leaving the others in their ruin and perdition in which they have involved themselves.”<sup>53</sup>

Scotch Confession 8: “And for this cause, ar we not affrayed to cal God our Father, not sa meikle because he hes created us, quhilk we have common with the reprobate.”

Irish Articles: “By the same eternal counsel, God has predestinated some unto life and reprobated some unto death.”

Lambeth Articles: “God from eternity has predestinated certain men unto life; certain men he has reprobated.”

Dort Canons 1.15: “Holy Scripture testifies that not all persons are elect, but that certain persons are nonelect or bypassed in the eternal election of God. Evidently God, in his most free, just, blameless, and immutable good pleasure, determined to abandon them in the common misery [i.e., of the fall], into which they cast themselves through their own fault.”<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> 50. Et quamvis deus norit qui sunt sui, et alicubi mentio fiat paucitatis electorum, bene sperandum est tamen de omnibus, neque temere reprobis quisquam est adnumerandus.

<sup>51</sup> 51. Alii dicunt: si vero sum de reproborum numero.

<sup>52</sup> 52. Nous croyons que de cette condamnation, Dieu retire ceux lesquels il a élus, laissant les autres.

<sup>53</sup> 53. Nous croyons que Dieu s’est démontré tel qu’il est; savoir miséricordieux et juste: miséricordieux, en retirant et sauvant ceux qu’en son conseil éternel il a élus; juste, en laissant les autres en leur ruine et trébuchement où ils se sont précipités.

<sup>54</sup> 54. Scriptura Sacra testatur non omnes homines esse electos, sed quosdam non electos, sive in aeterna dei electione praeteritos, quos scilicet deus ex liberrimo, justissimo, irreprehensibili, et immutabilimi beneplacito decrevit in communi miseria, in quam se sua culpa praecipitarunt, relinquere.

Westminster Confession 3.3: “By the decree of God, for the manifestation of his glory, some men and angels are predestinated unto everlasting life, and others foreordained to everlasting death.”<sup>55</sup>

Reprobation relates to regenerating grace, not to common grace. It is an error to suppose that the reprobate are entirely destitute of grace. All mankind enjoys common grace. There are no elect or reprobate in this reference. Every human being experiences some degree of the ordinary influences of the Spirit of God. St. Paul teaches that God strives p 335 with man universally. He convicts him of sin and urges him to repent of it and forsake it (Rom. 1:19–20; 2:3–4; Acts 17:24–31):

The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who hold the truth in unrighteousness, so that they are without excuse. And think you, O man, that you shall escape the judgment of God? Or despise you the riches of his goodness and forbearance and long-suffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance. God has made of one blood all nations of men and appointed the bounds of their habitation, that they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him and find him: for in him we live and move and have our being.

The reprobate resist and nullify common grace; and so do the elect. The obstinate selfishness and enmity of the human heart defeats divine mercy as shown in the ordinary influences of the Holy Spirit, in both the elect and nonelect: “You stiff-necked, you do always resist the Holy Spirit” (Acts 7:51). The difference between the two cases is that in the instance of the elect God follows up the common grace which has been resisted with the regenerating grace which overcomes the resistance, while in the instance of the reprobate he does not. It is in respect to the bestowment of this higher degree of grace that St. Paul affirms that God “has mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardens [i.e., does not soften].” Says Bates (*Eternal Judgment*, 2):

It is from the perverseness of the will and the love of sin that men do not obey the gospel. For the Holy Spirit never withdraws his gracious assistance, till resisted, grieved, and quenched by them. It will be no excuse that divine grace is not conferred in the same eminent degree upon some as upon others that are converted; for the impenitent shall not be condemned for want of that

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<sup>55</sup> 55. WS: The Formula of Concord (1576–84) teaches that foreknowledge extends to both good and evil, that predestination extends to good only. The Waldensian Confession (1655) teaches inability, election, and preterition. It is an abridgment of the Gallican Confession and is “highly prized” by the modern Waldensians. The Articles of the Congregational Union of England and Wales (1833) teach election. The creed of the Free Church of Geneva (1848) teaches inability and election. The Free Italian Church (1870) teaches inability. The Methodist Articles (1784) drawn up by Wesley teach inability; the sinner “cannot turn and prepare himself to faith.” The Arminian Articles (1610) teach impotence and that “God by an eternal purpose has determined to save those who believe and persevere.” Niemeyer excludes this from his collection of “Reformed” Confessions. The Cumberland Presbyterian Confession (1813–29) teaches inability and that “God’s sovereign electing love is as extensive as the legal condemnation or reprobation, in which all men are by nature. But in a particular and saving sense, none can be properly called God’s elect till they be justified and united to Christ. None are justified from eternity. God has reprobated none from eternity” (Schaff, *Creeeds* 3.772).

singular powerful grace that was the privilege of the elect, but for receiving in vain that measure of common grace that they had. If he that received one talent had faithfully improved it, he had been rewarded with more; but upon the slothful and ungrateful neglect of his duty, he was justly deprived of it and cast into a dungeon of horror, the emblem of hell. (See supplement 3.6.14.)

Reprobation comprises preterition and condemnation or damnation. It is defined in Westminster Confession 3.7 as a twofold purpose: (a) “to pass by” some men in the bestowment of regenerating grace and (b) “to ordain them to dishonor and wrath for their sin.” The first is preterition; the last is condemnation or damnation. Preterition must not be confounded with condemnation (this is done by Baier, *Compendium* 3.12.27). Much of the attack upon the general tenet of reprobation arises from overlooking this distinction. The following characteristics mark the difference between the two. (a) Preterition is a sovereign act; condemnation is a judicial act. God passes by or omits an individual in the bestowment of regenerating grace because of his sovereign good pleasure (*eudokia*).<sup>56</sup> But he condemns this individual to punishment, not because of his sovereign good pleasure, but because this individual is a sinner. To say that God condemns a man to punishment because he pleases is erroneous; but to say that God omits to regenerate a man because he pleases is true. (b) The reason of condemnation is known; p336 sin is the reason. The reason of preterition is unknown. It is not sin, because the elect are as sinful as the nonelect. (c) In preterition, God’s action is permissive, inaction rather than action. In condemnation, God’s action is efficient and positive. (See supplement 3.6.15.)

The decree of preterition or omission is a branch of the permissive decree. As God decided to permit man to use his self-determining power and originate sin, so he decided to permit some men to continue to use their self-determining power and persevere in sin. Preterition is no more exposed to objection than is the decree to permit sin at first. “It is no blemish,” says Howe (*Decrees*, lect. 3), “when things are thus and so connected in themselves naturally and morally, to let things in many instances stand just as in themselves they are.” Preterition is “letting things stand” as they are. To omit or pretermit is to leave or let alone. The idea is found in Luke 17:34: “The one shall be taken, the other shall be left.” God sometimes temporarily leaves one of his own children to his own self-will. This is a temporary reprobation. Such was the case of Hezekiah: “In the business of the ambassadors of the princes of Babylon, God left him, to try him, that he might know all that was in his heart” (2 Chron. 32:31; cf. Ps. 81:12–13 and David’s temporary reprobation in the matter of Uriah). Preterition in the bestowment of regenerating (not common) grace is plainly taught in Scripture (Isa. 6:9–10; Matt. 11:25–26; 13:11; 22:14; Luke 17:34; John 10:26; 12:39; Acts 1:16; 2 Thess. 2:11–12; 2 Tim. 2:20; 1 Pet. 2:8; Rom. 9:17–18, 21–22; Jude 4). Isaiah 6:9–10 is quoted more often in the New Testament than any other Old Testament text. It occurs four times in the gospels (in every instance in the discourse of our Lord), once in Acts, and once in Romans (Shedd on Rom. 9:18, 23, 33).

The decree of preterition may relate either to the outward means of grace or to inward regenerating grace. The former is national, the latter is individual preterition. In bestowing written revelation and the promise of a Redeemer upon the Jews under the old economy, God omitted or passed by all other nations: “The Lord your God has chosen you to be a special people unto himself: not because you were more in number, for you were the fewest” (Deut. 7:10). Until the appointed time had come, Christ himself forbade his disciples to preach the gospel indiscriminately to Jews and Gentiles (Matt. 10:5–6). After his resurrection, national preterition

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<sup>56</sup> 56. εὐδοκία

ceased (Mark 16:15; Luke 24:47). All nations are now elected to the outward means of salvation, namely, the Scriptures and the ministry of the word, so far as the command of God is concerned, though practically many are still reprobated, owing to the unfaithfulness of the Christian church. St. Paul teaches this when he asks and answers: “Have they [Gentiles] not heard? Yes, verily, their sound [of the preachers] went into all the earth, and their words to the end of the world” (Rom. 10:18). The proclamation of the gospel is universal, not national.

There may be individual preterition in connection with national election. Some of the Jews were individually and inwardly reprobated, but all of them were nationally and outwardly elected: “Israel [the nation] has not obtained that which he seeks for, but the election has obtained it, and the rest [of the nation] were blinded” (Rom. 9:27; 11:7); “many are [outwardly] called, but few [inwardly] chosen” (Matt. 10:16; Isa. 10:22–23). Some in Christendom will in the last day prove to have been passed by in the bestowment of regenerating grace: “All that hear the gospel and live in the visible church are not saved; but they only who p 337 are true members of the church invisible” (Westminster Shorter Catechism 61). Reprobated persons are striven with by the Holy Spirit and are convicted of sin, but they resist these strivings, and the Holy Spirit proceeds no further with them. In his sovereignty, he decides not to overcome their resistance of common grace. The nonelect are the subjects of common grace, to which they oppose a strenuous and successful determination of their own will. Every sinner is stronger than common grace, but not stronger than regenerating grace. The nonelect “may be and often are outwardly called by the ministry of the word and have some common operations of the Spirit, who for their willful neglect and contempt of the grace offered to them, being justly left in their unbelief, do never truly come to Jesus Christ” (Westminster Shorter Catechism 68). “Go and tell this people, Hear indeed, but perceive not. Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes and hear with their ears and understand with their heart and convert and be healed” (Isa. 6:9–10). The resistance and abuse of common grace is followed by desertion of God, which negative desertion is, in this passage of the evangelical prophet, called, Hebraistically, a positive stupefying, hardening and deafening. (See supplements 3.6.16 and 3.6.17.)

Preterition is not inconsistent with the doctrine of divine mercy. A man who has had common grace has been the subject of mercy to this degree. If he resists it, he cannot complain because God does not bestow upon him still greater mercy in the form of regenerating grace. A sinner who has quenched the convicting influence of the Holy Spirit cannot call God unmerciful because he does not afterward grant him the converting influence. A beggar who contemptuously rejects the five dollars offered by a benevolent man cannot charge stinginess upon him because after this rejection of the five dollars he does not give him ten. A sinner who has repulsed the mercy of God in common grace and demands that God grant a yet larger degree virtually says to the infinite one: “You have tried once to convert me from sin; now try again and try harder.”

There may be individual election in connection with national preterition. Some men may be saved in unevangelized nations. That God has his elect among the heathen is taught in Calvinistic creeds. Westminster Confession 10.3, after saying that “elect infants dying in infancy are regenerated and saved by Christ through the Spirit, who works when and where and how he pleases,” adds “so also are all other elect persons [regenerated and saved by Christ through the Spirit], who are incapable of being outwardly called by the ministry of the word.” This is not to be referred solely to idiots and insane persons, but also to such of the pagan world as God pleases to regenerate without the written word. The Second Helvetic Confession, one of the most important of the Reformed creeds, after saying that the ordinary mode of salvation is by the

instrumentality of the written word, adds (1.7), “We grant, meanwhile, that God can illuminate people even without the external ministry, how and when he wishes, for it lies within his power to do so.”<sup>57</sup> Zanchi (*Predestination*, 1) says that “national reprobation does not imply that every individual person who lives in an unevangelized country, must therefore unavoidably perish forever: any more than that every individual who lives in a land called Christian is therefore in a state of salvation. p 338 There are no doubt elect persons among the former, as well as reprobate ones among the latter.” Again (*Predestination*, 4), after remarking that many nations have never had the privilege of hearing the word preached, he says that “it is not indeed improbable that some individuals in these unenlightened countries may belong to the secret election of grace, and the habit of faith may be wrought in them.” By the term *habit* (*habitus*), the elder divines meant an inward disposition of the heart and will. The “habit of faith” is the believing mind or disposition of soul. And this implies penitence for sin and the longing for deliverance from it. The habit of faith is the broken and contrite heart which expresses itself in the publican’s prayer: “God be merciful to me a sinner.” It is evident that the Holy Spirit by an immediate operation can, if he please, produce such a disposition and frame of mind in a pagan without employing as he commonly does the preaching of the written word. That there can be a disposition to believe in Christ before Christ is personally known is proved by the case of the blind man in John 9:36–38: “Jesus says unto him, Do you believe on the Son of God? He answered and said, Who is he Lord, that I might believe on him? And Jesus said unto him, You have both seen him, and it is he that talks with you. And he said, Lord, I believe. And he worshiped him.” The case of the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8:27–28) is a similar instance of a penitent sense of sin and a desire for deliverance from it before the great deliverer himself is actually set before the mind. Calvin (4.16.19) remarks that “when the apostle makes hearing the source of faith, he describes only the ordinary economy and dispensation of the Lord, which he generally observes in the calling of his people, but does not prescribe a perpetual rule for him, precluding his employment of any other method, which he has certainly employed in the calling of many to whom he has given the true knowledge of himself in an internal manner, by the illumination of his spirit, without the intervention of any preaching.” Calvin is speaking of infants in this connection; but the possibility of the regeneration of an infant without the written word proves the same possibility in the instance of an adult. In 3.17.4 he describes Cornelius as having been “illuminated and sanctified by the Spirit” prior to Peter’s preaching to him. Augustine (Letter 102 to Deogratias) teaches that some are saved outside of the circle of special revelation: “Seeing that in the sacred Hebrew books some are mentioned, even from Abraham’s time, not belonging to his natural posterity nor to the people of Israel, and not proselytes added to that people, who were nevertheless partakers of this holy mystery, why may we not believe that in other nations also, here and there, some names were found, although we do not read their names in these authoritative records?” In his *Retractationes* 2.31 Augustine remarks upon this passage that the salvation in such cases was not on the ground of personal virtue and merit, but by the grace of God in regenerating the heart and working true repentance for sin in it: “This I said, not meaning that anyone could be worthy through his own merit, but in the same sense as the apostle said, ‘Not of works, but of him that calls’—a calling which he affirms to pertain to the purpose of God” (*Nicene Fathers* 1.418).

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<sup>57</sup> 57. Agnoscimus interim, deum illuminare posse homines etiam sine externo ministerio, quo et quando velit: id quod ejus potentiae est.

That the Holy Spirit saves some of the unevangelized heathen by the regeneration of the soul and the production of the penitent and believing habit or disposition is favored by Scripture; though from the nature of the case, the data are not numerous. The Bible teaches that the ordinary method of salvation is through the instrumentality of the [p 339](#) word: “How shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?” (Rom. 10:14). But it also teaches that the divine Spirit sometimes operates in an extraordinary manner and goes before the preacher of the word. The case of Cornelius, which is one of a class, warrants the belief that the Holy Spirit sometimes works in the individual heart and produces a sense of sin and a believing disposition, prior to the actual presentation of Christ, the object of faith. Cornelius, before Peter is sent to preach Christ to him, is described as “a just man” who “feared God” (Acts 10:22). This does not mean that he was a “virtuous pagan” who claimed to have lived up to the light he had and who upon this ground esteemed himself to be acceptable to God; but it means that he was a convicted sinner who was seriously inquiring the way of salvation from sin. This is evident from the facts that Peter preached to this “just man who feared God” the forgiveness of sin through Christ’s blood and that this “just man” believed and was baptized (10:44–47). Again, it is said, “Many shall come from the east and the west and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven, but the children of the kingdom shall be cast out” (Matt. 8:11). The individually and spiritually elect from outside of Israel are here contrasted with the individually and spiritually reprobated from within Israel. Again, the universality of the gospel for the Gentiles as well as the Jews, taught in the promise to Abraham and in the prophesies of Isaiah, makes it probable that the divine Spirit does not invariably and without any exceptions wait for the tardy action of the unfaithful church in preaching the written word, before he exerts his omnipotent grace in regeneration. Peter supposes the exertion of prevenient grace when he says, “Whosoever among you fears God, to you is this word of salvation sent” (Acts 13:26). The phrase *fears God* here, as in 10:22, denotes a sense of sin and a predisposition of mind to receive the remission of sins produced by the Holy Spirit. The apostles seem to have found such a class of persons in their missionary tours among the unevangelized populations. The assertion of Christ (Matt. 13:17) that “many prophets and righteous men have desired to see” the Messiah, though referring primarily to the Old Testament prophets and righteous persons, may have a secondary reference to inquiring persons among the Gentiles and to Christ as the “desire of all nations.”

Whether any of the heathen are saved outside of Christian missions depends, therefore, upon whether any of them are “regenerated and saved by Christ through the Spirit.” The pagan cannot be saved by good works or human morality, any more than the nominal Christian can be. Pagan morality, like all human morality, is imperfect; and nothing but perfection can justify. Hence, Westminster Larger Catechism Q. 60 affirms that pagans “cannot be saved, be they never so diligent to frame their lives according to the light of nature.” The fathers of the English church also deny “that every man shall be saved by the law or sect which he professes, so that he be diligent to frame his life according to that law and the light of nature” (Farrar, *St. Paul* 1.280). The utmost diligence and effort of a pagan fails perfectly to obey the law of God written on the heart; and only perfect obedience is free from condemnation. The most virtuous heathen has an accusing conscience at times and must acknowledge that he has come short of his duty (Rom. 2:15). Yet missionary annals furnish instances of a preparation of heart to welcome the Redeemer when he is offered. Pagans have been found with a [p 340](#) serious and humble sense of

sin and a desire for salvation from it.<sup>58</sup> Baxter, in his *Personal Narrative*, says: “I am not so much inclined to pass a peremptory sentence of damnation upon all that never heard the gospel: having some more reason than I knew of before to think that God’s dealing with such is unknown to us; and therefore the ungodly here among us Christians are in a far more worse case than they.”

The decree of preterition supposes the free fall of man and his responsibility for the existence of sin (see Edwards, *Decrees and Salvation* §58). Man is already guilty and deserving perdition, and the reprobating decree of God simply leaves him where he already is by an act of his own self-determination. The infralapsarian or sublapsarian theory is the correct one: *infra-* or *sub-*being used logically not temporally. The sublapsarian order of the divine decrees is this: (1) the decree to create man in holiness and blessedness, (2) the decree to permit man to fall by the self-determination of his own will, (3) the decree to save a definite number out of this guilty aggregate, and (4) the decree to leave the remainder to their self-determination in sin and to the righteous punishment which sin deserves. Sublapsarianism is taught by the Synod of Dort (Decrees, art. 7) and Turretin (4.9.5). (See supplement 3.6.18.)

The supralapsarian theory places, in the order of decrees, the decree of election and preterition before the fall instead of after it. It supposes that God begins by decreeing that a certain number of men shall be elected and reprobated. This decree is prior even to that of creation in the logical order. The supralapsarian order of decrees is as follows: (1) the decree to elect some to salvation and to leave some to perdition for divine glory, (2) the decree to create the men thus elected and reprobated, (3) the decree to permit them to fall, and (4) the decree to justify the elect and to condemn the nonelect. The objections to this view are the following: (a) The decree of election and preterition has reference to a nonentity. Man is contemplated as creatable, not as created. Consequently, the decree of election and preterition has no real object: “Man as creatable and fallible is not the object of predestination, but man as created and fallen is”<sup>59</sup> (Turretin 4.9.5). Man is only ideally existent, an abstract conception; and therefore any divine determination concerning him is a determination concerning nonentity. But God’s decrees of election and reprobation suppose some actually created beings from which to select and reject:

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<sup>58</sup> 58. WS: The case of the Indian described in Edward’s *Life of Brainerd* is sometimes cited, but it is not so clear and satisfactory as some others. Brainerd describes the Indian as one who “had formerly been like the rest of the Indians, until about four or five years previously. Then, he said, his heart was very much distressed. At length God comforted his heart and showed him what he should do.” Brainerd adds: “I must say that there was something in his temper and disposition which looked more like true religion than anything I ever observed among other heathens.” But Brainerd does not say that this Indian believed and trusted in Christ when Christ was presented to him as the Savior from sin: yet had he done so, he would certainly have mentioned it. On the contrary, Brainerd remarks that the Indian “disliked extremely” some of his teaching. He also continued to practice the tricks of a conjurer in connection with idolatrous worship. The evidence and criterion of a true sense of sin and of a genuine work of the Holy Spirit in a heathen heart is that readiness to welcome and believe in Christ when preached, which was exhibited by Cornelius and the eunuch.

<sup>59</sup> 59. Homo creabilis et labilis non est objectum praedestinationis, sed creatus et lapsus.

“On whom (*on*)<sup>60</sup> he will, he has mercy; and whom he will, he hardens” (Rom. 9:18). The first decree, in the order of nature, must therefore be a decree to create. God must bring man into being before he can decide what man shall do or experience. It is no reply to say that man is created in the divine idea, though not in reality, when the decree of predestination is made. It is equally true that he p 341 is fallen in the divine idea, when this decree is made. And the question is what is the logical order in the divine idea of the creation and the fall. (b) The Scriptures represent the elect and nonelect, respectively, as taken out of an existing aggregate of beings: “I have chosen you out of (*ek*)<sup>61</sup> the world” (John 15:19). (c) The elect are chosen to justification and sanctification (Eph. 1:4–6; 1 Pet. 1:2). They must therefore have been already fallen and consequently created. God justifies “the ungodly” (Rom. 4:5) and sanctifies the unholy. (d) The supralapsarian reprobation is a divine act that cannot presuppose sin because it does not presuppose existence. But the Scriptures represent the nonelect as sinful creatures. In Jude 4 the men who were “of old ordained to this condemnation” are “ungodly men, turning the grace of God into lasciviousness.” Accordingly, Westminster Confession 3.7 affirms that God passes by the nonelect and “ordains them to dishonor and wrath for their sin, to the praise of his glorious justice.”

The supralapsarian quotes Rom. 9:11 in proof of his assertion that election and preterition are prior to the creation of man: “The children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil,” Jacob was chosen and Esau was left. This is an erroneous interpretation. Birth is not synonymous with creation. Parents are not the creators of their children. Man exists before he is born into the world.<sup>62</sup> He exists in the womb; and he existed in Adam. Accordingly, in Rom. 9:10–12 it is said that “when Rebecca had conceived, it was said to her, The elder shall serve the younger.” The election and preterition related to the embryonic existence. Jacob and Esau had real being in their mother, according to Ps. 139:15–16: “My substance was not hid from you, when I was made in secret and curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth. Your eyes did see my substance, yet being unperfect; and in your book all my members were written, which in continuance were fashioned when as yet there was none of them.” St. Paul (Gal. 1:15) says that he was “separated and called from his mother’s womb.” God says to Jeremiah (1:5), “Before you came out of the womb I sanctified you.” In saying that they had not “done any good or evil” at the moment of their election and preterition, actual transgression after birth is meant. Original sin, or corruption of nature, characterized them both; otherwise, it would be absurd to speak of electing one of them to mercy and leaving the other to justice. Absolute innocence can neither be elected nor rejected, saved or lost. Ephesians 3:9–10 is explained by the supralapsarian to teach that creation is subsequent in the order to redemption. But the clause *who created all things by*

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<sup>60</sup> 60. öv

<sup>61</sup> 61. ἐκ

<sup>62</sup> 62. WS: Says Haeckel (*Evolution of Man* 2.3): “The human embryo passes through the whole course of its development in the space of forty weeks. Each man is really older, by this period, than is usually assumed. When, for example, a child is said to be 9.25 years old, he is really 10 years old.”

*Jesus Christ* is parenthetical, not the principal clause. The clause *hina gnōristhē*<sup>63</sup> depends on *euangelisasthai*<sup>64</sup> and *phōtīσαι*<sup>65</sup> in verses 8–9 (see Olshausen and Hodge *in loco*).

The decree of preterition does not necessitate perdition, though it makes it certain. (a) It has no effect at all, in the order of decrees, until after the free will of man has originated sin. The decree of preterition supposes the voluntary fall of man. It succeeds, in the order of nature, the decree to permit Adam’s sin. Preterition, consequently, has to do p 342 only with a creature who is already guilty by his own act and justly “condemned already” (John 3:18). (b) It is a permissive not an efficient act on the part of God that is exerted in preterition. In respect to regeneration, God decides to do nothing in the case of a nonelect sinner. He leaves him severely alone. He permits him to have his already existing self-determination, his own voluntary inclination. This is not compulsion, but the farthest possible from it. Compulsion might with more color of reason be charged upon election, than upon preterition. For in this case, God works in the human will “to will.”

The efficient and blameworthy cause of the perdition of the nonelect is not the decree of preterition, but the self-determined apostasy and sin of the nonelect. Mere permission is not causation: “Causality has no place where there is bare permission”<sup>66</sup> (Quenstedt 2.2.2). The nonelect is not condemned and lost because God did not elect him, but because he “sinned and came short of the glory of God” (Rom. 3:23); “because of unbelief, they were broken off” (11:20).

The sentence of the last day will not be founded upon God’s negative act of not saving, but upon the sinner’s positive act of sinning. Christ will not say to the impenitent, “Depart, because I did not save you,” but, “Depart, because you have sinned and have no sorrow for it.” Should John Doe throw himself into the water and be drowned, while Richard Roe stood upon the bank and did nothing, the verdict would be that the act was suicide, not homicide: “Drowned, not because Richard Roe did not pull him out, but because John Doe threw himself in.” It is true that Richard Roe, in this instance, would be guilty of a neglect of duty toward God in not saving the life of John Doe, but he would not be guilty of the murder of John Doe. Richard Roe’s nonperformance of his duty toward God would not transfer the guilt of John Doe’s act of self-murder to him. Were God under an obligation to save the sinner, the decree of preterition would be unjustifiable. It would be a neglect of duty. But salvation is grace, not debt; and therefore the decision not to bestow it is an act of justice without mercy: “On them that fell, severity” or exact justice is inflicted (Rom. 11:22).

While, then, election is the efficient cause of salvation, preterition is not the efficient cause of perdition. If I hold up a stone in my hand, my holding it up is the efficient cause of its not falling; but if I let it go, my letting it go is not the efficient cause of its falling. The efficient cause, in this case, is the force of gravity. Nonprevention is inaction, and inaction is not causation. On the side of election, the efficient cause of salvation is the Holy Spirit in regeneration; but on the side of reprobation, the efficient cause of perdition is the self-determination of the human will (see

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<sup>63</sup> 63. ἵνα γνωρισθῆ = in order that it might be made known

<sup>64</sup> 64. εὐαγγελίσασθαι = to preach the gospel

<sup>65</sup> 65. φωτίσαι = to bring to light

<sup>66</sup> 66. Ubi nuda est permissio, ibi locum non habet causalitas.

South, sermon on Deut. 29:4). Bunyan (*Reprobation Asserted*, 11) lays down the following propositions: (1) eternal reprobation makes no man a sinner, (2) the foreknowledge of God that the reprobate will perish makes no man a sinner, (3) God's infallible determining upon the damnation of him that perishes makes no man a sinner, and (4) God's patience and forbearance until the reprobate fits himself for eternal destruction makes no man a sinner.

The decree of preterition makes perdition certain, because the bondage of the sinner's will to evil prevents self-recovery. There are but two agents who can be conceived of as capable of converting the human will from sin to holiness, namely, the will itself and God. If owing to its own action <sup>p 343</sup> the human will is unable to incline itself to holiness and God purposes not to incline it, everlasting sin follows, and this is everlasting perdition. The certainty of the perdition of the nonelect arises from his inability to recover himself from the consequences of his own free agency and the decision of God to leave him "to eat of the fruit of his own way and to be filled with his own devices" (Prov. 1:31). (See supplement 3.6.19.)

The reason for preterition or not bestowing regenerating grace is secret and unknown to man. It supposes sin, but not a greater degree of sin than in the elect. This is taught in Rom. 9:11: "The children not having done any good or evil, in order that the purpose of God might stand, not of works, it was said, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated." Election also supposes sin, but not a less degree of sin than in the nonelect. Saul of Tarsus was a violent and bitter enemy of the gospel, but was "a chosen vessel." This is the sovereignty of God in election and preterition, taught in 9:18: "He has mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardens." The meaning of "harden" here is "not to soften."<sup>67</sup> The meaning of "hate" in 9:11 is "not to love." This text is equivalent to Luke 17:34: "The one shall be taken, the other shall be left." The word *emisēsa*<sup>68</sup> is employed Hebraistically, not classically. It does not denote the positive emotion of hatred against sin, because it is expressly said that in election and preterition reference is not had to holiness and sin. A man is not elected because he is holy or omitted because he is sinful. Hatred, here, denotes the withholding of regenerating mercy. It is the same Hebraistic use of the word *hate* with that of Christ in Luke 14:26 compared with Matt. 10:37. To hate father and mother is the same as to "love less," in comparison. Compare also the Hebraistic use of "hide" to denote "not to reveal" in 12:25. The popular signification of "reprobate" denotes an uncommonly wicked person. In this, it differs from the scriptural and theological signification, which denotes mere nonelection, with no reference to degrees of sin. A similar Hebrew idiom is seen in Ps. 141:4: "Incline not my heart to any evil thing." The psalmist calls the negative permission to incline himself a positive inclining by God. He asks God to keep him from his own inclination to evil. This idiom is found in the Turkish language. "To let fall" and "to cause to fall" are the same word. "I missed my steamer" in Turkish is literally "I caused my steamer to run away." In the oriental languages, the imperative form often expresses permission instead of command (Herrick in *Bibliotheca sacra*, Oct. 1885). (See supplement 3.6.20.)

Again, preterition, while supposing existing sin and unbelief, does not rest upon foreseen perseverance in sin and unbelief. God did not omit Esau in the bestowment of regenerating grace, because he foreknew that he would continue to do wrong in the future. He was passed by,

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<sup>67</sup> 67. WS: "Pharaoh was hardened because God with his Spirit and grace hindered not his ungodly proceedings, but suffered him to go on and have his way. Why God did not hinder or restrain him we ought not to inquire" (Luther, *Table Talk*, 49 [ed. Bogue]).

<sup>68</sup> 68. ἐμίσησα = I hated

“not having done any evil,” that is, without reference either to past or future transgressions. A reference to these would have been a reason for passing by Jacob as well as Esau. Perseverance in sin is the consequence of preterition, not the cause of it. God decides not to overcome the sinner’s resistance and obstinacy, and the result is that he persists in his willful course. Hence, future perseverance in sin is not the reason why God does not bestow regenerating grace upon the nonelect. p 344

The final end of both election and reprobation is divine glory in the manifestation of certain attributes. It is no more true that God creates any “merely to damn them,” than that he creates them merely to save them. The ultimate end of all of God’s acts is in himself: “For of him and through him and to him are all things” (Rom. 11:36). When God elects and saves a sinner, the attribute of mercy is glorified. When he leaves a sinner in sin and punishes him, the attribute of justice is glorified. Neither salvation nor damnation are ultimate ends, but means to an ultimate end, namely, the manifested glory of the triune God. To exhibit justice as well as to exhibit mercy is honorable to God: “The ministration of death was glorious. The ministration of condemnation is glory” (2 Cor. 3:7, 9). (See supplement 3.6.21.)

## Arminian and Calvinistic Systems Compared

The two great systems of theology that divide evangelical Christendom—Calvinism and Arminianism—are marked by their difference respecting the doctrines of election and preterition:

1. In the Calvinistic system, election precedes faith, and preterition precedes perseverance in unbelief. God elects a sinner to the bestowment of regenerating grace, and faith in Christ is the consequence. God passes by a sinner in the bestowment of regenerating grace (though he may bestow all the grades of grace below this), and endless unbelief is the consequence. God is thus the efficient cause and author of faith, but not of unbelief. The electing decree is efficacious and originates faith. The nonelecting decree is permissive and merely allows existing unbelief to continue. In the Arminian system, election is subsequent to faith, and preterition is subsequent to perseverance in unbelief. God elects an individual because his faith is foreseen, and God omits to bestow regenerating grace upon an individual because his persistence in sin and unbelief is foreseen. For the divine mind, the faith and the perseverance in unbelief have occurred, and the election and preterition follow after them as their consequence. Consequently, in the Arminian scheme, the reasons for election and preterition are not secret but known. Man’s faith is the reason for election; man’s perseverance in unbelief is the reason for preterition.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> 69. WS: Respecting election, Watson (*Institutes* 2.338) remarks as follows: “To be elected is to be separated from the world (‘I have chosen you out of the world’) and to be sanctified by the Spirit (‘elect unto obedience’). It follows, then, that election is not only an act of God in time, but also that it is subsequent to the administration of the means of salvation. Actual election cannot be eternal, for from eternity the elect were not actually chosen out of the world and could not be actually sanctified unto obedience.” This explanation makes election to be sanctification itself, instead of its

2. Arminian election and preterition are judicial, not sovereign acts of God. They are of the nature of reward and punishment. Because a man believes in Christ, he is elected—this is his reward. Because he persists in sin and unbelief, he is passed by—this is his p 345 punishment. Calvinistic election and preterition are sovereign, not judicial acts. A man is elected because of God’s good pleasure (*kata eudokian*),<sup>70</sup> not because of faith; and a man is passed by because of God’s good pleasure, not because of persistence in sin.
3. Since Arminian election succeeds saving faith in the logical order, it must in the same order succeed death. Inasmuch as in the Arminian scheme the believer may at any time before death fall from faith, and therefore it cannot be determined until after death who has saving faith, it follows that a man cannot be elected until after he is dead. In the order of events, death is prior to election.
4. Arminian election and preterition are the election and preterition of qualities, namely, of faith and persevering unbelief. Calvinistic election and preterition are those of persons, namely, Peter, James, and Judas.
5. Arminian election is inconsistent with a part of the Arminian statement respecting inability.<sup>71</sup> If God elects a sinner because he foresees that he will believe and repent, it follows that the sinner has power to believe and repent. If election is conditioned by the act of the human will in believing, this act must be within the sinner’s ability. But in the seventeenth chapter of the Declaration of the Remonstrants, the following statement is found: “Man has not saving faith from himself, neither is he regenerated or converted by the force of his own free will; since in the state of sin he is not able of and by himself to think, will, or do any good thing—any good thing that is saving in its nature, particularly conversion and saving faith.” If this were all that is said in the Arminian Articles respecting ability, it would be impossible to harmonize it with conditional election. Unconditional election alone is consistent with it. But in connection with this statement of inability, a view of grace is presented that modifies and really retracts this assertion of utter inability and is consistent with conditional election. Though it is said that man by apostasy “is not able of and by himself to think, will, or do any good thing that is saving in its nature,” yet, it is also said that “the Holy Spirit confers, or at least is ready to confer, upon all and each to whom the word of faith is preached, as much grace as is sufficient for generating faith and carrying forward their conversion in its successive stages.” Every man, therefore, that hears the gospel receives a degree of grace that is

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cause: “To be elected is to be separated from the world and to be sanctified.” The term *separate* is used here by Watson not as St. Paul uses it to denote election, when he says that God “separated him from his mother’s womb” (Gal. 1:15); but in the sense of sanctification, as St. Paul employs it in 2 Cor. 6:17: “Be separate and touch not the unclean thing.” By this interpretation, election is made to be the same thing as sanctification, instead of being an act of God that produces it, as is taught in Eph. 1:4 (“he has chosen us that we should be holy”) and in 1 Pet. 1:2 (“elect unto obedience”).

<sup>70</sup> 70. κατὰ εὐδοκίαν

<sup>71</sup> 71. WS: Baur (*Gegensatz*, 216) shows that the same inconsistency, in first asserting and then denying inability, appears in the Lutheran doctrine of regeneration as stated in the Formula of Concord.

sufficient for regeneration, provided that he rightly uses it. If therefore he is not regenerated, it must be from the lack of his human efficiency in cooperation with the divine. The difference, consequently, between the believer and unbeliever, the elect and nonelect, is referable not wholly to God's electing grace, but partly to the right use made of grace by the man himself. Dependence upon regenerating grace in the Arminian scheme is partial, not total; and Arminian election depends partly upon the act of the human will and not wholly upon the will of God. (See supplement 3.6.22.)

### p 346 **Objections to Election and Reprobation Answered**

It is objected to the doctrine of preterition that God cannot be sincere in the universal offer of the gospel in Mark 16:15. The first reply is that sincerity depends upon the intrinsic nature of the thing desired, not upon the result of endeavors to attain it. A parent sincerely desires the reformation of a child, because his reformation is a good thing in itself. He may have little or no expectation of accomplishing it, but this does not weaken his longing or impair the sincerity of his efforts. A miser upon his deathbed desires wealth as a species of good as sincerely as ever, but he knows that he can no longer have it. In like manner, God, by reason of his inherent compassion, may sincerely desire the conversion of a sinner as the sinner's highest good, though he knows that it will never take place. The Arminian theory has no advantage over the Calvinistic at this point. God, says the Arminian, sincerely desires the sinner's repentance, although he foreknows infallibly that his desire will not be gratified by the action of the sinner. Second, the decree of God is not always expressive of his desire, but sometimes may be contrary to it. God decreed sin and yet prohibited it. A man's decision, which is his decree in a particular case, is frequently contrary to his natural inclination. He decides to suffer pain in the amputation of a limb, though he is utterly averse to pain. His natural spontaneous desire is to escape physical pain, but in this particular instance he decides not to escape it. If there are sufficient reasons for it, a man's particular decision may be not only no index of his general desire, but directly contrary to it. The same is true of God. The natural spontaneous desire of God toward all men, the nonelect as well as the elect, is expressed in Ezek. 33:11; 18:32: "As I live, says the Lord, I have no pleasure<sup>72</sup> (*hāpēs*)<sup>73</sup> in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his evil way and live. I have no pleasure in the death of him that dies, says the Lord; wherefore turn yourselves and live." This divine desire is constitutional. It springs from the compassionate love of the Creator toward the soul of the creature and is founded in the essential benevolence of the divine nature. But this general and abiding desire is distinguishable from the realization or gratification of it by a particular decision in a particular instance. It is conceivable that God may sincerely desire that Judas Iscariot would believe on Christ and repent of sin, and yet for some sufficient reason decide not to overcome his opposition and incline him to the act of faith. God desires that there should be no physical pain in his creation. He takes no delight in physical

<sup>72</sup> 72. WS: The Septuagint, contrary to New Testament usage, incorrectly renders this by *boulōai* (βούλομαι = to decide) instead of *thelō* (θέλω = to desire).

<sup>73</sup> 73. ׀ֶֶֶ

distress. But in particular instances, he decides not to realize this desire by a special act of his own in preventing or removing pain. The purpose of God—in distinction from his desire—toward the nonelect is expressed in Exod. 9:16: “For this cause have I raised you up, for to show in you my power and that my name may be declared throughout all the earth”; and in Rom. 9:18: “Whom he will, he hardens.” The purpose spoken of here was the decision of God not to interfere with the will of Pharaoh. God desired that Pharaoh would spontaneously and of his own accord let the people go: “Let my people go” (Exod. 9:1). But he decided not to overcome the unwillingness of Pharaoh to let the people go: “God hardened the heart of Pharaoh, p 347 and he hearkened not” (9:12). This “hardening” was the not softening of his already hard heart. God sent Moses to persuade Pharaoh. This indicated divine desire. But God at the same time informed Moses that his persuasion would fail (7:1–4). This indicated divine purpose not to conquer Pharaoh’s obstinacy. Christ, in deep sincerity and in tears, said: “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which kills the prophets and stones them that are sent unto you—how often would I have gathered your children together, as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you would not” (Luke 13:34; 19:41). He unquestionably desired that the inhabitants of Jerusalem would yield to that degree of common grace with which they had been blessed and would repent and believe on him; and he unquestionably could have exerted upon them that degree of uncommon grace, by which he is “the author and finisher of faith” (Heb. 12:2) and by which he demonstrates that “all power is given unto him in heaven and in earth” (Matt. 28:18). Yet he did not exert his power to overcome the obstinacy and resistance of the human will in this instance. Those inhabitants of Jerusalem over whom he had wept were passed by in the bestowment of regenerating grace, but not of common. (See supplement 3.6.23.)

One class of scriptural texts teaches that the benevolent desire of God is that all should turn from sin. Another class teaches that for reasons unknown to man, but sufficient for God, God determines in some instances not to gratify his own desire. There is nothing self-contradictory in this; for it finds a parallel in human action. It is indeed strange to human view that an omnipotent being should, in even a single instance, forbear to bring about what he sincerely desires. But if there be a sufficient reason for it in the divine mind, there is nothing intrinsically contradictory in the procedure, and there is certainly nothing unjust to the sinner in it. Says Turretin (4.17.33):

God delights in the conversion and eternal life of the sinner, as a thing pleasing in itself and congruous with his own infinitely compassionate nature, rather than in his perdition; and therefore demands from man, as an act due from him, to turn if he would live. But although he does not will, in the sense of delighting in, the death of the sinner, he at the same time wills, in the sense of decreeing, the death of the sinner for the display of his justice. Even as an upright magistrate, though he does not delight in and desire the death of the criminal, yet determines to inflict the just penalty of the law.

God desires that the nonelect would turn of himself by the spontaneous action of his own will under the operation of common grace. He would rejoice in such a conversion. The entreaty “turn, why will you die?” springs out of this desire. That this entreaty of God fails in this case is owing to the sinner and therefore does not prove that God is insincere in his desire. Sincerity, we have seen, is independent of the result. If the failure of this entreaty were due to God’s own action, then, indeed, insincerity might be charged. If God, at the time when he is entreating a man to turn, were at work to prevent him from turning, the entreaty would be hypocritical. But God, instead of hindering the sinner, is helping him with that degree of grace which is called common. The reason why divine entreaty thus accompanied with common grace is unsuccessful is the resistance of the sinner. Surely, the fact that God does not think proper to add a second degree of

grace in order to [p 348](#) overcome the sinner's resistance of the first degree of grace does not prove that God is insincere in his desire for the sinner's conversion under the first degree of grace. If a man offer a beggar a small sum and it is rejected, it would be absurd to say that because he does not now offer him a large sum, he was insincere in the first offer. A parent wills the payment of a son's debts, in the sense of desiring that his son would by industry and economy pay the debts which he has contracted; but he may not will the payment of these debts in the sense of deciding to pay them for him, the reason being that should he pay them he would do injustice to the other members of his family.

A certain class of objections to election and reprobation rests upon the assumption that God is not merciful unless he shows special mercy and not sincere unless he does all that he possibly can to save sinners. This is a fallacy. Sincerity in extending an invitation does not involve an obligation to give a disposition to accept it. God is merciful in bestowing the gifts of providence and of common grace, though he go no farther than this; and he is sincere in doing what he does in common grace, though he does not exert saving grace. Says Richard Baxter:

If God please to stop Jordan and dry up the Red Sea for the passage of the Israelites and to cause the sun to stand still for Joshua, must he do so for every man in the world or else be accounted unmerciful? Suppose a king knew his subjects to be so wicked that they have everyone a design to poison themselves with something that is enticing by its sweetness: the king not only makes a law strictly charging them all to forbear to touch that poison; but sends special messengers to entreat them and tell them the danger. If these men will not hear him but willfully poison themselves, is he therefore unmerciful? But suppose that he has three or four of his sons that are infected with the same wickedness, and he will not only command and entreat them, but he will lock them up or keep the poison from them or feed them by violence with better food, is he unmerciful unless he will do so by all the rest of his kingdom?

If common grace should prevail over the sinner's resistance, it would be saving grace. This is not the same as saying that the sinner by a right use of common grace makes it saving grace. In this latter case, there is a cooperation of the sinner with God in regeneration. The sinner by working concurrently with common grace renders it effectual. This is synergistic regeneration and involves conditional election. But if without any right concurrent working of the sinner's will common grace should overcome the sinner's resistance and do the whole work, the regeneration would be due to God alone. To overcome the sinful will is not the same as to assist it.<sup>74</sup> (See supplement 3.6.24.)

The difference between divine desire and divine purpose or decree is the same as between the revealed and the secret will of God, mentioned in Deut. 29:29. God's desire in reference to sin and salvation is expressed in all that he has revealed (a) in the moral law and (b) in the plan of redemption. Everything in the law and the gospel implies that God does not take pleasure in sin or in the death of the sinner. But there is nothing in the revealed will of God, as made known in the law and gospel, that indicates what he has decided to do toward actually converting [p 349](#) particular persons from their sins. This decision is altogether different from his desire, and it is a secret with himself.

The phrase *God's will* is ambiguous. It may mean what he is pleased with, loves, and desires. An example of this is Heb. 13:20–21: "Now the God of peace make you perfect to do his will

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<sup>74</sup> 74. WS: Cf. Edwards, *On Decrees and Election* §§59–62; Howe, *Reconcilableness of God's Prescience with His Sincerity*; Baxter, *Directions for Spiritual Peace and Comfort* 1.252 (ed. Bacon).

(*thelēma*),<sup>75</sup> working in you that which is well pleasing (*euareston*)<sup>76</sup> in his sight.” Here, God’s will is something which he desires and delights in. An example of the secret will is found in Rom. 9:19: “Who has resisted his will?” Here, God’s will is his purpose or decree to “harden” (or not soften) and is designated by *boulēma*.<sup>77</sup> What he wills, that is, decrees in this instance, is the sinner’s remaining in sin, which certainly is not well pleasing in his sight. In the holy actions of elect men, the secret and the revealed will agree. God, in this case, decrees what he loves. In the sinful actions of nonelect men, the two wills do not agree. God, in this case, decrees what he hates.<sup>78</sup> This distinction is sometimes designated by the terms *legislative will* and *decretive will*, sometimes by *will of complacency* (*complacentiae*) and *will of good pleasure* (*beneplaciti*), in which latter case, good pleasure must not be confounded with pleasure. The Schoolmen employ the terms *voluntas signi*<sup>79</sup> (signified) and *voluntas beneplaciti*.<sup>80</sup> The Greeks speak of the will *euarestias*<sup>81</sup> and *eudokias*.<sup>82</sup>

The universal offer of the gospel is consistent with the divine purpose of predestination because (1) Christ’s atonement is a sufficient satisfaction for the sins of all men and (2) God sincerely desires that every man to whom the atonement is offered would trust in it. His sincerity is evinced by the fact that, in addition to his offer, he encourages and assists man to believe by the aids of his providence—such as the written and spoken word, parental teaching and example, favoring social influences, etc.—and by the operation of the common grace of the Holy Spirit. The fact that God does not in the case of the nonelect bestow special grace to overcome the resisting self-will that renders the gifts of providence and common grace ineffectual does not prove that he is insincere in his desire that man would believe under the influence of common grace any more than the fact that a benevolent man declines to double the amount of his gift, after the gift already offered has been spurned, proves that he did not sincerely desire that the person would take the sum first offered. (For a fuller statement upon this subject, see pp. 750–53.)

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<sup>75</sup> 75. θέλημα

<sup>76</sup> 76. εὐάρεστον

<sup>77</sup> 77. βούλημα

<sup>78</sup> 78. WS: Augustine (*Enchiridion* 101) shows how one man in doing right may agree with the revealed will of God and disagree with the secret will; and another in doing wrong may disagree with the revealed will and agree with the secret. A sick father has two sons. One of them is godly and desires and prays for his father’s recovery. The other is wicked and desires and prays for his father’s death. God purposes that the father shall die, and he does die. See Owen, *Arminianism*, 5.

<sup>79</sup> 79. voluntas signi = will of sign, i.e., his revealed will

<sup>80</sup> 80. voluntas beneplaciti = will of good pleasure

<sup>81</sup> 81. εὐαρεστίας = well pleased

<sup>82</sup> 82. εὐδοκίας = satisfied

## Decree of Election and the Decree of Redemption

The relation of the decree of election to that of redemption is important. The statement in Westminster Shorter Catechism Q. 20 is as [p 350](#) follows: “God, having elected some to everlasting life, did enter into a covenant of grace to deliver them by a Redeemer.” According to this statement, the decree to provide redemption succeeds the decree of election. God first decides to save certain individuals from sin and death, and an atoning Redeemer is the means of carrying out this design. This order is favored by the fact that Scripture speaks of a covenant between the Father and Son respecting the redemption of men: “When you shall make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed” (Isa. 53:10); “I will give you the heathen for your inheritance” (Ps. 2:8). Christ stipulates to suffer, provided actual not merely possible salvation shall be the result. He volunteers to die not only for the purpose of removing legal obstacles to salvation, but also with the view of actually delivering an immense multitude of particular persons from condemnation. Who these persons are is determined by a previous election. Christ did not covenant with the Father merely to atone for human sin in the abstract. He covenants for more than this, because this of itself would not secure the salvation of a single individual, since the result would depend upon the hostile will of man. In this case, Christ would have died in vain and would receive no reward for his incarnation, humiliation, and crucifixion. The Arminian order reverses the Calvinistic in making the decree to provide redemption precede that of election: (1) the decree to appoint Christ as mediator, (2) the decree to make faith and perseverance on the part of man the condition of salvation, (3) the decree appointing the means to faith and perseverance, namely, the Scriptures, sacraments, and the influence of the Holy Spirit, and (4) the decree to elect those whom God foresaw would employ the means and to condemn those who would not. In this scheme the success of Christ’s atonement depends partly upon the action of the human will and not wholly as in the Calvinistic scheme upon the divine will and efficiency.

The school of Saumur advanced a theory called hypothetical universalism, which begins with Arminianism and ends with Calvinism. (1) God decreed to provide a Redeemer for all men indiscriminately, without electing any to faith, but leaving wholly to man the act of faith in the provided Redeemer. In this way, God has a general will or purpose that all men shall be saved, but its success is conditioned upon the act of man. (2) Foreseeing that no man will believe upon the provided Redeemer, God then elects some in whom he works faith and secures perseverance (see Turretin 4.17). The first part of this theory is Arminian; the second part is Calvinistic.

The objections to this theory are the following:

1. The decree of redemption is made to depend upon human action. Its success is therefore uncertain. But a divine decree is an independent and infallibly successful act of God. This doctrine therefore conflicts with the idea of a divine decree.
2. This theory implies that one divine decree may fail and be replaced by another. The decree of redemption does not succeed in saving any of mankind, owing to their unbelief, and God supplements it with a successful decree of election.
3. The decree of redemption, in this theory, does not, as it professes, include all men indiscriminately. Large masses of mankind in heathenism have had no opportunity of deciding whether they will believe in Christ. [p 351](#)

4. This theory implies that men are elected and saved after they have rejected Christ's atonement. But the Scriptures teaches that there is no salvation, but, on the contrary, eternal death, in case there has been a rejection of Christ (Heb. 6:4–6; 10:26).

## Teaching and Preaching the Doctrines of Election and Reprobation

The doctrines of election and reprobation belong to the higher ranges of revealed truth. This is implied in 2 Pet. 3:15–16. Among the “things hard to be understood” are St. Paul’s dogmatic teachings respecting the divine decrees. And those who are “unlearned” in the Christian system and “unstable” in the Christian experience “wrest” them out of their true import. They are truths for the well-indoctrinated and somewhat matured Christian. And this, because they combine and systematize all the other truths of the gospel. These doctrines are the outline and scheme under which the doctrines of grace and redemption are embraced. A man may trust in the atonement of Christ and yet not be able to state accurately the relation of his act of faith to God’s sovereignty and universal dominion. He may drink in the sincere milk of the word, while yet the strong meat belongs not to him because he is unskillful in the word of righteousness, because he is a minor and not of full age, and because he has not his senses exercised, by reason of use, to discriminate between truth and error (Heb. 5:13–14).

Consequently, the doctrines of election and reprobation are not to be preached “out of season” or taught out of the logical order in the system. They are not to be preached to babes in Christ but to those who are of full age. They suppose some ripeness and maturity of the Christian experience. In teaching geometry, an instructor does not put a beginner upon proposition 47. He leads him up to it, through the axioms and the preparatory theorems. He tells him that proposition 47 is as certainly true as the axioms, and that he will see it to be so in the end. But he forbids him to perplex himself about it at first. Similarly, the beginner in religion, and still more the unregenerate man, is not to be instructed first of all in the doctrine of the divine decrees. This is to be reserved for a later period in his mental history. The statement upon this point in the seventeenth of the Thirty-nine Articles is excellent:

As the godly consideration of predestination and our election in Christ is full of sweet, pleasant, and unspeakable comfort to godly persons and such as feel in themselves the workings of the Spirit of Christ, so for sinners and carnal persons lacking the Spirit of Christ to have continually before their eyes the sentence of God’s predestination is a most dangerous downfall, whereby the devil does thrust them either into desperation or into recklessness of most unclean living, no less perilous than desperation.

Says Selden (*Table Talk*): “They that talk nothing but predestination and will not proceed in the way of heaven till they be satisfied in that point do as a man that would not come to London unless at his first step he might set his foot upon the top of Paul’s.” Says Bengel: “Man must not attempt to look at God behind the scenes.” But in all discussion of the [p 352](#) subject of predestination, it should never be forgotten that the Scriptures teach a large, not a narrow decree of election. God’s elect are “a multitude which no man can number.” Redemption by election includes the vast majority of mankind, if the whole history of man is considered.

The doctrine of election and irresistible grace is more encouraging to the preacher of the word than the opposite theory. It is more probable that an individual sinner will believe and repent, if faith and repentance depend wholly upon the regenerating power of the Holy Spirit,

than if they depend partly upon the energy of the sinner's will; and still more probable, if they depend wholly upon it. The Christian knows that if his faith and repentance had been left either partly or wholly to his own separate agency, he would not have believed and repented, because he was strongly inclined to sin, loved its pleasure, and disliked humbling confession of sin and steady struggle against it.

On the same principle, it is more probable that the world of sinful men will come to faith and repentance if this great event depends wholly upon God and not wholly or partly upon the lethargic, fickle, and hostile will of man. If the success of the Holy Spirit depends upon the assistance of the sinner, he may not succeed. But if his success depends wholly upon himself, he is certain to succeed. It is better to trust God for such an immense good as the salvation of the great mass of mankind than to trust mankind themselves either entirely or in part. The biographies of successful ministers and missionaries show that the longer they preach and the more successful their preaching, the less do they rely upon the will of the sinner for success: "Not by [human] might nor by [human] power, but by my Spirit, says the Lord of Hosts" (Zech. 4:6):

We shall not walk in an even course, but still reeling and staggering, till faith be set wholly upon its own basis, the proper foundation of it; not set between two, upon one strong prop and another that is rotten; partly on God and partly on creature helps and encouragements or our own strength. That is the way to fall off. Our only safe and happy way is, in humble obedience, in God's own strength, to follow his appointments without standing and questioning the matter and to resign the conduct of all to his wisdom and love; to put the rudder of our life into his hand, to steer the course of it as seems him good, resting quietly on his word of promise for our safety. Lord, whither you will and which way you will, be my guide, and it suffices. (Leighton on 1 Pet. 3:19–21).

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## S U P P L E M E N T S

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**3.6.1** (see p. 313). Owen (*Saints' Perseverance*, chap. 3) observes that the divine decree relates only to what may or may not be, not to what must be; to what depends upon the optional will of God, not to what depends upon his intrinsic being and nature: "God's purposes are not concerning anything that is in itself absolutely necessary. He does not purpose that he will be wise, holy, good, just."

**3.6.2** (see p. 317). "It does not follow that though there is for God a certain order of all causes, there must therefore be nothing depending on the free exercise of our own wills; for our wills themselves are included in that order of causes which is certain to God and is embraced by his foreknowledge, for human wills are also causes of human actions; and he who foreknew all the causes of things would certainly among those causes not have been ignorant of our wills" (Augustine, *City of God* 5.9). Augustine here uses "foreknow" in the common classical signification of simply knowing beforehand and not in the uncommon Hebrew signification of "choosing," as in Rom. 8:29; 11:2. There is nothing in simply foreknowing or foreseeing that interferes with free agency, any more than the simple onlooking of a spectator interferes with the action of a thief or murderer. The difficulty arises when the reconciliation of free agency with foreknowledge, in the sense of foreordination or predestination, is attempted. In this latter instance God does not merely look on like a spectator, but he does something like an actor. And the problem is how to make his action consistent with the creature's action. The clue to the reconciliation is in the distinction between God's efficient and permissive action. But his does not clear up the mystery in

the instance of the origination of [p 353](#) sin by a holy being like unfallen Adam, though it does in the instance of the continuation of sin in a sinful being like fallen Adam.

**3.6.3** (see p. 317). Schleiermacher directs attention to the fact that while God's decree makes all events certain, it does not make them so by the same kind of power. He says (*Doctrine* §80) that "it leads to Manicheism [the doctrine of two eternal principles of good and evil] if sin is denied to have its ground in God in any sense whatever, and it leads to Pelagianism if this is asserted and no distinction is made in the manner of divine causality." Here he evidently has in mind the permissive decree as distinguished from the efficient decree.

**3.6.4** (see p. 318). Augustine teaches as distinctly as Calvin that sinners are elected to faith, not because of faith: "God elected us in Christ before the foundation of the world, predestinating us to the adoption of children, not because we were going to be of ourselves holy and immaculate, but he elected and predestinated that we might be so" (*Predestination* 37). "The elect are not those who are elected because they have believed, but that they might believe. For the Lord himself explains this election when he says: 'You have not chosen me, but I have chosen you.' If they had been elected because they first believed, they themselves would have first chosen him by believing in him, so that they should deserve to be elected" (*Predestination* 34). "Let us look into the words of the apostle and see whether God elected us before the foundation of the world because we were going to be holy or in order that we might be so. 'Blessed,' says he, 'be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with all spiritual blessing in the heavens in Christ; even as he has chosen us in himself before the foundation of the world that we should be holy and unspotted.' Not, then, because we were to be so, but that we might be so" (*Predestination* 36).

**3.6.5** (see p. 318). Charnock (*Immutability of God*, 222 [ed. Bohn]) thus remarks upon the relation of prayer to divine immutability: "Prayer does not desire any change in God, but is offered to God that he would confer those things which he has immutably willed and purposed to communicate; but he willed them not without prayer as the means of bestowing them. The light of the sun is ordered for our discovery of visible things; but withal it is required that we use our faculty of seeing. If a man shuts his eyes and complains that the sun is changed into darkness, it would be ridiculous; the sun is not changed, but we alter ourselves. Nor is God changed in his giving us the blessings he has promised, because he has promised in the way of a due address to him, and opening our souls to receive his influence, and to this his immutability is the greatest encouragement."

**3.6.6** (see p. 319). In endeavoring to explain how God decrees sin, some theologians make divine concursus to be identically the same thing in relation to both holiness and sin, namely, that of internal and positive actuation or inclining of the human will. In both cases God works in the finite will "to will and to do." This destroys the distinction between the efficient and the permissive decree. Howe (*Letter on God's Prescience*, postscript) discusses this point in his answer to the criticism of Theophilus Gale, who charged him with denying the divine concursus altogether, because he refused to make "the concurrence of God to the sins of men" identical with that to the holiness of men. The substance of his answer is that there is both an "immediate" and a "determinative," that is, causative concurrence of God to the will of man in good action, but only an "immediate," not "determinative" or causative concurrence in evil action. In the first instance God both upholds and inwardly inclines or actuates the will of man; in the second instance he upholds but does not inwardly incline it: "Divine concurrence or influence (for I here affect not the curiosity to distinguish these terms, as some do), which I deny not to be immediate to any actions, I only deny to be determinative as to those that are wicked. It is only God's determinative concurrence to all actions, even those that are most malignantly wicked, which is the thing I speak of; as what I cannot reconcile with the wisdom and sincerity of his councils and exhortations against such actions." Howe sums up his view in the following declarations: "(1) That God exercises a universal providence about all his creatures, both in sustaining and governing them. (2) That, more particularly, he exercises such a providence about man. (3) That this providence about man extends to all the actions of all men. (4) That it consists not alone in

beholding the actions of men, as if he were only a mere spectator of them, but is positively active about them. (5) That this active providence of God about all the actions of men consists not merely in giving them the natural powers whereby they can work of themselves, but in a real influence upon those powers. (6) That this influence is, in reference to holy and spiritual actions (whereto, since the apostasy, the nature of man is become viciously disinclined), necessary to be efficaciously determinative, that is, such as shall overcome that disinclination and reduce those powers into act. (7) That the ordinary way for the communication of this determinative influence is by the inducements which God presents in his word, namely, the precepts, promises, and threatenings which are the moral instruments of his government. [This is common grace, which Howe elsewhere describes as failing to overcome the sinner's opposition.] No doubt but he may extraordinarily actuate men by inward impulse, but he has left them destitute of any encouragement to expect his influences in the neglect of his ordinary methods. (8) That, in reference to all other actions which are not sinful, though there be not a sinful disinclination to them, yet because there may be a sluggishness and ineptitude to some purposes God intends to serve by them, this influence is always determinative [causative] thereunto. [Howe here refers to the struggle with indwelling sin in the regenerate which is assisted by God.] (9) That, in reference to sinful actions, by this influence God does not only sustain men who do them and continue to them their natural faculties and powers whereby they are done, but also, as the first mover, so far excite and actuate those powers as that they are apt and habile for any congenerous action to which they have a natural [created] designation; and whereto they are not so sinfully disinclined. (10) That, if men do then employ them to the doing of any sinful action; by that same influence he does, as to him seems meet, limit, moderate, and, against the inclination and design of the sinful agent, overrule and dispose it to good. But now if, besides all this, they will also assert that God does by an efficacious influence move and determine men to wicked actions; this is that which I most resolutely deny. That is, in this I shall differ with them; that I do not suppose God to have, by internal influence, as far a hand in the worst and wickedest actions as in the best. I assert more [internal influence] to be necessary to actions to which men are wickedly disinclined; but that less will suffice for their doing of actions to which they have inclination more than enough."

Neander (*History* 1.374) remarks that "the gnostics would not allow any distinction between permission and causation on the part of God. *To mē kōlouon aition estin*<sup>83</sup> is their usual motto in opposing the doctrine of the church."

Milton (*Paradise Lost* 10.40–41) states the permissive decree as follows:

I told you then he should prevail, and speed  
 On his bad errand; man should be seduced,  
 And flattered out of all, believing lies  
 Against his Maker; no decree of mine p 354  
 Concurring to necessitate his fall,  
 Or touch with lightest moment of impulse  
 His free will, to her own inclining left  
 In even scale.

Here the certainty of the fall is announced by God, but not the necessity in the sense of compulsion. There is no inward impulse and actuation of the will by God, when it inclines and falls from holiness to sin. This mode of internal and causative actuation is confined to the inclining of man's will to holiness, to "working in him to will that which is pleasing to God" and accompanies the efficient decree, not the permissive.

The permissive decree is executed in part by the withdrawal of restraints, as a punitive act of God which St. Paul speaks of in Rom. 1:24, 28. This is a punishment for sin previously committed: "When God 'gives up' the sinner to sin, he does not himself cause the sin. To withdraw a restraint is not the same

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<sup>83</sup> 83. τὸ μὴ κωλοῦον αἴτιον ἐστὶν = that which does not hinder (an action) is responsible (for it)

as to impart an impulse. The two principal restraints of sin are the fear of punishment before its commission and remorse after it. These are an effect of the divine operation in the conscience; the revelation of divine *orgē*<sup>84</sup> in human consciousness. When God ‘gives over’ an individual he ceases, temporarily, to awaken these feelings. The consequence is utter moral apathy and recklessness in sin” (Shedd on Rom. 1:24). The view of Augustine is expressed in the following extracts and is the same as Calvin’s: “When you hear the Lord say, ‘I the Lord have deceived that prophet’ (Ezek. 14:9), and likewise what the apostle says, ‘He has mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardens’ (Rom. 9:18), believe that in the case of him whom he permits to be deceived and hardened his evil deeds have deserved the judgment. Nor should you take away from Pharaoh free will, because in several passages God says, ‘I have hardened Pharaoh’ or ‘I have hardened or will harden Pharaoh’s heart’; for it does not by any means follow that Pharaoh did not, on this account, harden his own heart” (*Grace and Free Will* 45). “From these statements of the inspired word (Ps. 105:25; Prov. 21:1; 1 Kings 12:15; 2 Chron. 21:16–17) and from similar passages, it is, I think, sufficiently clear that God works in the hearts of men to incline their wills<sup>85</sup> whithersoever he wills, whether to good deeds according to his mercy or to evil after their own deserts; his own judgment being sometimes manifest, sometimes secret, but always righteous. This ought to be the fixed and immovable conviction of your heart, that there is no unrighteousness with God. Therefore, whenever you read in the Scriptures that men are led aside or that their hearts are blunted and hardened by God, never doubt that some ill deserts of their own have first occurred so that they shall justly suffer these things” (*Grace and Free Will* 43). “There are some sins which are also the punishment of sins” (*Predestination of the Saints* 19). The permission to sin, according to these extracts, is punitive. The sinner is left to his own will without restraint from God, as a punishment for his obstinacy in sin. When God, after striving with the sinner in common grace which is resisted and nullified, decides to desist from further striving with him, this is retribution. It is the manifestation of justice. The process is described in Rom. 1:21–24: The heathen “changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man. Wherefore God gave them up to uncleanness, through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonor their own bodies between themselves.” Man’s active commission of sin, St. Paul teaches, is punished by God’s subsequent passive permission of it. It will be noticed that Augustine says that “God works (*operari*) in the hearts of men to incline their wills to evil deeds.” To incline the will, strictly speaking, is to “work in it to will” (Phil. 2:13), is to originate an inclination or disposition in the voluntary faculty. Scripture everywhere asserts that God exerts such action whenever the human will wills holiness, but never when it wills sin. Respecting sin, it declares that God “suffered (*eiase*)<sup>86</sup> all nations to walk in their own ways” (Acts 14:16); “the times of this ignorance God overlooked” (17:30); God “gave them their own desire” (Ps. 78:29); God “gave them their own request” (106:15). That Augustine did not intend to use the term *incline* in the strict sense of causation or inward actuation is proved by his caution: “Nor should you take away from Pharaoh free will, because in several passages God says, ‘I have hardened Pharaoh’s heart; for it does not by any means follow that Pharaoh did not on this account harden his own heart.” The following extracts from *Grace and Free Will* 41 puts this beyond all doubt: “Was it not of their own will that the enemies of the children of Israel fought against the people of God, as led by Joshua the son of Nun? And yet the Scripture says, ‘It was of the Lord to harden their hearts, that they should come against Israel in battle, that he might destroy them utterly’ (Josh. 11:20). And was it not likewise of his own will that Shimei, the wicked son of Gera, cursed King David? And yet what says David, full of true and deep and pious wisdom? ‘Let him alone, and let him curse, because the Lord has said unto him, Curse David’ (2 Sam. 16:9–10). Now what prudent reader will fail to understand in what way the Lord bade this profane man to

<sup>84</sup> 84. ὀργή = wrath

<sup>85</sup> 85. ad inclinandas eorum voluntates

<sup>86</sup> 86. εἶασε

curse David? It was not by literal command that he bade him, in which case his obedience would be praiseworthy; but he inclined (*inclinavit*) the man's will, which had [already] become debased by his own perverseness, to commit this sin. Therefore it is said, 'The Lord said unto him.' " The "inclining," here, in Augustine's use of the term, is not the origination by God of an evil inclination in Shimei's will, for this already existed, but the permitting it to continue and the using it to accomplish his own purposes. "See, then," concludes Augustine, "what proof we have here that God uses the hearts of even wicked men for the praise and assistance of the good. Thus did he make use of Judas when betraying Christ; thus did he make use of the Jews when they crucified Christ." To incline the will of a wicked man in this qualified use of the term is to permit instead of restraining and stopping its sinful inclining—as in Ps. 119:36: "Incline my heart unto your testimonies and not to covetousness"—and to "make use" of it for a wise and benevolent purpose. But the term is liable to be understood to denote more than merely permissive divine agency, and it would have prevented some misapprehension and misrepresentation of the doctrine of predestination if it had always been strictly confined to the efficient agency of God in the origin of holiness. The author of sin is necessarily a sinner, and he who inclines a will to sin, in the strict sense of "incline," is the author of sin. God is indisputably the author of holiness, when by regeneration he inclines the unregenerate to will holily. But Augustine invariably denies that God is the author of sin, while he invariably affirms that he is the author of holiness: "If anyone suffers some hurt through another's wickedness or error, the man indeed sins whose ignorance or injustice does the harm; but God, who by his just though hidden judgment permits it to be done, sins not" (*City of God* 21.13).

For a fuller account of the double predestination to both holiness and sin, see Shedd, *Calvinism: Pure and Mixed*, 88–95.

**3.6.7** (see p. 321). Möhler in his *Symbolics* contends that the doctrine of the absolute dependence of man upon God, held by both Luther and Calvin, makes God the author of sin. Baur (*Gegensatz*, 145–46) replies as follows: "If man is absolutely dependent upon God, it seems, certainly, that with the same right and reason that all goodness is to be carried back to divine agency, all evil also has God for its efficient and working cause. Nevertheless the Reformers do not concede this inference, and as decidedly as they derive all goodness from God only, so decidedly do they also assert that man alone bears the guilt of evil. Often as Calvin speaks p 355 of the fall of man as a fall foreordained of God, he at the same time designates it as a fall self-incurred and culpable. 'The first man fell,' so reads the leading passage on this point (3.23.8–9), 'because the Lord had considered it expedient for it to occur; he conceals from us why he considered it so. Nevertheless, it is certain that he would not have considered it unless he saw that the glory of his name would deservedly be illustrated from it. Wherever you hear mention of the glory of God, here think of justice. For that which deserves praise must be just. Therefore man fell, God's providence so ordaining. Nevertheless, man fell through his own fault.'<sup>87</sup> [In a note Baur adds, "It is remarkable that Möhler repeatedly cites this passage from Calvin, but in every instance omits the clause upon which everything depends: 'but he [man] fell through his own fault.'<sup>88</sup> His bold assertion in his *New Investigations* §125 that the *vitio suo cadere* is not omitted is refuted by ocular demonstration (*Augenschein*)."] The Lord had declared a bit earlier that all things which he had made were exceedingly good. From where, therefore, did man acquire that depravity that he might fall away from God? Lest it should be supposed that it arose from his creation, God had given his approval by his own brief pronouncement (*elogio*) of what he himself had originated. Therefore, man corrupted the pure nature,

<sup>87</sup> 87. Lapsus est primus homo, quia Dominus ita expedire censuerat; cur censuerit nos latet. Certum tamen est non aliter censuisse, nisi quia videbat nominis sui gloriam inde merito illustrari. Ubi mentionem gloriae Dei audis, illic justitiam cogita. Justum enim oportet quod laudem meretur. Cadit igitur homo, Dei providentia sic ordinante: sed suo vitio cadit.

<sup>88</sup> 88. sed suo vitio cadit

which he had received from the Lord, through his own wickedness. By his own ruin he drew his entire posterity into his destruction. Consequently, let us much rather contemplate the evident cause of the damnation of the human race in the corrupt nature, which is nearer to us, than looking to God's predestination, which is hidden and thoroughly incomprehensible. For even though man was created that the eternal providence of God should subject him to that calamity, nevertheless he derived the matter of it from himself, not from God. In no other way did he perish than by degenerating from the pure creation of God into corrupt and impure perversity.<sup>89</sup> Can it be said any more plainly than it is here by Calvin that man is fallen by his own fault alone?"

While, however, Baur accurately states the view of Luther and Calvin in correction of the misconception of Möhler, he follows it with an explanation which ascribes to them his own theory of the origin of sin as the necessary evolution of the divine idea, instead, as the Reformers held, of the origination of sin by an act of man's free will in Adam. In this, as in other instances, the remarkable power which this dogmatic historian possessed of perceiving and stating the contents of a theological system is vitiated by an obtuseness in expounding it which leads him to suppose that his own pantheistic explanation of it is what its author really meant. After the above-given analysis of Calvin's doctrine he thus proceeds: "Is not this view, however, a logical inconsistency, whereby what is affirmed on one side of the proposition is denied on the other? How can man have fallen by free will and culpably, if he fell only because God so willed and ordained? Does not the all-determining and ordaining agency of God necessarily exclude all freedom of will? So indeed it looks; but everything depends upon the view taken of the nature of the evil which man received into his nature by the fall. If the fall can be conceived of only as a deterioration of the originally pure and holy nature of man as created by God, then the fall, or the evil coming into this nature by the fall, is related to this nature only as the negative is to the positive. Hence we must distinguish a positive and a negative side of human nature; all that belongs to the positive side is the nature as it was created by God, but what is negative in the positive cannot be carried back, like the positive, to the same divine activity, since it is to be regarded as only the negation and limitation of the creative activity of God in respect to man. Accordingly, what can the Calvinistic proposition 'man fell, God so ordaining, but by his own fault'<sup>90</sup> mean but merely this: Man, so far as he is created by God, is originally pure and good, but he has also a side of his being (*Wesen*) which is averse from God and finite, and therefore perverse and evil? As upon the one side [of his being] he bears the image of God in himself, so on the other side he has a fallen nature, and for this very reason the fall is his own fault, since if he is to be man he cannot be conceived of without this negativity and finiteness of being which places him wholly in the antithesis (*Gegensatz*, point of indifference) between infinite and finite, perfect and imperfect, positive and negative, good and evil. He is therefore the original sin itself that is imputable to him, so far as this negativity and finiteness which is the source of all evil in him so belongs to the conception of his being that it cannot be separated from it; on which account the fall, at least ideally, must be eternally attributed to the nature of man. But since all that the fall potentially includes for human nature can be

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<sup>89</sup> 89. Pronuntiaverat paulo ante Dominus omnia quae fecerat esse valde bona. Unde ergo illa homini pravitas ut a Deo deficiat? Ne ex creatione putaretur, elogio suo approbaverat Deus quod profectum erat a se ipso. Propria ergo malitia, quam acceperat a Domino puram naturam corruptit; sua ruina totam posteritatem in exitium suum attraxit. Quare in corrupta potius humani generis natura evidentem damnationis causam, quae nobis propinquior est, contemplemur, quam absconditam ac penitus incomprehensibilem inquiramus in Dei praedestinatione. Tametsi aeterna Dei providentia in eam cui subjacet calamitatem conditus est homo, a se ipso tamen ejus materiam, non a Deo, sumpsit; quando nulla alia ratione sic perditus est, nisi quia a pura Dei creatione in vitiosam et impuram perversitatem degeneravit.

<sup>90</sup> 90. cadit homo Deo sic ordinante, sed suo vitio

conceived only as something to be developed consequentially and additionally; inasmuch as the evil is ever only in the good and is antithetic to it as the negative is to the positive; therefore Calvin represents the fall not merely as an absolutely necessary consequence, but also as a contingent and arbitrary one. ‘In his perfect condition,’ says Calvin (1.15.8), ‘man was endowed with free will, by which if he had so inclined he might have obtained eternal life. Adam could have stood if he would, since he fell merely by his own will; but because his will was flexible to either side and he was not endowed with constancy to persevere in holiness, therefore he fell so easily. He had, indeed, received the power to persevere in holiness if he chose to exert it; but he had not the will to use that power, for perseverance would have been the consequence of this will.’ ”

This explanation of Calvin’s meaning in these extracts from the *Institutes* is as far as possible from the truth. Calvin teaches that human nature as created was positive only; Baur, that it was positive and negative together. Calvin teaches that it was good only; Baur, that it was good and evil together. Calvin teaches that God is unconditioned in the creative act; Baur, that there is “a negation and limitation of the creative activity of God.” Calvin teaches that sin is an origination from nothing<sup>91</sup> by the self-determination of the human will; Baur, that it is a development of the positive and negative sides of human nature. Calvin makes original sin to be culpable because it is the product of man; Baur destroys its culpability (while at the same time asserting it) by making it to be the man himself in the necessary evolution of his being. Baur asserts that evil belongs necessarily and eternally to the idea of man and that he cannot be conceived of as man without it; Calvin p 356 denies this. Baur holds that “the idea of human nature can be realized only through the medium of the fall and of sin”; Calvin holds that sin is not only necessary to the ideal and perfect condition of human nature, but is the absolute ruin of it. Baur declares that man is culpable for sin because while “on one side of his being he bears the image of God, on the other side of it he has a fallen nature which is averse from God and is evil because it is finite”; Calvin would deny that man is culpable for sin, if sin were one of two sides of his being and if finiteness is intrinsically evil. In brief, the difference between Calvin’s and Baur’s theories of sin is as wide as between the theistic and pantheistic views of God, man, and the universe, from which each theory takes its start and in which each has its basis.

There are some passages both in Calvin and Augustine which on the face of them seem to teach that God’s agency in relation to sin is efficient and not permissive. They are passages in which the term *incline* is used. Augustine (*Grace and Free Will* 41), after citing David’s words to Abishai respecting Shimei, “Let him curse, for the Lord has bidden him” (2 Sam. 16:11), remarks: “It was not by a command that he bade him, in which case his obedience would be praiseworthy; but by his own just and secret judgment. He inclined (*inclinavit*) the man’s will, which had become debased by his own perverseness, to commit this sin.” That “incline” does not here mean inward actuation or “working in the will to will and to do” is evident from the following considerations: (1) Augustine denies that God commanded Shimei to curse David; for in this case, says he, “he would have deserved to be praised rather than punished, as we know he was afterward punished for this sin.” But God works efficiently in the human will to do what he commands or to do duty. (2) Augustine, in the context, explains “incline” by “using the heart of a wicked man”: “See what proof we have here that God uses the hearts of even wicked men for the praise and assistance of the good.” (3) He describes Shimei’s will, which God inclined, as a will already wickedly inclined: “He inclined the man’s will, which had become debased by his own perverseness, to commit this sin.” These explanations show that Augustine employs the term *incline* in the biblical and oriental sense of giving the will up to its own inclining. When David prays to God: “Incline not my heart to any evil thing, to practice wicked works with men that work iniquity” (Ps. 141:4) or “incline not my heart to covetousness” (119:36), he prays that God would not leave his heart or will to its willful propensity to sin. This is not a prayer that God would work inwardly upon his will to make it wicked and covetous. It was already so. As in the biblical and oriental idiom when God is said to harden when he does not soften (Rom. 9:18) and to blind when he does not enlighten (11:8, 10; John 12:40; Isa. 6:10), so he is said to

<sup>91</sup> 91. de nihilo (which carries essentially the same meaning as *ex nihilo*)

incline when he does not disincline. In all these instances of inclining, hardening, and blinding, the existence and presence of sin is supposed in the person of whom they are predicated. As Augustine (*Grace and Free Will* 43) says: “Whenever you read in the Scriptures of truth that men are led aside or that their hearts are blunted and hardened by God, never doubt that some ill deserts of their own have first occurred, so that they justly suffer these things. Then you will not run against that proverb of Solomon: ‘The foolishness of a man perverts his ways, yet he blames God in his heart’ (Prov. 19:3).”

The phraseology of Calvin upon this subject is like that of Augustine. In 2.4.4 he remarks: “Moses expressly declared to the people of Israel that it was the Lord who had made the heart of their enemies obstinate (Deut. 2:30). The psalmist, reciting the same history, says: ‘He turned their heart to hate his people’ (Ps. 105:25). Now, it cannot be said that they stumbled (*impegisse*) [merely] because they were destitute of the counsel of God. For if they are ‘made obstinate’ and are ‘turned,’ they are designedly inclined (*destinato flectuntur*) to this very thing. Besides, whenever it has pleased God to punish the transgressions of his people, how has he accomplished his work by means of the reprobate? In such a manner that anyone may see that the power of acting (*efficaciam agendi*) proceeded from him and that they were the ministers of his will.” Again, he says (1.18.2): “Nothing can be more explicit than God’s frequent declarations that he blinds the minds of men, strikes them with giddiness, inebriates them with the spirit of slumber, fills them with infatuation, and hardens their hearts. These passages many persons refer to permission, as though, in abandoning the reprobate, God only permitted them to be blinded by Satan. But this solution is frivolous, since the Holy Spirit expressly declares that their blindness and infatuation are inflicted by the righteous judgment of God.” That this phraseology is not intended to teach that God works in the human will “to will and to do” evil is evident for the following reason: Calvin teaches that the agency of God in relation to sin is different from that of man. He says (1.18.2): “Some elude the force of these expressions [concerning God’s hardening, etc.] with a foolish cavil; that since Pharaoh himself is said to have hardened his own heart his own will is the [only] cause of his obduracy; as if these two things did not agree well together, although in different modes (*licet diversis modis*), namely, that when man is made to act by God, he nevertheless is active himself (*ubi agitur a deo, simul tamen agere*).” The mode, according to Calvin, in which God acts when he “hardens” the human heart is

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1. By voluntary permission, not involuntary or “bare” permission. God decides to permit the sinful will to sin, though he could prevent it: “It is nugatory to substitute for the [active] providence of God a bare [passive] permission; as though God were sitting in a watchtower awaiting fortuitous events, and so his decisions were dependent on the will of man” (1.18.1).
2. By positively withdrawing the restraints of conscience and the common influences of the Spirit, after they have been resisted and made ineffectual, as taught by St. Paul in Rom. 1:24, 28
3. By using the agency of Satan (described in John 13:2, 27): “I grant, indeed, that God often actuates (*agere*) the reprobate by the interposition of Satan; but in such a manner that Satan himself acts his part by the divine impulse and proceeds only so far as God appoints” (1.18.2). “According to one view of the subject, it is said: ‘If the prophet be deceived when he has spoken a thing, I the Lord have deceived that prophet’ (Ezek. 14:9). But according to another, God is said himself to give men over to a reprobate mind (Rom. 1:28) and to the vilest lusts; because he is the principal author of his own righteous retribution, and Satan is only the dispenser of it” (1.18.1).

“The whole,” says Calvin (1.18.1), “may be summed up thus: that as the will of God is said to be the cause of all things, his providence is established as the governor in all the counsels and works of man, so that it not only exerts its power in the elect, who are influenced by the Holy Spirit, but also compels the compliance of the reprobate.” The term *compel* here, like the term *necessitate*, is employed in the sense of “making certain” (see also supplement 4.5.14).

Finally, while the inward actuation of the human will “to will and to do” right is invariably represented by Calvin as the agency of the Holy Spirit, there is nothing in his harshest and most unguarded teachings concerning God’s predestination of the nonelect to sin that can be construed to mean

that the Holy Spirit in the same manner, by inward actuation, works in the sinner “to will and to do” wrong. Calvin drew up the Gallican Confession of 1559. Article 8 says: “We believe that God not only created all things, but that he governs and directs them, disposing and ordaining by his sovereign will all that happens in the world; not that he is the author of evil or that the guilt of it can be imputed to him, seeing that his will is the sovereign and infallible rule of all right and p 357 justice; but he has wonderful means of so making use of devils and sinners that he can turn to good the evil which they do and of which they are guilty.” Again, in his articles on predestination (*Opera* 9.713), he says: “Although the will of God is the first and highest cause of all things and God has the devil and all the wicked subject to his decree (*arbitrio*), yet he cannot be called the cause of sin nor the author of evil nor is he obnoxious to any blame. Although the devil and the reprobated are the servants and instruments of God and execute his secret judgments, yet God so operates in an incomprehensible manner in and by them that he contracts no corruption from their fault, because he uses their wickedness rightly and justly for a good end, although the mode and manner is often hidden from us. They act ignorantly and calumniously who say that God is the author of sin, if all things occur according to his will and ordination; because they do not distinguish between the manifested depravity of man and the secret decrees of God.”

**3.6.8** (see p. 323). “What I will is fate,” says God, according to Milton; by which he means that what God wills is certain to occur. This statement does not imply that the action of the human will is necessitated because it is willed by God. For God wills this species of action as the action of mind not of matter, self-action, or self-motion and therefore it is free action. If he willed it as physical action *ab extra*,<sup>92</sup> like the fall of a stone by the action of gravity which is extraneous to the stone, it would be involuntary and compulsory action. When God wills physical action in the material world, his “will is fate” in the sense of necessity, because he wills the action of impersonal and involuntary agents. But when he wills personal and voluntary action in the moral world, his “will is fate” in the sense of certainty, because he wills the action of self-determining agents. There is nothing in the idea of certainty that implies compulsion. It is certain that some men will steal tomorrow, but this does not make their theft involuntary and necessitated.

The pagan conception of fate, as something to which God is subject, is expressed by Aeschylus (*Prometheus Bound* 524–27):

*Chorus*: Who then is it that manages the helm of necessity?

*Prometheus*: The triform Fates and the unforgetful Furies.

*Chorus*: Is Jupiter less powerful than these?

*Prometheus*: Most certainly he cannot in any way escape his doom.

Cicero asserted human freedom, but denied divine foreknowledge as incompatible with it. Augustine (*City of God* 5.9) combats his view. Anselm (*Why the God-Man?* 2.18) makes a distinction between antecedent and subsequent necessity, which is valuable in explaining the self-motion and responsibility of the enslaved will: “There is an antecedent necessity which is the cause of a thing, and there is also a subsequent necessity arising from the thing itself. Thus when the heavens are said to revolve, it is an antecedent and efficient necessity, for they must revolve. But when I say that you speak of necessity because you are speaking, this is nothing but a subsequent and inoperative necessity. For I only mean that it is impossible for you to speak and not to speak at the same time and not that someone compels you to speak. This subsequent necessity pertains to everything, so that we say: Whatever has been necessarily has been. Whatever is must be. Whatever is to be of necessity will be. Wherever there is an antecedent necessity, there is also a subsequent one; but not vice versa. For we can say that the heaven revolves of necessity, because it revolves; but it is not likewise true that because you speak you do it of necessity.” In the instance of subsequent necessity within the voluntary or moral sphere, the necessity is made by a foregoing free act of the will. Says Anselm (*Why the God-Man?* 2.5): “When one does a benefit from a necessity to which he is unwillingly subjected, less thanks are due to him or none at all. But when he

<sup>92</sup> 92. from the outside

freely places himself under the necessity of benefiting another and sustains that necessity without reluctance, then he certainly deserves greater thanks for the favor. For this should not be called necessity but grace, inasmuch as he undertook it not with any constraint, but freely. For what you promise today of your own accord that you will give tomorrow, you give tomorrow with the same willingness that you promised it, though it be 'necessary' for you to redeem your promise or make yourself a liar."

Applying this distinction to the fall of mankind in Adam: There was no antecedent necessity that this fall from holiness should occur. It was left to the self-determination of the human will whether it should occur. But having occurred, then there was a subsequent necessity of two kinds: (1) it was necessary that what is should be; and (2) it was necessary that sin having freely originated should continue to be, because of its enslaving effect upon the will that originated it.

Voluntary action, be it inclination or volition, is certain to occur, whether the certainty be ascribed to chance or to the divine decree. If it can be made certain by chance, this would not prove that it was necessitated in the sense of compelled. For the very object which the opponent of decrees has in view in asserting that voluntary actions are fortuitous is to evince thereby that they are free. If, again, a voluntary act can be made certain by leaving the will to itself and exerting no divine influence of any kind upon it, this would not prove that it was necessitated in the sense of compelled. This shows that certainty and necessity are not synonyms. In English usage the term *necessity* sometimes denotes compulsion and sometimes only certainty. Consider the two following propositions: It is certain and necessary that a stone will fall by gravitation; it is certain and necessary that man will incline and exert volitions. In the first of these propositions the certainty is also strict necessity, because it is brought about by a force of nature; in the last, the certainty is not strict necessity, because it is brought about by the self-motion of the human will.

**3.6.9** (see p. 326). Augustine teaches that the number of the elect is definite and fixed: "I speak of those who are predestinated to the kingdom of God, whose number is so certain that a single one can neither be added to them nor taken from them. For that the number of elect is certain and neither to be increased nor diminished, it signified by John the Baptist when he says, 'Bring forth, therefore, fruits meet for repentance, and think not to say within yourselves we have Abraham to our father; for God is able of these stones to raise up children to Abraham.' This shows that those who do not produce the fruits of true repentance will be cast off and others put in their places, so that the complete number of the spiritual seed promised to Abraham should not be wanting. The certain number of the elect is yet more plainly declared in the Apocalypse: 'Hold fast that which you have, lest another take your crown' (Rev. 3:11). For if another is not to receive unless one has lost, the number is fixed" (*Rebuke and Grace* 39).

**3.6.10** (see p. 327). Milton (*Paradise Lost* 3.129) assigns as the reason for the preterition of the fallen angels and the election of fallen man the fact that the fall of the former was a more willful act than that of the latter, because it occurred without external temptation:

The first sort by their own suggestion fell,  
Self-tempted, self-depraved; man falls deceived  
By the other first: man therefore shall find grace,  
The others none.

But this is contrary to St. Paul's doctrine of election and preterition, according to which neither of the two is explicable by the fact of more or less sin in the parties, and the reason for the discrimination is wholly secret (Rom. 9:11–12). The difference in the treatment p 358 of individuals, both in regard to the gifts of providence and the gifts of grace, is like the difference in the world of material nature. If we ask, Why ten blades of grass rather than nine grow up in a particular spot, the answer is that it is the will of the Creator. But if we ask, Why the Creator so willed, the reply must be, as in the instance of election and preterition, that the reason is unknown.

Augustine (*Rebuke and Grace* 27) thus describes the elect and nonelect angels: "We believe that the God and Lord of all things, who created all things very good and foreknew that evil things would arise

out of good and knew that it belonged to his omnipotent goodness even to educe good out of evil things rather than not to allow evil things to be at all, so ordained the life of angels and men that in it he might first of all show what their free will was capable of and then what the compassion of his grace and the righteousness of his justice was capable of. In brief, certain angels, of whom the chief is he who is called the devil, became by free will outcasts from the Lord God. Yet although they fled from his goodness wherein they had been blessed, they could not flee from his judgment by which they were made most wretched. Others, however, by the same free will stood fast in the truth and obtained the knowledge of that most certain truth that they should never fall.” Augustine omits to mention the reason why the free will of these latter persevered in holiness, namely, the bestowment of a higher grade of grace than that given in creation to both classes of angels alike. The grace given by creation to all angels was sufficient to enable them all to persevere in holiness, but not to prevent their apostasy. But the grace given to those who did not fall was sufficient to “keep them from falling.” This constituted them elect angels, the others being nonelect. Angelic election and nonelection have reference to perseverance or continuance in holiness; human election and nonelection, to perseverance or continuance in sin. A holy angel if kept in holiness is an elect angel; if not kept, but left to decide the event of apostasy for himself, is a nonelect angel. A sinful man if delivered from sin by regenerating grace is an elect man; if left in sin, is a nonelect man. Angelic election and nonelection relate to the perpetuity of holiness; human election and nonelection to the perpetuity of sin.

**3.6.11** (see p. 328). The following is the view of Socrates concerning God and evil: “We must not listen to Homer or any other poet who is guilty of the folly of saying that ‘at the threshold of Zeus lie two casks full of lots, one of good, the other of evil’ (*Iliad* 24.527), and again, ‘Zeus is the dispenser of good and evil to us.’ And if anyone asserts that the violation of oaths and treaties of which Pandarus was the real author (*Iliad* 2.69) was brought about by Athena and Zeus, he shall not have our approval; neither will we allow our young men to hear the words of Aeschylus, when he says that ‘God plants guilt among men when he desires utterly to destroy a house.’ The poet may say that the wicked are miserable because they require to be punished and are benefited by receiving punishment from God; but that God, being good, is the author of evil to anyone is to be strenuously denied and not allowed to be sung or said in any well-ordered commonwealth by old or young. Such a fiction is suicidal, ruinous, impious. Let this then be one of the rules of recitation and invention—that God is not the author of evil, but of good only.” The good and evil spoken of in the first two extracts from Homer are physical good and evil, but that spoken of in the third extract from Homer and in the extract from Aeschylus is moral good and evil. God may be the author of the first without dishonor to his nature, but not of the second.

**3.6.12** (see p. 329). While revelation teaches that the majority of the human race are saved by Christ’s redemption, it also teaches that the lost minority are a large multitude; but much less than those of the saved and infinitely less than the immense number of the holy and blessed in the whole universe of God. The fact of sin looks very differently when confined to the small sphere of earth from what it does when viewed from the immense range of the universe. Even if there had been no redemption of man and the whole family of mankind had been left like the fallen angels in their voluntary and self-originated ruin, the proportion of moral evil in the wide creation of God would still have been small. The kingdom of God is infinitely greater than that of Satan. Holy angels and redeemed men vastly outnumber lost angels and lost men. The human race has had an existence of only six or eight thousand years, but the “heavenly host” has existed ages upon ages. The supplication “your will be done on earth as it is in heaven” implies that heaven is the rule in the universe of God, and hell the exception. God “inhabits the praises of eternity” and of infinity. This means that praises have been ascending to him from the hosts of holy intelligences during a past eternity, compared with which the short duration of man’s existence on earth is nothing. While, therefore, earth appears gloomy and dark because of apostasy, the illimitable universe looks bright and glorious because of obedience and holiness. This is often forgotten and explains the exaggerated statements of both infidels and Christians concerning the extent of moral evil, making the problem of sin more difficult of explanation with reference to the benevolence and power of God. For if

sin had been permitted throughout all of God's dominions in the same proportion that it has been in the little province called earth, it would have required a greater faith in God's unsearchable wisdom than it does now. When, therefore, the theologian is depressed and tempted to "charge God foolishly" because of the reign of sin and death among the generations of men, let him look up and out into the immense universe of God and remember that through this vast range of being there is innocence and purity and the love and worship of God.

Leibnitz (*Theodicy*, 509 §1.19 [ed. Erdmann]), who with Augustine assumed that the majority of mankind are lost, relieves this opinion by the observation that this is an insignificant number compared with that of the holy and happy in the remainder of the universe. In this way he makes out that the existing universe is the best possible, notwithstanding that there is so much sin and misery in this planet on which man is placed. Howe (*Christian's Triumph*) also says: "Consider how minute a part of the creation of God this globe of earth is, where death has reigned. For aught we know, death never reaches higher than this earth of ours; and therefore there are vast and ample regions, incomparably beyond the range of our thought, where no death ever comes. We are told (Eph. 1:20–21) that God has set the mediator in the heavenly places, far above all principality and power and dominion; angels, authorities, and powers being made subject to him. Though we cannot form distinct thoughts what these dominions are, yet we cannot but suppose those inconceivably vast regions peopled with immortal inhabitants that live and reign in holy life and blessedness. Furthermore, death is to be confined and go no further. In the future state of things all death is to be gathered into death, and hell into hell (Rev. 20:14). It shall be contracted, gathered into itself. Whereas formerly it ranged to and fro uncontrolled, it now is confined to its own narrow circle and can get no new subjects and shall therefore give no further trouble or disturbance to the rest of God's universe."

Similarly, Baxter (*Dying Thoughts*) remarks that "God's infinite kingdom is not to be judged of by his jail or gibbets. And what though God give not to all men an overcoming measure of grace, nor to the best of men so much as they desire, yet the earth is but a spot or point of God's creation; not so much as an anthillock to a kingdom or perhaps to all the earth. And who is scandalized because the earth has a heap of ants in it, yea, or a nest of snakes that are not men? The vast, unmeasurable worlds of light which are above us are possessed by inhabitants suitable to their glory."

Such a broad and lofty view of holiness compared with sin as this should be introduced into eschatology and mitigate the dark p 359 subject of moral evil, not by the unscriptural doctrine of future redemption and the denial of endless punishment, but by the biblical teaching of the infinitude of holiness and blessedness and the finiteness of sin and misery.

If it is proper to attempt to compute the number of lost men, perhaps the statement is measurably correct that most of them belong to early manhood, middle age, and old age. All infants who die in infancy are saved by infant regeneration. This constitutes one-half of the human family. Of the other half, there is reason to hope that the majority of those who die in childhood and youth are regenerated. Original sin, in their case, has not been intensified by actual transgression to the degree that it is in early manhood, middle life, and old age. Consequently, the influence of religious instruction in the family, the Sabbath school, and the sanctuary is more effective in them than upon adults generally. The total population of school age in the United States is 22,447,392. Of these, 9,718,422 are Sabbath school scholars. The majority of conversions are between the ages of six and twenty years. This leaves adults from twenty to seventy years; and looking abroad over the world as it now appears, the millennium not being considered, there is melancholy reason to fear that the majority of these do not turn from sin to God. This part of mankind is more inclined and self-determined to this world, more absorbed in its business and pleasures, more sunk in hardened vice and besotted luxury, and less susceptible to the influence of divine truth. Few of them are in the Bible class, and a very large number of them never enter the sanctuary for religious instruction. The greater part of the lost, consequently, come from this class. Few of this class, to human view, have the broken and contrite spirit of the publican respecting their personal sinfulness, and any son of Adam who goes into the divine presence unable, because unwilling, to pray, "God be merciful to me, a sinner," is a lost spirit.

That more mankind are lost than are saved was, on the whole, the patristic and medieval opinion. The doctrine that baptism by the church is necessary to salvation, which prevailed universally in those periods, contributed to this. Augustine teaches that the elect are the minority of mankind: “St. Paul says, ‘Not as the offense so also is the free gift. For if through the offense of one many be dead, much more the grace of God and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, has abounded unto many.’ Not many more, that is, many more men, for there are not more persons justified than condemned; but it runs, much more has abounded; since, while Adam produced sinners from his one sin, Christ has by his grace procured free forgiveness even for the sins which men have of their own accord added by actual transgression to the original sin in which they were born” (*Forgiveness and Baptism* 1.14). “As many of the human race as are delivered by God’s grace are delivered from the condemnation in which they are held bound by the sin in Adam. Hence, even if none should be delivered, no one can justly blame the judgment of God. That, therefore, in comparison with those that perish, few, but in their absolute number many, are delivered from this condemnation, is effected by grace (*gratia*), is effected gratuitously (*gratis*); and thanks must be given because it is effected so that no one may be lifted up as of his own deservings, but that every mouth may be stopped, and he that glories may glory in the Lord” (*Rebuke and Grace* 28). “It is a matter of fact that not all nor even a majority of mankind are saved” (*Enchiridion* 97).

**3.6.13** (see p. 332). The following texts are sometimes erroneously explained to teach that election is mutable: “Have I not chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil” (John 6:70); the election meant here is not election to salvation; but to the apostolate. “He called unto him his disciples; and of them he chose twelve whom he also named apostles” (Luke 6:13). “Those whom you gave me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition: that the Scripture might be fulfilled” (John 17:12). The particles *ei mē*<sup>93</sup> qualifying *ho huios tēs apoleias*<sup>94</sup> are adversative, making two propositions, not exceptive, making only one. None of those whom the Father had given to Christ and whom Christ had kept were lost is the first proposition. But the son of perdition is lost that the Scripture might be fulfilled is the second. The son of perdition in the second proposition is not one of those whom Christ kept in the first proposition. Luke 4:27 (cf. 4:25–26) illustrates: “Many lepers were in Israel in the time of Eliseus the prophet; and none of them was cleansed saving Naaman the Syrian.” The particles *ei mē*<sup>95</sup> qualifying *neeman ho syrios*<sup>96</sup> are not exceptive here, as the word *saving* implies, but adversative. Naaman was not one of the lepers of Israel and so was not an exception, belonging to them. The true rendering, therefore, of John 17:12 is as follows: “Those whom you gave me I have kept, and none of them [whom you gave me] is lost; but the son of perdition [is lost] that the Scripture might be fulfilled.” This is Turretin’s explanation (4.12.24).

**3.6.14** (see p. 335). Bunyan (*Reprobation Asserted*, chap. 10) clearly states the difference between common grace and saving grace as follows: “There is a great difference between the grace of election and the grace in the general tenders of the gospel: a difference as to its timing, latituding, and working. (1) Touching its timing; it is before, yea, long before there was either tender of the grace in the general offer of the gospel to any or any need of such a tender. [The grace of election is from eternity; that of the general offer is at a particular time.] (2) Touching the latitude or extent; the tenders of grace in the gospel are common and universal to all, but the extension of that of election is special and peculiar to some. ‘There is a remnant according to the election of grace.’ (3) Touching the working of the grace of election, it differs from the working of grace in the general offers of the gospel in the following particulars: (a) The

<sup>93</sup> 93. εἰ μὴ = except

<sup>94</sup> 94. ὁ υἱὸς τῆς ἀπολείας = the son of perdition

<sup>95</sup> 95. εἰ μὴ = except

<sup>96</sup> 96. νεεμὰν ὁ σύρος = Naaman the Syrian

grace that is offered in the general tenders of the gospel calls for faith to lay hold upon and accept thereof; but the special grace of election works that faith which does lay hold thereof. (b) The grace that is offered in the general tenders of the gospel calls for faith as a condition to be performed by us, without which there is no life; but the special grace of election works faith in us without any such condition. [It imparts the life which produces the faith.] (c) The grace that is offered in the general tenders of the gospel promotes happiness upon the condition of persevering in the faith; but the special grace of election causes this perseverance. (d) The grace offered in the general tenders of the gospel, when it sparkles most, leaves the greatest part of men behind it; but the special grace of election, when it shines least, does infallibly bring every soul therein concerned to everlasting life. (e) A man may overcome and put out all the light that is begotten in him by the general tenders of the gospel; but none shall overcome or make void or frustrate the grace of election. (f) The general tenders of the gospel, apart from the concurrence with them of the grace of election, are insufficient to save the elect himself as well as the nonelect.”

**3.6.15** (see p. 336). Augustine teaches preterition in the following places: “Faith, as well in its beginning as in its completion, is God’s gift. But why it is not given to all ought not to disturb the believer who believes that from one all have gone into a condemnation which undoubtedly is most righteous; so that even if none were delivered therefrom there would be no just cause for finding fault with God. Whence it is plain that it is a great grace for many to be delivered, and that those who are not delivered should acknowledge what is due to themselves. But why God delivers one rather [p 360](#) than another—his judgments are unsearchable, and his ways past finding out” (*Predestination* 16). “So far as concerns justice and mercy, it may be truly said to the guilty who is condemned and also concerning the guilty who is saved, ‘Take what yours is, and go your way; I will give unto this one that which is not due. Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with my own? Is your eye evil [envious] because I am good?’ And if he shall say, ‘Why not to me also?’ he will hear, and with reason, ‘Who are you, O man, that replies against God?’ And although in the one case you see a most benignant benefactor and in the other a most righteous exactor, in neither case do you behold an unjust God. For although God would be righteous if he were to punish both, yet he who is saved has good ground for thankfulness, and he who is condemned has no ground for finding fault” (*Perseverance* 16). “I do not know the reason why one or another is more or less helped or not helped by that grace which restrains sinful self-will and changes it; this only I know, that God does this with perfect justice and for reasons which to himself are known as sufficient” (Letter 95.6 to Paulinus, A.D. 408).

Augustine teaches that preterition does not apply to baptized infants: “Persons, whether parents or others, who attempt to place those who have been baptized under idolatry and heathen worship are guilty of spiritual homicide. True, they do not actually kill the children’s souls, but they go as far toward killing them as is in their power. The warning, ‘Do not kill your little ones,’ may with all propriety be addressed to them; for the apostle says, ‘Quench not the Spirit’; not that he can be quenched [in baptized infants], but that those who so act as if they wished to have him quenched are deservedly spoken of as quenchers of the Spirit. In this sense the words of Cyprian are to be understood respecting the ‘lapsed’ who in times of persecution had sacrificed to idols: ‘And that nothing might be wanting to fill up the measure of their crime, their infant children lost, while yet in their infancy, that which they had received [in baptism] as soon as life began.’ They lost it, he meant, so far as pertained to the guilt of those by whom they were compelled to incur the loss; that is to say, they lost it in the purpose and wish of those who perpetrated on them such a wrong [as to bring them up in idolatry]. For had they actually in their own persons lost it, they must have remained under divine sentence of condemnation. But shall not these infants say when the judgment day has come: ‘We have done nothing; we have not of our own accord hastened to participate in profane rites, forsaking the bread and the cup of our Lord; the apostasy of others caused our destruction.’ Hence, in the just dispensation of judgment by God, those shall not be doomed to perish whose souls their parents did, so far as concerns their own guilt in the transaction, bring to ruin” (Letter 98.3 to Boniface, A.D. 408). “You must refer it to the hidden determination of God when you see in one and the same condition, such as all infants unquestionably have who derive their hereditary sin from Adam, that one is

assisted so as to be baptized, and another is not assisted so that he dies in bondage” (*Grace and Free Will* 45).

**3.6.16** (see p. 337). It is impossible to make sense of Rom. 11:7 without supposing two kinds of election and preterition, namely, national and individual, and two corresponding grades of grace, namely, common and special. St. Paul says that “Israel has not obtained that which he seeks for, but the election has obtained it, and the rest were blinded.” The “rest” of whom? The rest of Israel, of course. Whom does he mean by “Israel”? All of the descendants of Abraham. These were all without exception nationally elected. They were all without exception “Israelites, to whom pertains the adoption and the glory and the covenants and the giving of the law and the promises, whose are the fathers and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed forever” (9:4–5). This national election entitled the subjects of it to all the blessings of the theocracy on condition of observing the Mosaic ordinances and keeping the theocratic covenant, of which circumcision was the sign and seal. Ishmael as well as Isaac, Esau as well as Jacob, were sealed with the sign of circumcision and were entitled, together with their offspring, to the blessings of the theocracy, if faithful in this relation. By birth they all belonged to the chosen people and the national church. “By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come” (Heb. 11:20; Gen. 27:27, 39). But Ishmael and Esau and their descendants separated from the theocracy and renounced the messianic covenant and for this reason, though born of Abraham, failed to obtain the messianic salvation: “Was not Esau Jacob’s brother? says the Lord; yet I loved Jacob and I hated Esau” (Mal. 1:2–3). Jacob I effectually called, and Esau I left to his own will. Ishmael, Esau, and their descendants together with a part of the descendants of Isaac and Jacob were the “rest that were blinded” (Rom. 11:7); who “were Jews outwardly, but not inwardly” (2:28–29); who “were of Israel, but were not Israel” (9:6); who “were the seed of Abraham, but were not children” (9:7); who were nationally but not individually and spiritually elected. If there is but one election, namely, the national and universal, there can be no discrimination like this, no “rest that were blinded.” But in one case, according to the apostle, the election includes all of the descendants of Abraham; in the other, only a part of them. The entire Hebrew nation was outwardly called by the ministry of the law, moral and ceremonial. Many of them rejected this call and did not obtain salvation. A part of them were individually and effectually called and were saved.

Calvin (3.21.5–7) thus distinguishes between national and individual election: “Predestination we call the eternal decree of God by which he has determined in himself what he would have to become of every individual of mankind. For they are not all created with a similar destiny; but eternal life is foreordained for some, and eternal damnation for others. Every man, therefore, being created for one or other of these ends, we say, he is predestinated either to life or to death. This, God has not only testified in particular persons, but has given a specimen of it in the whole posterity of Abraham, which should evidently show the future condition of every nation to depend upon his decision. ‘When the Most High divided the nations, when he separated the sons of Adam, the Lord’s portion was his people; Jacob was the lot of his inheritance’ (Deut. 32:8–9). The separation is before the eyes of all; in the person of Abraham, as in the dry trunk of a tree, one people is peculiarly chosen to the rejection of others: no reason for this appears, except that Moses, to deprive their posterity of all occasion of glorying, teaches them that their exaltation is wholly from God’s gratuitous love (7:7–8; 10:14–15). There is a second degree of election, still more restricted, or that in which divine grace was displayed in a more special manner, when of the same race of Abraham God rejected some and by nourishing others in the church proved that he retained them among his children. Ishmael at first obtained the same station [of national election] as his brother Isaac, for the spiritual covenant was equally sealed in him by the symbol of circumcision. He is cut off [in individual election]; afterward Esau is and, last, an innumerable multitude, and almost all Israel are. In Isaac the seed was called; the same calling continued in Jacob. God exhibited a similar example in the rejection of Saul, which is celebrated by the psalmist: ‘He refused the tabernacle of Joseph and chose not the tribe of Ephraim, but chose the tribe of Judah’ (Ps. 78:67–68). I grant that it was by their own crime and guilt that Ishmael, Esau, and persons of similar character fell from [national] adoption; because the condition annexed was that they should faithfully keep the covenant of God, which they perfidiously violated.

Malachi thus aggravates the ingratitude of Israel, because though not only nationally elected out of the whole race of mankind, but also separated from a sacred family to be a peculiar people, they despised God, their most beneficent Father. ‘Was not Esau Jacob’s brother? says the Lord; yet I loved Jacob, and I hated Esau’ (Mal. 1:2–3).

“Though it is sufficiently clear that God in his secret counsel freely chooses whom he will and rejects others, his gratuitous election is but half displayed till we come to particular individuals to p 361 whom God not only offers salvation, but assigns it in such a manner that the certainty of the effect is liable to no suspense or doubt. That the general election of a people is not invariably effectual and permanent, a reason readily presents itself, because when God covenants with them he does not also give them the spirit of regeneration to enable them to persevere in the covenant to the end; but the external call, without the internal efficacy of grace, which would be sufficient for their preservation, is a kind of medium between the rejection of all mankind and the election of the small number of believers.”

**3.6.17** (see p. 337). Calvin in his comment on Rom. 9:8 thus describes the difference between common and special grace: “Two things are to be considered in reference to the selection by God of the posterity of Abraham as a peculiar people. The first is that the promise of blessing through the Messiah has a relation to all who can trace their natural descent from him. It is offered to all without exception, and for this reason they are all denominated the heirs of the covenant made with Abraham and the children of promise. It was God’s will that his covenant with Abraham should be sealed by the rite of circumcision with Ishmael and Esau, as well as with Isaac and Jacob, which shows that the former were not wholly excluded from him. Accordingly, all the lineal descendants of Abraham are denominated by St. Peter (Acts 3:25) the ‘children of the covenant,’ though they were unbelieving; and St. Paul, in this chapter (v. 4), says of unbelieving Jews: ‘Whose are the covenants.’ The second point to be considered is that this covenant, though thus offered, was rejected by great numbers of the lineal descendants of Abraham. Such Jews, though they are ‘of Israel,’ they are not the ‘children of the promise.’ When, therefore, the whole Jewish people are indiscriminately denominated the heritage and peculiar people of God, it is meant that they have been selected from other nations, the offer of salvation through the Messiah has been made to them and confirmed by the symbol of circumcision. But inasmuch as many reject this outward adoption and thus enjoy none of its benefits, there arises another difference with regard to the fulfillment of the promise. The general and national election of the people of Israel not resulting in faith and salvation is no hindrance that God should not choose from among them those whom he pleases to make the subjects of his special grace. This is a second election, which is confined to a part, only, of the nation.”

**3.6.18** (see p. 340). The preterition of a part of mankind in the bestowment of regenerating grace presupposes the fall, according to Calvin. This places him among the sublapsarians. The following extracts from his *Institutes* show this: “If anyone attack us with such an inquiry as this, ‘Why God has from the beginning predestinated some men to death, who not yet being brought into existence could not yet deserve the sentence of death’ [This is the objector’s, not Calvin’s phraseology. In his reply, Calvin says, “previously to birth adjudged to endless misery,” not previously to creation], we will reply by asking them in return, What they suppose God owes to man if he chooses to judge of him from his own [sinful] nature. As we are all corrupted by sin, we must necessarily be odious to God and that not from tyrannical cruelty, but in the most equitable estimation of justice. If all whom the Lord predestinates to death are in their natural condition liable to the sentence of death, what injustice do they complain of receiving from him? Let all the sons of Adam come forward; let them all contend and dispute with their Creator, because by his eternal providence they were previously to their birth [not previously to their creation and fall in Adam, as the objector states it] adjudged to endless misery. What murmur will they be able to raise against this vindication when God, on the other hand, shall call them to a review of themselves. If they have all been taken from a corrupt mass, it is no wonder that they are subject to condemnation. Let them not, therefore, accuse God of injustice if his eternal decree has destined them to death, to which they feel themselves, whatever be their desire or aversion, spontaneously led forward by their own [sinful] nature. Hence appears the perverseness of their disposition to murmur, because they

intentionally suppress the cause of condemnation which they are constrained to acknowledge in themselves, hoping to excuse themselves by charging it upon God. But though I ever so often admit God to be the author of it [i.e., the condemnation], which is perfectly correct, yet this does not abolish the guilt impressed upon their consciences and from time to time recurring to their view” (3.23.3). “They further object, ‘Were they not by the decree of God antecedently predestinated to that corruption which is now stated as the cause of condemnation? When they perish in their corruption, therefore, they only suffer the punishment of that misery into which, in consequence of God’s predestination, Adam fell and precipitated his posterity with him. Is not God unjust, therefore, in treating his creatures with such cruel mockery? I confess, indeed, that all the descendants of Adam fell by the divine will into that miserable condition in which they are now involved; and this is what I asserted from the beginning, that we must always return at last to the sovereign determination of God’s will, the cause of which is hidden in himself. But it follows not, therefore, that God is liable to this reproach [of justice]” (3.23.4). Calvin then gives two replies to the allegation that the fall of Adam, by being decreed by God, was necessitated by him. The first reply is that of St. Paul, “O man, who are you that replies against God?” “What stronger reason,” says Calvin, “can be presented than when we are directed to consider who God is? How could any injustice be committed by him who is the judge of the world? If it is the peculiar property of the nature of God to do justice, then he naturally loves righteousness and hates iniquity. The apostle, therefore, has not resorted to sophistry, as if he were in danger of confutation, but has shown that the reason of divine justice is too high to be measured by a human standard or comprehended by the littleness of the human mind” (3.23.4). The second reply is that sin is decreed in such a manner as not to interfere with the free agency and responsibility of Adam and his posterity in the fall. Before proceeding to this important particular, Calvin first objects to that statement of the permissive decree which makes God a mere passive spectator of the fall without a positive act of will concerning it and asserts with Augustine that “the permission is not involuntary but voluntary” (1.18.3). “Here they recur to the distinction between will and permission and insist that God permits the destruction of the wicked, but does not will it. But what reason shall we assign for his permitting it, but because it is his will? It is not probable that man procured his own destruction by the mere permission without any appointment (*ordinatione*) of God; as though God had not determined what he would choose to be the condition of the principal of his creatures. I shall not hesitate, therefore, to confess plainly with Augustine ‘that the will of God is the certainty (*necessitatem*) of things, and that what he has willed will certainly (*necessario*) come to pass; as those things are surely about to happen which he has foreseen’ ” (3.23.8). Having given what he regards as the true view of God’s permission of sin by a voluntary decree to permit it, Calvin then affirms that the fall of Adam thus actively-permissively decreed was free and guilty: “Now, if either Pelagians or Manicheans or Anabaptists or Epicureans (for we are concerned with these four sects in this argument), in excuse for themselves and the impious, plead the certainty (*necessitatem*) with which they are bound by God’s predestination, they allege nothing applicable to the case. For if predestination [to death] is no other than a dispensation of divine justice, mysterious, indeed, but liable to no blame, since it is certain that they were not unworthy of being predestinated to that fate, it is equally certain that the destination they incur by predestination is consistent with the strictest justice. Moreover, their perdition depends on divine predestination in such a manner that the cause and matter of it are found in themselves. For the first man fell because the Lord had determined it was so p 362 expedient. The reason of this determination is unknown to us. Man falls, therefore, according to the appointment of divine providence; but he falls by his own fault. The Lord had a little before pronounced ‘everything that he had made’ to be ‘very good.’ Whence, then, comes the depravity of man to revolt from his God? Lest it should be thought to come from creation, God had approved and commended what had proceeded from himself. By his own wickedness, therefore, Adam corrupted the nature he had received pure from the Lord, and by his fall he drew all his posterity with him into destruction. Wherefore let us rather contemplate the evident cause of condemnation, which is nearer to us in the corrupt nature of mankind, than search after a hidden and altogether incomprehensible one in the predestination of God” (3.23.8). Calvin quotes from Augustine to the same effect: “Wherefore there is the greatest propriety in the following observations of Augustine (Letter 106; *Perseverance of the Saints* 12): ‘The whole mass of mankind having fallen into condemnation in the first man, the vessels that are formed

from it to honor are not vessels of personal righteousness, but of divine mercy; and the formation of others to dishonor is to be attributed not to iniquity [i.e., to a greater degree of iniquity], but to the divine decree.’ While God rewards those whom he rejects with deserved punishment and to those whom he calls freely gives undeserved grace, he is liable to no accusation, but may be compared to a creditor who has power to release one and enforce his demands on another. The Lord, therefore, may give grace to whom he will, because he is merciful, and yet not give it to all, because he is a just judge; may manifest his free grace by giving to some what they do not deserve, while by not giving to all he declares the demerits of all” (3.23.11).

Respecting the preterition of some by Christ in the days of his flesh, Calvin remarks as follows: “Christ testifies that he confined to his apostles the explanations of the parables in which he had addressed the multitude; ‘because to you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given’ (Matt. 13:11). What does the Lord mean, you will say, by teaching those by whom he takes care not to be understood? Consider whence the fault arises, and you will cease the inquiry; for whatever obscurity there is in the word, yet there is always light enough to convince the consciences of the wicked. It remains now to be seen why the Lord does that which it is evident he does. If it be replied that this is done because men have deserved it by their impiety, wickedness, and ingratitude, it will be a just and true observation; but as we have not yet discovered the reason of the diversity, why some persist in obduracy while others are inclined to obedience, the discussion of it will necessarily lead us to the same remark that Paul has quoted from Moses concerning Pharaoh: ‘Even for this same purpose have I raised you up, that I might show my power in you and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth’ (Rom. 9:17). That the reprobate obey not the word of God when made known to them is justly imputed to the wickedness and depravity of their hearts, provided it be at the same time stated that they are abandoned to this depravity because they have been raised up by a just but inscrutable judgment of God to display his glory in their condemnation. So when it is related of the sons of Eli that they listened not to his salutary admonitions ‘because the Lord would slay them’ (1 Sam. 2:25), it is not denied that their obstinacy proceeded from their own wickedness, but it is also plainly implied that though the Lord was able to soften their hearts, yet they were left in their obstinacy, because his immutable decree had predestinated them to destruction” (3.24.13–14). “Examples of reprobation present themselves every day. The same sermon is addressed to a hundred persons; twenty receive it with the obedience of faith; the others despise or ridicule or reject or condemn it. If it be replied that the difference proceeds from their wickedness and perverseness, this will afford no satisfaction, because the minds of the others would have been influenced by the same wickedness but for the correction of divine goodness. And thus we shall always be perplexed, unless we recur to Paul’s question ‘who makes you to differ?’ in which he signifies that the excellence of some men beyond others is not from their own virtue, but solely from divine grace. Why, then, in bestowing [regenerating] grace upon some does he pass over others? Luke assigns a reason for the former, that they ‘were ordained to eternal life’ (Acts 13:48). What conclusion, then, shall be drawn respecting the latter, but that they are vessels of wrath to dishonor? Therefore let us not hesitate to say with Augustine (on Gen. 11:10), ‘God could convert the will of the wicked because he is omnipotent. It is evident that he could. Why, then, does he not? Because he would not. Why he would not remains with himself.’ For we ought not to aim at more wisdom than becomes us [by assigning some other reason for preterition than the sovereign will of God]. That will be much better than adopting the evasion of Chrysostom that ‘God draws those that are willing and who stretch out their hands for his aid’ so that the difference may not appear to consist in the decree of God, but wholly in the will of man” (3.24.12–13).

The doctrine that the sin of man was decreed, but in such a manner as to leave the origination of sin to the free agency of man was also held by Descartes. In his *Principles of Philosophy* 1.40–41 he remarks as follows: “What we have already discovered of God gives us assurance that his power is so immense that we would sin in thinking ourselves capable of ever doing anything which he had not ordained beforehand, and yet we should soon be embarrassed in great difficulties if we undertook to harmonize the preordination of God with the freedom of our will and endeavored to comprehend both truths at once. But in place of this we shall be free from these embarrassments if we recollect that our mind is limited, while the power of God, by which he not only knew from all eternity what is or can be, but also willed and

preordained it, is infinite. It thus happens that we possess sufficient intelligence to know clearly and distinctly that this power is in God, but not enough to comprehend how he leaves the free actions of men indeterminate; and, on the other hand, we have such consciousness of the liberty which exists in ourselves that there is nothing we more clearly or perfectly comprehend, so that the omnipotence of God ought not to keep us from believing it. For it would be absurd to doubt of that of which we are fully conscious and which we experience as existing in ourselves, merely because we do not comprehend another matter which from its very nature we know to be incomprehensible.” This presents the subject in a practical and conclusive manner. The omnipotence of God requires a decree by which all things are ordained and come to pass, both good and evil, holiness and sin. For unless all events are under the control of his will he is not almighty. And the justice of God requires that, in the execution of the decree that sin shall come into the world, the free self-determination of man and his responsibility for sin shall be intact.

The doctrine of the permissive decree, as explained by Calvin, must be associated with the following statement of his, which has often been misconceived and misrepresented: “I inquire, again, how it came to pass that the fall of Adam, apart from any remedy (*absque remedio*), should involve so many nations with their infant children in eternal death, but because it was the will of God. It is an awe-exciting (*horrible*)<sup>97</sup> decree I confess; but no one can deny that God foreknew the future final state of man before he created him and that he foreknew it because it was appointed by his own p 363 decree. This subject is judiciously discussed by Augustine. ‘We most wholesomely confess, what we most rightly believe, that the God and Lord of all things, who created everything very good and foreknew that it was more suitable to his almighty goodness to bring good out of evil than not to suffer evil to exist, ordained the life of angels and men in such a manner as to exhibit in it, first, what free will was capable of doing and, afterward, what could be effected by the blessings of his grace and the sentence of his justice’ ” (3.23.7). These extracts show that both Augustine and Calvin assert the decreed origin of human sin only in connection with a free and responsible fall in Adam. All mankind, as a common mass and unity, sinned and fell in the first self-moved and unimpelled act of transgression. That act was permissively decreed, that is, foreordained in such a way as not to necessitate the act, but to leave it to the self-determination of Adam and his posterity in him. The election of some men from sin and the leaving of others in sin suppose this free but foreordained fall from the holiness in which Adam and his posterity were primarily created. If the facts and premises upon which both Augustine and Calvin reason are granted, there is no ground for charging the doctrine of predestination to sin with either compulsion or fatalism.

The biblical proof of a permissive decree that brings about the event without working efficiently in the human will “to will and to do” is abundant. Take the following as an example: God decrees that Magog shall invade Israel: “Son of Man, prophesy and say unto Gog, Thus says the Lord God, In that day when my people of Israel dwells safely, shall you not know it? And you shall come from your place out of the north parts, you and many people with you, all of them riding upon horses, a great company and a mighty army; and you shall come up against my people of Israel as a cloud to cover the land; it shall be in the latter days and I will bring you against my land that the heathen may know me, when I shall be sanctified in you, O Gog, before their eyes” (Ezek. 38:14–16). God also decrees that Gog shall fail in this invasion and that he will punish him for the attempt: “It shall come to pass at the same time, when Gog shall come up against the land of Israel, says the Lord God, that my fury shall come up in my face. For in my jealousy and in the fire of my wrath have I said, Surely in that day there shall be a great shaking in the land of Israel. Therefore you Son of Man prophesy against Gog and say, Thus says the Lord God, Behold I am against you, O Gog, and I will turn you back and leave but the sixth part of you and will cause you

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<sup>97</sup> 97. In this connection Richard Muller’s observation about the “horrible decree” is worth repeating: “*Decretum horrible*: terrifying decree; a much-abused term from Calvin. It does not translate ‘horrible decree’ and in no way implies that the eternal decree is somehow unjust or horrifying, but only that the decree is awesome and terrifying, particularly to those who are not in Christ”; Richard A. Muller, *Dictionary of Greek and Latin Theological Terms* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1985), 88.

to come up from the north parts and will bring you upon the mountains of Israel, and I will smite your bow out of your left hand and will cause your arrows to fall out of your right hand. And you shall fall upon the mountains of Israel, you and all your bands and the people that is with you; I will give you to the ravenous birds of every sort and to the beasts of the field to be devoured. You shall fall upon the open field; for I have spoken it, says the Lord God” (38:18–19; 39:1–5). It is impossible to suppose that the holy and just God positively inclined and inwardly changed the heart of Magog and his hosts from friendship toward himself and his people to enmity against them and then punished them for their hostility. And there is no need of so supposing. Gog and his hosts were a part of the human race which fell from holiness in Adam. They already had the carnal mind which is enmity against God. The permissive decree that they should invade Israel supposed this fallen condition. God decided not to counterwork against this evil heart, but to permit its free self-moved operation. An evil heart, if not restrained by divine grace, is infallibly certain to act wrongly. In determining not to hinder and prevent Gog from following his own evil free will, God made his invasion of Israel a certainty. At the same time this sure and certain agency of Gog was his own voluntary self-determination and deserving of the retribution which it received. This same reasoning applies to the case of Pharaoh and many others like it mentioned in Scripture. It will not apply, however, to the fall of man itself. The first origin of sin by the permissive decree presents a difficulty not found in the subsequent continuance of sin by it. The certainty that sin will continue to be, if God decides not to overcome it by regeneration and sanctification, is explicable; but the certainty that sin will come to be, if God decides not to originate it himself in the created will, but leaves the origination to the creature alone, is an insoluble problem, yet a revealed truth. It should be observed, however, that the first origin of sin in the fall of Adam has no connection with the doctrines of election and preterition. It is only the subsequent continuance of sin that is so connected. Some men are not elected to apostasy, and others passed by. The apostasy is universal, and there is no discrimination in this respect. But some men are elected to deliverance from apostasy, and some are not elected to deliverance and are left in sin (see Shedd, *Calvinism: Pure and Mixed*, 93).

**3.6.19** (see p. 343). One of the best defenses of the doctrine of preterition is found in Charnock (*Holiness of God*, prop. 7): “That God withdraws his grace from men and gives them up sometimes to the fury of their lusts is as clear in Scripture as anything: ‘The Lord has not given you a heart to perceive and eyes to see and ears to hear’ (Deut. 29:4). Judas was delivered to Satan after the sop and put into his power for despising former admonitions. God often leaves the reins to the devil that he may use what efficacy he can in those that have offended the majesty of God; and he withholds further influences of grace or withdraws what before he had granted them. Thus he withheld that grace from the sons of Eli that might have made their father’s pious admonitions effectual to them (1 Sam. 2:25): ‘They hearkened not to the voice of their father, because the Lord would slay them.’ He gave grace to Eli to reprove them and withheld that grace from them which might have enabled them, against their natural corruption and obstinacy, to receive that reproof. But the holiness of God is not blemished by withdrawing his grace from a sinful creature, whereby he falls into more sin (1) because the act of God in this is only negative. Thus God is said to ‘harden’ men, not by positive hardening or working anything in the creature, but by not working, not softening, leaving a man to the hardness of his own heart, whereby it is unavoidable by the depravation of man’s nature and the fury of his passions, but that he should be further hardened and ‘increase unto more ungodliness’ (2 Tim. 2:19). As a man is said to give another his life when he does not take it away when it lay at his mercy, so God is said to ‘harden’ a man when he does not mollify him when it was in his power and inwardly quicken him with that grace whereby he might infallibly avoid any further provoking him. God is said to harden man when he removes not from them the incentives to sin, curbs not those principles which are ready to comply with those incentives, withdraws the common assistance of his grace, concurs not with counsels and admonitions to make them effectual, and flashes not in the convincing light which he darted upon them before. If hardness follows upon God’s withholding his softening grace, it is not by a positive act of God, but from the natural hardness of man. If you put fire near to wax or rosin, both will melt; but when that fire is removed they return to their natural quality of hardness and brittleness; the positive act of the fire is to melt and soften, and the softness of the

rosin is to be ascribed to that; but the hardness is from the rosin itself, wherein the fire has no influence but only a negative act by a removal of it: so when God hardens a man he only leaves him to that stony heart which he derived from [and originated in] Adam and brought with him into the world. (2) The whole positive cause of this hardness is from man's corruption. God infuses not any sin into his creatures, but forbears to infuse his grace and restrain their lusts, which upon the removal of his grace work impetuously. God only gives them up to that which he knows will work strongly in their hearts. And therefore the apostle wipes off from God any positive act [actuation] in that uncleanness the heathen were given up to: 'Wherefore God gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts [p 364](#) of their own hearts' (Rom. 1:24). God's giving them up was the logical [or occasional] cause [of the uncleanness]; their own lusts were the true and natural cause [of it]. Their own lusts they were before they were given up to them and belonging to no one as their author but themselves after they were given up to them. (3) God is holy and righteous because he does not withdraw from man till man deserts him. To say that God withdrew that grace from Adam which he had afforded him in creation or anything that was due to him till he had abused the gifts of God and turned them to an end contrary to that of creation would be a reflection upon divine holiness. God was first deserted by man before man was deserted by God; and man does first contemn and abuse the common grace of God and those relics of natural light that 'enlighten every man that comes into the world' (John 1:9) before God leaves him to the hurry of his own passions. Ephraim was first joined to idols before God pronounced the fatal sentence: 'Let him alone' (Hos. 4:17). God discovers himself to man in the works of his hands; he has left in him prints of natural reason; he does attend him with the common motions of his Spirit and corrects him for his faults with gentle chastisements. He is near to all men in some kind of moral instructions; he puts, many times, providential bars in the way of their sinning; but when they will rush into it as the horse into the battle, when they will rebel against the light, God does often leave them to their own course and sentence him that is 'filthy to be filthy still' (Rev. 22:11), which is a righteous act of God as the rector and governor of the world. It is so far from being repugnant to the holiness and righteousness of God that it is rather a commendable act of his holiness and righteousness, as the rector of the world, not to let those gifts continue in the hands of a man who abuses them. Who will blame a father that, after all the good counsels he has given to his son to reclaim him, all the corrections he has inflicted on him for his irregular practices, leaves him to his own courses and withdraws those assistances which he scoffed at and turned a deaf ear to? Or who will blame the physician for deserting the patient who rejects his counsel, will not follow his prescriptions, but dashes his physic against the wall? No man will blame him, no man will say that he is the cause of the patient's death; but the true cause is the fury of the distemper and the obstinacy of the diseased person to which the physician left him. And who can justly blame God in a similar case, who never yet denied supplies of grace to any that sincerely sought it at his hands? What unholiness is it to deprive men of the assistances of common grace because of their sinful resistance of them and afterward to direct those sinful counsels and practices of theirs which he has justly given them up unto, to serve the ends of his own glory in his own plan and methods? (4) God is not under obligation to continue the bestowment of grace to any sinner whatever. It was at his liberty whether he would give renewing grace to Adam after his fall or to any of his posterity. He was at liberty either to withhold it or communicate it. But if the obligation were none just after the fall, there is none now since the multiplication of sin by man. But God is certainly less obliged to continue his grace after a repeated refusal and resistance and a peremptory abuse, than he was bound to proffer it after the first apostasy. God cannot be charged with unholiness in withdrawing his grace after we have received it, unless we can make it appear that his grace was a thing due to us, as we are his creatures and as he is the governor of the world. If there be an obligation on God as a governor, it would lie rather on the side of justice to leave man to the power of the devil whom he courted and the prevalency of those lusts he has so often caressed and to wrap up in a cloud all his common illuminations and leave him destitute of all the common workings of his Spirit."

**3.6.20** (see p. 343). Turretin (11.2.22) defines the Hebraistic “hate” as loving in a less degree: “To hate (*to misein*) should be understood comparatively, as standing for a lesser or smaller degree of love.”<sup>98</sup> The hardening of a part of the Israelites is described as not softening them, in Deut. 29:4: “Yet the Lord has not given [all of you] a heart to perceive and eyes to see and ears to hear, unto this day.” This identical process is described in Isa. 6:10 by “make the heart of this people fat and make their eyes heavy and shut their eyes” and in 63:17 by “O Lord, why have you made us to err from your ways and hardened our heart from your fear?” And in John 12:40, Christ himself adopts the same phraseology and teaches the doctrine of preterition: “He has blinded their eyes and hardened their heart, that they should not see with their eyes nor understand with their heart and be converted.”

**3.6.21** (see p. 344). A common objection to the doctrine that God’s final end in all that he does is his own glory is that this is selfishness, and God is compared with man in proof. Should man do this, he would be actuated by egotism and self-love. But the argument from analogy between God and man cannot be carried beyond the communicable attributes. It stops at the incommunicable. We can argue from human justice to divine justice, from human benevolence to divine, etc., because man has these attributes by virtue of being made in the divine image. But neither man nor angel has the attributes of infinity, eternity, immensity, and omnipotence. These are incapable of degrees or of being bestowed upon a creature. There is no inferior degree of eternity or infinity, etc. These make no part of the divine image in which man was created. In such cases there must be the whole of the attribute or none of it. Consequently, to reason from analogy in regard to the incommunicable attributes of God is false reasoning, because there is no analogy.

Now, in the instance of the “glory of God,” the reasoning relates to a subject of this latter class. Divine glory or excellence is an infinite, eternal, omnipotent, and omnipresent excellence. No creature can have such an excellence as this. The glory or excellence of man or angel is a finite, temporal, local, weak, and dependent excellence. The two differ in kind, not merely in degree, as in the case of the communicable attributes. Consequently, the two “glories” cannot be used in an argument from analogy. It does not follow that because the glory of a man, say Napoleon, does not permit him to make it the chief end of his action, the glory of God does not permit him to do so. There are properties in God’s excellence that cannot possibly belong to man excellence, so that what can be argued from the latter cannot be from the former, and the converse. If analogical reasoning should be pushed in reference to the subject of the worship of God, which has its ground in the glory of God, it would plainly be improper, because worship is incommunicable to the creature and is confined to the infinite. God demands that all his rational creatures adore and praise him. No man or angel has the right to make such a demand upon his fellow creatures.

**3.6.22** (see p. 345). No logical intermediate between Calvinism and Arminianism is capable of combining both systems. It is impossible to say (a) that man is both totally and partially depraved; (b) that election is both unconditional and conditional; (c) that regenerating grace is both irresistible and resistible; (d) that redemption is both limited and unlimited; and (e) that perseverance is both certain and uncertain. Nor can there be a modification of one by the other. One or the other of the above-mentioned points must overcome the other. It is impossible to blend the two, which is requisite in order to a modification. This is not a gloomy view of Christian theology because (a) both systems hold in common the saving doctrines of the gospel (a sinner may be regenerated and sanctified under either) and (b) the influence of each upon the other is best when each is pure and simple. p 365 Medicines of opposite properties produce their good effect when they are unmixed with foreign ingredients. If the Calvinistic churches hold their ancestral Calvinism with frank sincerity and logical consistency and the Arminian churches hold their ancestral Arminianism in the same manner, they will have a better understanding with each other and do a greater work in extending the common gospel and destroying the common enemy, than they would by endeavoring to formulate a theology that should be neither Calvinistic nor Arminian. The endeavor of the

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<sup>98</sup> 98. Τὸ μισεῖν intelligendum est comparate pro amore minori et diminuto.

Arminians in Holland in the seventeenth century to modify the Calvinistic Belgic Confession and of the Calvinists to suppress the Arminian Articles by the civil power resulted in one of the most bitter conflicts in church history and filled both parties with an unchristian spirit. Had there been no union of church and state at the time and had all denominations of Christians then stood upon an independent position, unrestrained by the civil authority, as is now the case very generally in Europe and America, neither of these two theological divisions would have interfered, by civil and military power, with the doctrine and practice of the other, and mutual respect would have characterized both. Whenever the endeavor is made to mix the immiscible and to fuse two types of theology that exclude each other, each party strives to outwit the other, and this produces jealousy and animosity. Mutual confidence is impossible. Hypocrisy and the pretense of being what one is not are liable to prevail. A Calvinist is a dishonest disorganizer if he poses as an Arminian, and so is an Arminian if he pretends to be a Calvinist. The recent attempt within the Northern Presbyterian Church in America to revise the Westminster standards, which was initiated by a very small minority of the whole body who were dissatisfied with Calvinism and who, under the claim of improving it by conforming it to popular opinion and the lax religious sentiment of the day, proposed changes that would utterly demolish it, was of the same general nature with that in Holland. But the rationalism and infidelity into which it developed under the leadership of the higher critics had nothing in common with the evangelical doctrines which were retained in their creed by Arminius and his followers.

**3.6.23** (see p. 347). That the sincerity of God's desires that the sinner would repent and forsake sin is independent of the result is evinced by the temporary preterition of his own church: "My people would not hearken to my voice and Israel would none of me. So I gave them up unto their own hearts' lust: and they walked in their own counsels. Oh that my people had hearkened unto me and Israel had walked in my ways! I should soon have subdued their enemies and turned my hand against their adversaries" (Ps. 81:11–14). In this instance God bestowed a certain degree of grace upon his chosen people. It was frustrated and unsuccessful. God might have increased the degree of grace and "made them willing in the day of his power." He did not immediately do this, though he did subsequently to a part of them who were the individually called in distinction from the nationally called. Does this prove that Jehovah was insincere when he said, with reference to those who resisted and frustrated the lower grade of his grace, "Oh that my people had hearkened unto me and Israel had walked in my ways?"

Howe (*Redeemer's Tears*) upon this text thus remarks: "We must take heed lest under the pretense that we cannot ascribe everything unto God that such expressions seem to import, we therefore ascribe nothing. We ascribe nothing if we do ascribe a real unwillingness that men should sin on and perish; and consequently a real willingness that they should turn to him and live, as so many plain texts assert. And therefore it is unavoidably imposed upon us to believe that God is truly unwilling of some things which he does not think fit to interpose his omnipotency to hinder and is truly willing of some things which he does not put forth his omnipotency to effect, that he makes this the ordinary course of his dispensation toward men, to govern them by laws and promises and threatenings, to work upon their minds, their hope, and their fear; affording them the ordinary assistances of supernatural light and influence, with which he requires them to comply and which, upon their refusing to do so, he may most righteously withhold and give them the victory to their own ruin; though oftentimes he does, from a sovereignty of grace, put forth that greater power upon others, equally negligent and obstinate, not to enforce, but effectually to incline their wills and gain a victory over them to their salvation."

The question arises whether, when God offers salvation to all men without exception but does not save all men without exception by overcoming their opposition, this is real compassion. It is real but not so high a degree of compassion as actual salvation. There are degrees of compassion. To offer the sinner a full pardon of all his sins on condition of faith and repentance (which condition the sinner must fulfill), instead of making no such offer, but immediately punishing him for them, is certainly a grade of mercy. Because God manifests a yet higher grade in the case of those whose opposition he overcomes, it does not follow that the lower grade is not mercy. Charnock (*God's Patience*, 733 [ed. Bohn]) argues that the patience of God in forbearing to inflict the penalty of sin immediately upon its commission is suggestive, even to the heathen, of mercy in remitting it, though not demonstrative of it. It is adopted to awaken hope,

but cannot produce certainty. Only revelation does the latter: “The heathen could not but read in the benevolence of God, shown in his daily providences, favorable inclinations toward them; and though they could not be ignorant that they deserved the inflictions of justice, yet seeing themselves supported by God they might draw from thence the natural conclusion that God was placable.” St. Paul teaches the same truth in saying that the benevolence of God in his common providence is fitted to produce penitence for sin and hope in his mercy: “The goodness of God in his forbearance and long-suffering leads you to repentance” (Rom. 2:4).

**3.6.24** (see p. 348). Christ (Luke 10:13) declares that if the common grace granted to Chorazin and Bethsaida, which was ineffectual with them, had been granted to Tyre and Sidon, it would have been effectual with these. The miracles (*dynameis*)<sup>99</sup> together with the ordinary influences of the Holy Spirit which produced no repentance in the former case, he says, would have produced it in the latter. According to this statement of our Lord, the very same amount of divine influence may succeed in overcoming a sinner’s opposition in one instance and not in another. When it succeeds, it is effectual and irresistible grace; when it fails, it is ineffectual and resistible. This shows that grace is to be measured relatively by the result and not absolutely by a stiff rule which states arithmetically the amount of power exerted. All grace that fails, be it greater or less, is common; all that succeeds, be it greater or less, is special. In order to have effected repentance in the people of Chorazin, it would have been necessary to exert a higher degree of grace than was exerted upon them; while in order to effect repentance in the people of Tyre, no higher degree would have been requisite than that exerted upon Chorazin. But it is to be carefully noticed that the failure in the instance of Chorazin was owing wholly to the sinful resistance made to the grace; and the success affirmed in the instance of Tyre would be owing not to any assistance of the grace by the cooperation of the sinful will of Tyre, but wholly to the overcoming of Tyre’s resistance by the grace exerted. The sinful will of the inhabitants of Tyre, in the supposed case, was a wholly resisting will like that of the inhabitants of Chorazin and hence could not synergize with the divine Spirit any more than theirs could, but the degree of resistance, according to our Lord’s statement, was less.

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## Creation

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In Westminster Shorter Catechism Q. 8 it is said that “God executes his decrees in the works of creation and providence.” The decree itself, we have seen, as immanent in the divine being, is formed in eternity and is one single act which simultaneously includes all that comes to pass in all space and time. But as emanent and transitive, it passes into execution by a gradual and endless succession of events and phenomena. The two general modes in which the divine decree is executed are creation and providence. It might at first sight seem as if redemption should

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<sup>99</sup> 99. δυνάμεις

constitute a third mode; but theologians have commonly included this under the head of providence, as the special manner in which God provides for the needs of men as sinners.

## Creation *Ex Nihilo*

Creation, in the proper sense of origination *ex nihilo*, is the very first work that God does *ad extra*. Nothing precedes it, except that eternal activity in the divine essence which results in the trinitarian persons. These latter are not creations, but emanations. Hence creation is called “the beginning of God’s way” (Prov. 8:22); and God is said to have created the heaven and earth “in the beginning” (Gen. 1:1). The doctrine of creation is taught in Gen. 1:1; Neh. 9:6; Job 26:3; Ps. 19:1; 104:30; 124:8; 146:6; John 1:3; Acts 17:24; Rom. 11:36; 1 Cor. 8:6; 2 Cor. 4:6; Col. 1:16; Heb. 3:4; 4:4; 11:3. The peculiar characteristic in creation, namely, the origination of entity from nonentity, is mentioned in the following: “The worlds were framed so that things which are seen were not made of things that do appear” (Heb. 11:3); “God commanded the light to shine out of darkness” (2 Cor. 4:6); and “by him were all things created, visible and invisible” (Col. 1:16).

Creation *ex nihilo* is peculiar to the Scriptures. It is not found even in the most rational and spiritual of the ancient cosmogonies. Even when an intelligent architect of the universe is affirmed, as in the systems of Plato and Aristotle, an eternal *hylē*,<sup>1</sup> or chaotic matter, is postulated, out of which it is formed. Philo (*On the World*) takes the same view. In the Platonic writings, God is rather a demiurge than a Creator. Plutarch (*Procreation of the Soul*) describes Plato’s view as follows: “The creation was not out of nothing, but out of matter wanting beauty and perfection, like the rude materials of a house lying first in a confused heap.” Ranke (*Universal History* 1.22) marks the difference between the Mosaic and the Egyptian and Assyrian cosmogonies as ...

an express counterstatement. With the Egyptians and Babylonians, everything is developed from the inherent powers of the sun, the stars, and the p 367 earth itself. Jehovah, on the other hand, appears as the Creator of heaven and earth; as both the originator and the orderer of the world. The conception of a chaos is not excluded, but this conception itself rested on the idea of a previous creation. (See supplement 3.7.1.)

In Scripture, the term *creation* is sometimes employed in a secondary sense: “You send forth your spirit, they are created” (Ps. 104:30); “I create evil” (Isa. 45:7); “the Lord has crated a new thing in the earth” (Jer. 31:22); “create in me a clean heart” (Ps. 51:10); “I create new heavens and a new earth” (Isa. 65:17; Rev. 21:1; and other passages). In these instances, divine agency operating by means of second causes is intended. Creatures are propagated under laws established by the Creator; sin is permitted and controlled by God employing the human will; an extraordinary event in history is brought about by divine providence; the regeneration and sanctification of the human soul is a secondary creation.

Under the head of creation, we have to do only with the primary and strict signification of the term, as denoting origination from nothing: *de nihilo* or *ex nihilo*. The poverty and inadequateness of human language is very apparent in respect to this idea. Words are more or less pictorial in their roots and elements. But the creation of entity from nonentity utterly forbids

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<sup>1</sup> 1. ὕλη

any picturing or imaging. For this reason, more or less of qualification or explanation must be employed, in all languages, in connection with the words that are used to denote this purely abstract and inexplicable conception.

The Hebrew word employed to denote the idea of creation is *bārā*.<sup>2</sup> According to Gesenius (*in voce*) it signifies “(1) to cut, to carve; (2) to form, create, produce; Gen. 2:3 reads *bārā la-āśōt*:<sup>3</sup> which he created in making, that is, which he made in creating something new.” Says Delitzsch (in *Lange’s Commentary* on Gen. 1:1), “*Bārā*,<sup>4</sup> in the Piel signifies to cut, hew, form; but in the Qal,<sup>5</sup> it is employed to denote divine products, new and not previously existing in the sphere of nature and history (Exod. 34:10; Num. 16:30; and frequently in the prophets) or in the sphere of spirit (Ps. 51:10). In the Qal it never denotes human productions and is never used with the accusative of the material.” In Exod. 5:16, *āśā*<sup>6</sup> is used with the accusative of material: “Make brick.” Dillmann (on Gen. 18:21) agrees with Delitzsch. Oehler (*Theology of the Old Testament* 1.169) takes the same view. Dorner (*Christian Doctrine* 2.23) endorses it. The patristic, medieval, and Reformation exegesis adopts this interpretation.

The clause *ex nihilo* is explanatory of the term *creation* and is necessary to define it and guard it from misuse. Unless it be employed, creation may be used to signify evolution or development, which is a wholly different conception. *Ex nihilo* denotes that a created thing is not produced out of existing matter of any kind whatever: “‘Out of’ (*ex*) does not indicate matter but rather excludes it.”<sup>7</sup> Creation of entity from [p 368](#) nonentity is expressed in Rom. 4:17: “God calls those things which be not, as though they were (*ta mē onta hōs onta*).”<sup>8</sup> The same idea is suggested in 2 Cor. 4:6: “God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness.” It is not meant that darkness is the material of which light is made, but the state or condition of things in which light is made to begin by a fiat. Hebrew 11:3, which says that “things which are seen were not made of things that do appear,” teaches that there is an invisible cause for all visibles; and Col. 1:16, which says that “all things visible and invisible” were created (*ektisthē*)<sup>9</sup> by the first

<sup>2</sup> 2. בָּרָא = to create

<sup>3</sup> 3. בָּרָא לַעֲשׂוֹת = to create by making

<sup>4</sup> 4. בָּרָא

<sup>5</sup> 5. The Qal is the simplest pattern of the Hebrew verb. It is used to express the basic meaning of the verb root. The Piel is a Hebrew verb pattern that may also express the basic meaning for some verb roots, though it more usually indicates some intensification of the action. For verbs whose Qal pattern represents a state or condition rather than an action (e.g., “to be heavy”), the Piel will refer to bringing about or making that condition (e.g., “to make heavy”).

<sup>6</sup> 6. עָשָׂה = to make

<sup>7</sup> 7. *ex*, non designat sed excludit materiam

<sup>8</sup> 8. τὰ μὴ ὄντα ὡς ὄντα

<sup>9</sup> 9. ἐκτίσθη

begotten, teaches that God creates the invisible forces of matter, as well as the invisible spirits of angels and men. In the apocryphal 2 Maccabees 7:28 it is said that “God made the heaven and earth of things that are not (*ex ouk ontōn*).”<sup>10</sup> Creation *ex nihilo* has its human analogies. The understanding originates thoughts from nothing; and the will originates volitions from nothing. Thoughts and volitions, however, are not entities or substances, and here the analogy fails. But they are *ex nihilo*. One thought is not made out of another thought; nor is a volition made out of another volition. Here the analogy holds good.

The maxim “nothing comes from nothing”<sup>11</sup> is true in the sense that nothing comes from nothing (a) by finite power, (b) as the material out of which something is produced, and (c) by the mode of emanation, generation, or evolution, because this supposes existing matter. Lucretius (1.151) lays down the position that “nothing ever was brought forth from nothing by divine power.”<sup>12</sup> The reason that he gives why even by divine power (*divinitus*) nothing can be produced from nothing is that in this case there would be no need of a seed or egg and that, consequently, everything might be produced out of everything: men could be originated out of the sea, and fishes and birds out of the earth. Lucretius does not conceive of the seed or egg as created, but as eternal. His reasoning is valid against pseudoevolution or evolution defined as “the transmutation of the homogeneous into the heterogeneous.” Everything may be originated out of everything, upon this theory. The homogeneous vegetable may develop into the heterogeneous animal; the homogeneous animal into the heterogeneous man. And the process may be downward as well as upward, because either process is alike the transmutation of a homogeneous substance into a heterogeneous one. If it were possible by the operation of merely natural law to convert the inorganic mineral into the organic vegetable, it would be possible by the same method to convert the organic vegetable into the inorganic mineral. The rule would work in both ways. As plausible an argument might be constructed out of the deterioration and degradation of some of the human family to prove that man may be evolved downward into an anthropoid ape, as that which has been constructed to prove that he has been evolved upward from one.

Spinoza’s definition of “substance” was intended to exclude the doctrine of creation *ex nihilo*. He defines substance as “that which exists of itself, that is, the conception of which does not require the conception of anything else” (*Ethics* 1.3). But the conception of a creature is the conception of a substance that requires another substance to [p 369](#) account for it. A created substance, consequently, is precluded by Spinoza’s definition of substance. There cannot be any such thing. Descartes had previously defined the absolute and primary substance as “that which so exists that it needs nothing else for its existence”; and Aquinas (1.29.2) so defines a trinitarian subsistence or person. But Descartes added a definition of created or secondary substance as “that which requires the concurrence (*concursum*) of God, for its existence.” Spinoza in his early life made an abstract of Descartes’s philosophy for the use of a pupil (*Concerning the Principles of Rene Descartes’ Philosophy*).<sup>13</sup> His editor, De Meyer, remarks that Spinoza must not be

<sup>10</sup> 10. ἐξ οὐκ ὄντων = from nonexisting things

<sup>11</sup> 11. ex nihilo nihil fit

<sup>12</sup> 12. nullam rem e nihilo gigni divinitus unquam

<sup>13</sup> 13. De principiis philosophiae Renati Descartes.

understood to agree with Descartes and mentions that he rejected Descartes's distinction between intellect and will, but says nothing about the distinction between primary and secondary substance (Bruder's *Spinoza* 1.89). Subsequently, when Spinoza published his own system, he rejected the distinction between primary and secondary substance and gave no definition of any substance but the "one and only substance,"<sup>14</sup> of which everything is a modification. By this begging the question<sup>15</sup> or postulate of one substance only, he excludes created substance and lays the foundation of pantheism.<sup>16</sup> This theory of the universe energetically rejects creation *ex nihilo* and maintains emanation. Fichte says that "the assumption of a creation is the fundamental error of all false metaphysics and philosophy." Hegel explains the universe of matter and spirit as an immanent process of God, a material efflux out from the absolute which is retracted again as immaterial spirit. Strauss expresses the same idea in the statement that "Trinity and creation are, speculatively considered, one and the same thing; only the former is the rational, and the latter the empirical aspect." Kant, on the contrary, asserts that "the proposition that God, as the universal first cause, is the cause of the existence of substance can never be given up without at the same time giving up the notion of God as the being of all beings and thereby giving up his all sufficiency, on which everything in theology depends" (*Practical Reason*, 279 [trans. Abbott]). (See supplement 3.7.2.)

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<sup>14</sup> 14. substantia una et unica

<sup>15</sup> 15. petitio principii

<sup>16</sup> 16. WS: A similar *petitio principii* is seen in von Baer's definition of evolution, adopted by Spencer, as the "transformation [transmutation] of the homogeneous into the heterogeneous." That a homogeneous substance (say, vegetable) can be transmuted into a heterogeneous substance (say, animal or mineral) is the point in dispute, but is quietly assumed in the definition. And, in order to give plausibility to this *petitio*, a false definition of the "homogeneous" is introduced. It is defined as "that which is without organs," the heterogeneous being "that which has organs" (Carpenter, *Physiology*, 888). But the presence or absence of organs is not a mark of a difference in substance, which is what is requisite in order to heterogeneity. Vegetable protoplasm before the differentiation into organs begins is as really vegetable substance as afterward. Animal protoplasm is as really animal matter before the organs appear as after. There is nothing heterogeneous in either instance. Another *petitio principii* of the same kind appears in the agnostic definition of knowledge as "classification." According to this definition, nothing can be known unless it can be brought under a class; and a class implies several individuals of the same species. "The first cause, the infinite, in order to be known must be classed," says Spencer (*First Principles*, 81). But as the infinite is the only one of the species, he cannot be put into a class, and therefore he is utterly unknowable. The point in dispute is whether all knowledge is classification and is quietly assumed by the agnostic in his definition of knowledge. Even in regard to those objects which can be classified, the whole of our knowledge does not consist merely in knowing the class to which they belong. Classification is only one of several elements in cognition.

The maxim “nothing comes from nothing”<sup>17</sup> is false in reference to the supernatural and omnipotent power of God. The Supreme Being p 370 can originate entity from nonentity.<sup>18</sup> The following are the characteristics of creation from nothing:

1. Creation has a beginning. It is not the eternal emanation of an eternal substance or the eternal evolution of an eternal germ. This is taught in Gen. 1:1 by the clause *in the beginning* and in the phrase *before the foundation of the world* frequently employed to denote eternity. Origen held that God is eternally creating; otherwise he would have nothing to do and would be mutable in deciding to create (Schleiermacher, *Dogmatics* 1.197). The *opera ad intra* meet the first objection. The eternal generation and spiration are divine activities prior to the creation of the universe and independent of it. Boethius asserted that God is eternal and that the world is perpetual. Rothe (*Ethics* §40) affirms eternal creation. Defective trinitarian or positively antitrinitarian theories logically tend either to the dogma of an eternal creation or else of emanation in order that the deity may have an object for himself as a subject. True trinitarianism finds this object within the Godhead. God the Son is God the Father’s object. If creation is eternal, the universe is as old as the Creator. It could be said of it, as the Nicenes said of the Son of God: *ouk ēn pote hote ouk ēn*.<sup>19</sup>
2. Creation is optional, not necessary, for God. It proceeds from free will and is expressed by fiat: “He has stretched out the heavens by his discretion” (Jer. 10:2). Emanation is necessary and constitutional, like the generation of the Son and spiration of the Spirit.
3. Creation originates another new substance; but emanation and evolution produce only modifications of an old and existing substance.

The conception of creation from nothing is purely intellectual, like that of a mathematical point, line, or surface. These latter cannot be explained or even illustrated by sensuous images and are held as valid conceptions by a purely rational act of the mind unassisted by sensation. The atheistic mathematician who denies the being of God and creation *ex nihilo*, because he cannot image them, should upon the same principle deny the validity of the mathematical conceptions of a point, line, and surface. Owing to man’s strong propensity to image his knowledge and explain conceptions by a sensuous method, he attempts to account for the universe by postulating an eternal substance of some ethereal kind, out of which it is made. Hence even Plato and Aristotle suppose a *hylē*,<sup>20</sup> which is formed into the cosmos by the supreme architect. Müller (*Literature of Greece*, 87–88) asserts that the idea of creation from nothing is wanting in the Greek conception of the deity and is found in the Eastern nations. But

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<sup>17</sup> 17. ex nihilo nihil fit

<sup>18</sup> 18. WS: On this dogma of creation *ex nihilo*, so vital to theism, ethics, and religion, see Cudworth, *Intellectual System*, chap. 5; Pearson, *On the Creed*, art. 1; Clarke, *Demonstration*, 76; Augustine, *Confessions* 11–12; Ambrose, *Hexaemeron* 2.1–2; Shedd, *History of Doctrine* 1.7–15; *Theological Essays*, 133–35, 154–59.

<sup>19</sup> 19. οὐκ ἦν πότε ὅτε οὐκ ἦν = there was not when he was not

<sup>20</sup> 20. ὕλη = matter

the only Eastern people who had the idea were the Hebrews. The Persian cosmogony is dualistic; and the Indian is pantheistic. "It is," says Augustine (*City of God* 11.2), "a great and very rare thing for a man, after he has contemplated the whole creation, corporeal and incorporeal, and has discerned its mutability, to p371 pass beyond it, and by the continued soaring of his mind to attain to this unchangeable substance of God, and, in that height of contemplation to learn from God himself that none but he made all that is not of the divine essence." Mosheim, in a note to Cudworth (3.140), proves by a survey of ancient philosophy and theology that the doctrine of creation *ex nihilo* is found only in Scripture.

## Creation Account in Genesis

The first verse of Genesis mentions the first of the *opera ad extra* of the triune God, namely, the creation of the present universe. The clause *heaven and earth* denotes all that is not God, namely, the worlds of matter and of finite mind or the sensible and intelligible worlds. "Heaven and earth" means the universe; as when one says of another: "He would move heaven and earth to accomplish his purpose." The sacred writer begins with an all-comprehending proposition: God created all finite beings and things. The same truth is taught in Col. 1:16: "By him were all things created, that are in heaven and that are in earth, visible and invisible." Here, the creation of the universe is referred to the second trinitarian person. A portion of the universe is spiritual in its substance and is denoted by "heaven"; and a portion is physical and is denoted by "earth." The spirits of angels and men constitute the spiritual part of the universe, and matter constitutes the physical part of it. From Job 38:7 it appears that the angels were created before the six days' work, and from Gen. 1:26 that men were created on the sixth day.

This is the old patristic interpretation of Gen. 1:1. Says Augustine (*Confessions* 12.7): "You created heaven and earth: things of two kinds; one near to you, the other near to nothing." By this latter, Augustine means the rarefied matter of chaos. Again (*Confessions* 12.7) he says, "You created heaven and earth; not out of yourself, for so they should have been equal to your only begotten Son, and thereby equal to you also."<sup>21</sup> (See supplement 3.7.3.)

The created universe of mind and matter, denominated "heaven and earth" in Gen. 1:1, is diverse from God, that is, is another substance. It is not God or a part of God, because God created it from nonentity. God and the universe are not one substance, but two substances: one primary and the other secondary, one necessary and the other contingent. God and the universe do not constitute one system of being, but two distinct and different systems; for a system implies that all the parts are of one nature and coequal in dignity and duration. Some theists, like Edwards, for example, under the phrase *being in general*, have unintentionally taught Spinozism. This phrase brings God and the universe into a single system and makes God a part of it.

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<sup>21</sup> 21. WS: See also *City of God* 11.9; *On the Literal Meaning of Genesis* 1.9.15; Gangauf, *Augustinus*, 100. Howe (*Oracles* 2.9) takes the same view, as does Pearson, *On the Creed*, art. 1. Delitzsch (*Old Testament History of Redemption*, 12) says that "the account of the creation begins with an all-comprehending statement (Gen. 1:1). The creation which is here intended is the very first beginning, which was not preceded by any other and hence embraces the heaven of heavens. That which follows in the second verse is confined to the earth and its heavens."

Whatever is really one system of being is a numerical unity and is of one and the same essence. The three trinitarian persons, for example, constitute one system of divine being, and they are numerically one substance. The universe is not infinite, but finite, and therefore cannot belong to the system of the [p 372](#) infinite. The term *infinite* in the proper sense is applicable only to God. For that which is strictly infinite is also eternal and necessary. But neither eternity of being or necessity of being belongs to the “heaven and earth” that was created “in the beginning” of time. The universe is the finite, and God is the infinite (see Howe, *Oracles* 2.9). The universe is unlimited, in distinction from infinite. The unlimited is capable of increase, diminution, and division; the infinite is not. Space, time, and matter are unlimited; they can be added to, subtracted from, and divided. God is infinite and incapable of addition, subtraction, or division. The finite spirit is also unlimited, not infinite. It is capable of increase and diminution; not by addition and subtraction of substance, but by development of latent properties or suppression of them. “World” is sometimes put for “universe.” In this case, “world” denotes all being that is not God. Coleridge’s formula illustrates this: “World minus God = zero. God minus world = reality absolute. The world without God is nonentity. God without the world is, in and of himself, absolute being and infinite perfection” (Marsh, *Remains*, 162). The use of “world” as the antithesis of “God” and the equivalent of “universe” is more common in philosophy than in literature. In literature, “world” more generally denotes a part of the universe. Milton uses the term to denote the visible universe of matter:

How this world  
Of heaven and earth conspicuous first began.  
—*Paradise Lost* 7.62

In Gen. 1:2 Moses proceeds to speak of the first state and condition of the “earth,” in distinction from the “heaven”: “And the earth was without form and void.” He describes the “earth” (excluding the “heaven”) as a mass of chaotic matter which had been created *ex nihilo* in that “beginning” spoken of in the first verse. By the “earth” in the second verse is not meant merely the planet earth, but the whole material system connected with it, both solar and stellar. The ensuing description of God’s work upon that part of the universe called “earth” shows that the sun, moon, and stars belong to it. Says Matthew Henry (on Gen. 1:2):

A chaos was the first matter. It is here called the “earth” (though the earth in the sense of the dry land was not made until the third day), because it did most resemble that which afterward was called earth, mere earth, an unwieldy mass. It is also called the “deep,” both for its vastness and because the waters which were afterward separated from the earth were now mixed with it. This mighty bulk of matter was it, from which all bodies even the firmament and visible heavens were afterward produced by the power of the eternal word.

Between the single comprehensive act of the creation of the angels and of chaotic matter mentioned in Gen. 1:1 and the series of divine acts in the six days described in Gen. 1:3–31, an interval of time elapsed. This is the old patristic interpretation. The very common assertion that the church has altered its exegesis, under the compulsion of modern geology, is one of the errors of ignorance. The doctrine of an immense time prior to the six creative days was a common view among the fathers and Schoolmen. So also was the doctrine of the rarefied and chaotic nature of matter in its first form a patristic tenet. Kant’s gaseous chaos filling [p 373](#) the universe, adopted by La Place and Herschel, was taught, for substance, by Augustine, in the following positions taken in *Confessions* 12.8.1. God created a chaotic matter that was “next to nothing,” that is, the most tenuous and imponderable form of matter. This chaotic matter was made from nothing

“before all days,” that is, in that prior period marked by the words *in the beginning*. This chaotic unformed matter was subsequently formed and arranged in the six days that are spoken of after Gen. 1:1.

Augustine’s exegesis of Gen. 1 is substantially this: In the beginning, that is, in a time prior to the six days, God created *ex nihilo* the angelic world or “the heaven” and chaotic inorganic matter or “the earth.” Then in the six days he formed (not created) chaotic inorganic matter into a cosmic system, solar, stellar, and planetary, and upon the planet earth created (not formed) the organic vegetable, animal, and human species. This was the interpretation generally accepted in the patristic and Middle Ages. Lombard (*Sentences* 2.12) adopts Augustine’s views. David Kimchi, a learned rabbi of the twelfth century, respecting whom the Jews said, “No Kimchi, no understanding of the Scriptures,” explained Gen. 1 in the following manner: “First of all, God created the ‘heaven,’ that is the highest heaven with the angels; then the ‘earth,’ the first appearance and condition of which are described in the second verse and out of which the other creatures are subsequently formed. And it is called without ‘form and void,’ in opposition to heaven; which was immediately carried to its full perfection and replenished with inhabitants” (Witsius, *Apostles’ Creed*, diss. 8).

Respecting the length of the six creative days, speaking generally, for there was some difference of views, the patristic and medieval exegesis makes them to be long periods, not days of twenty-four hours. The latter interpretation has prevailed only in the modern church. Augustine teaches (*On the Literal Meaning of Genesis* 4.27) that the length of the six days is not to be determined by the length of our days. Our seven days, he says, resemble the seven days of the account in Genesis in being a series and in having the vicissitudes of morning and evening, but they are “quite unequal.”<sup>22</sup> In 4.1 he says that it is difficult to say what “day” means. In 5.1 he calls attention to the fact that the “six or seven days may be and are called one day” (Gen. 2:4). In 2.14 he calls the six days “God-divided days,” in distinction from “sun-divided days” (see Lewis, “Genesis” in *Lange’s Commentary*, 131). Gangauf (*Augustine*, 111n) cites numerous passages to the same effect. Anselm (*Cur deus* 1.18) remarks that there was a difference of opinion in his time as to whether the six days of Moses “are to be understood like days of ours” as a successive creation or whether “the whole creation took place at once.” He says it is “the opinion of the majority” that man and angels were created at the same time, because we read: “He who lives forever created all things at once.”

There is nothing in the use of the word *day* by Moses that requires it to be explained as invariably denoting a period of twenty-four hours; but much to forbid it. The following facts prove this: (1) day means daylight in distinction from darkness (Gen. 1:5, 16, 18); (2) day means daylight and darkness together (1:5); and (3) day means the six days together (2:4). The first day (1:5) could not have been measured by the revolution of the sun around the earth because this was not yet visible. The p 374 same variety in signification is seen in the Mosaic use of the word *earth*: (1) the entire material universe (Gen. 1:1); (2) the solar, stellar, and planetary system (1:2); (3) the dry land of the planet earth (1:10); or (4) the whole of the planet earth (1:15, 17). The Ten Commandments were called by the Jews the “ten words.” The term *word* here denotes a truth or proposition, not a single word. Similarly, a period of time having its beginning and ending, its evening and morning, may naturally be called a “day.” (See supplement 3.7.4.)

The seven days of the human week are copies of the seven days of the divine week. The “sun-divided days” are images of the “God-divided days.” This agrees with the biblical

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<sup>22</sup> 22. multum impares (i.e., to our days)

representation generally. The human is the copy of the divine, not the divine of the human. Human fatherhood and sonship are finite copies of the trinitarian fatherhood and sonship. Human justice, benevolence, holiness, mercy, etc., are imitations of corresponding divine qualities. The reason given for man's rest upon the seventh solar day is that God rested upon the seventh creative day (Exod. 20:11). But this does not prove that the divine rest was only twenty-four hours in duration any more than the fact that human sonship is a copy of the divine proves that the latter is sexual.

## Harmony of the Biblical Creation Account with Physical Science

Respecting the harmony between physical science and revelation, it is to be observed in the first place that physical science is not infallible, so that an actual conflict between science and revelation would not necessarily be fatal to revelation. It might be fatal to science. In the seventeenth century the physics of Descartes had great authority, and much was made by the skeptics of that day of the fact that the Mosaic physics did not square with the Cartesian physics. Says Howe (*Oracles* 2.21), "Some are sick of the history of the creation, because they cannot reconcile the literal account thereof, in the beginning of Genesis, with the philosophy of their Descartes: as if his reputation were a thing more studiously to be preserved than that of Moses; though yet, more might be said than has been, to reconcile with natural principles even the whole history of the creation." The "vortices" of the Cartesian physics are today an exploded and rejected "science"; and the most skeptical physicist of this generation would not dream of alleging a conflict between science and religion because Moses does not agree with Descartes.

Again, in the second place, physical science is not one and invariable in its contents. There have been a multitude of scientific theories that cannot be reconciled with each other. The Ptolemaic and the Copernican astronomies are examples. For centuries the Ptolemaic system was undisputed; and the skeptic of those centuries endeavored to show that the Bible did not agree with it, and the believer of those centuries endeavored with equal strenuousness to show that it did (Herschel, *Discourse* §336). Christianity, on the other hand, has had substantial invariability. The differences between Christian believers, even upon the more recondite doctrines, are by no means so great as those between the ancient Greek and the modern Englishman upon the nature and laws of matter. The difference between the Augustinian and the Semipelagian or between the Calvinist and the Arminian is not at all equal to that [p 375](#) between Ptolemy and Copernicus. The doctrines of the Trinity, incarnation, apostasy, the redemption have always constituted the essential substance of the Christian faith. But no such substantial invariability as this appears in the history of physical science. Even, therefore, if it could not be shown that revelation is in harmony with a science that confessedly is not infallible and actually is not invariable, it would not be a very serious matter for revelation. The error might be upon the side of science.

After this preliminary observation, we remark, in the first place, that the biblical physics does not conflict with the heliocentric Copernican theory. Nothing at all is said in the opening of Genesis respecting the motion of the earth in relation to the sun; and the phraseology in other parts of Scripture is popular and to be explained as it is when the modern astronomer himself speaks of the rising and setting of the sun. In the second place, the order of creation as given in Genesis is corroborated by the best settled results of modern physics. The whole field cannot of

course be gone over. Let us test the matter by referring to geology, in respect to which science the conflict has been the most severe.<sup>23</sup>

The now generally accepted facts in geology remarkably coincide with the series of events related in Genesis. The sequence of the creative periods is substantially the same in both. Physical science may be regarded as having established with considerable certainty the following positions: (1) The planet earth, at first, was a chaotic mass in a state of fusion and enveloped in a totally dark atmosphere of vapor. This agrees with the statement in Gen. 1:2: "The earth was without form and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep." (2) By the cooling caused by the radiation of heat, a crust was formed over the molten interior, and the atmospheric vapor was condensed into an ocean of water which covered the superficial crust. This primeval ocean is mentioned in Gen. 1:2: "The Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters." The creative work under these two heads is not a part of the six days' work. It occurred before the first day and belongs to the immense duration between "the beginning" and the six days' work. (3) The condensation of vapor did not make the earth's atmosphere clear and translucent immediately. But in course of time it so cleared it, that the light, which had been generated by the heat, could penetrate it with some obscurity. Light as a luminous haze could now be distinguished from darkness. This agrees with Gen. 1:3-4: God said, "Let there be light; and God divided the light from the darkness."

The appearance of light before the appearance of the sun is one of the strongest proofs that the author of this narrative was instructed upon his point. Such a fact as this must have been revealed to him. Previous to modern physical investigations, this apparent misplacement of light before the sun was regarded as singular by the believer and absurd by the skeptic. The fact, moreover, that the sun and moon did not appear until the fourth day and that the vegetable kingdom was created on the third day and was growing without sun visible in the sky greatly increased the difficulty. But the theory of the modern geologist removes the difficulty and corroborates with Moses. According to geology, there was a long period when the primeval oceans were tepid water, when the [p 376](#) atmosphere was a gloaming and was as moist, warm, and germinating as that of the rainy season in the tropics:

Over all the face of the earth  
Main oceans flowed, not idle, but, with warm  
Prolific humor softening all her globe  
Fermented the great mother to conceive,  
Sate with genial moisture.  
—Milton

The consequence was that rank growth of succulent, fernlike vegetation, of which the coal beds are now the exponent.

As the inorganic process of radiation of heat and condensation of vapors went on, the earth's atmosphere became less and less vaporous and more and more luminous, until the space around the planet assumed the appearance of the empty, hollow arch of heaven. Previously, this space had been so much filled with vapor that no distinction between earth and sky was possible. This formation of the atmospheric welkin or dome is described in Gen. 1:6-8: "And God said, Let there be a firmament [expanse], and let it divide the waters which are under the firmament from

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<sup>23</sup> 23. WS: For a lucid statement of the teachings of geology concerning the order of creation, see Dana, *Creation*.

the waters which are above the firmament. And God called the firmament heaven.” A similar atmospheric process is continually occurring on a smaller scale in the clearing up of a storm or fog. It is described by Shelley in “The Cloud”:

For after the rain, when with never a stain,  
The pavilion of heaven is bare,  
Prolific humor softening all her globe  
The winds and the sunbeams with their convex gleams,  
Build up the blue dome of the air.

By the contact of water with the lava beneath the earth’s crust, steam and gases are generated, causing earthquakes and convulsions which lift the crust, forming the mountain ranges, elevating tablelands, lagoons, and ocean beds. This process having taken place, the planet is fitted to support the first and lowest form of organized matter, namely, the vegetable. Up to this point in the Mosaic account, there is no life of any kind in that part of the created universe designated by the term *earth* in Gen. 1:2. Everything is inorganic and lifeless, and the only forces in operation are mechanical and chemical. Now the plant as a living species, which could not be originated by any of the mechanical and chemical that had previously been in action, is created *ex nihilo*, and the vegetable kingdom is established on earth. Geology finds no evidences of vegetable life in igneous rocks and corroborates the teaching of Moses in Gen. 1:9–12: “And God said, Let the waters under the heavens be gathered together unto one place, and let the dry land appear. And God called the dry land Earth, and the gathering together of the waters called the Seas. And God said, Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb yielding seed, and the fruit tree yielding fruit after its kind.” With this is to be compared 2 Pet. 3:5: “By the word of God, there were heavens from of old and an earth compacted (*synestōsa*)<sup>24</sup> out of water (*ex hydatos*)<sup>25</sup> and amid [p 377](#) (or through) water (*di’ hydatos*)”<sup>26</sup> (Revised Version). This teaching of St. Peter seems to agree with the geological view that earth got its solid consistence “out of” and above the water, by means of the convulsions that lifted it up, and “amid” and under the water, by means of the deposit of rocky strata.

In saying “let the earth bring forth (*dāšā*)<sup>27</sup> grass” (Gen. 1:11), it is not meant that the inorganic earth or mineral develops into the organic vegetable and thus that vegetable life is an evolution from the lifeless clod; because it is also said that God “created every plant of the field before it was in the earth and every herb of the field before it grew” (Gen. 2:5).<sup>28</sup> The words *let*

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<sup>24</sup> 24. συνεστῶσα

<sup>25</sup> 25. ἐξ ὕδατος

<sup>26</sup> 26. δι’ ὕδατος

<sup>27</sup> 27. נִצַּחַ

<sup>28</sup> 28. WS: This is the rendering of the Septuagint, Vulgate, and Authorized Version. But even if that of the Targums, Syriac, Gesenius, and many modern Hebraists, whom the Revised Version follows, be adopted, it still appears from the narrative that there was a time when “no plant of the field was yet in the earth and no herb of the field had yet sprung up.” In this state of things, it is plain that the

*the earth bring forth* mean that the earth furnishes the nonvital material elements that constitute the visible form of a plant, which are vitalized and assimilated by an invisible principle of vegetable life—which invisible principle was a creation *ex nihilo*.<sup>29</sup> The creation of this is the creation of the species vegetable. This interpretation is evidently the true one, not only because it agrees with Gen. 2:5, but because the earth in verse 24 is said to bring forth animals also. If there be no intervening creative energy and the earth is the sole cause, then evolution produces out of the very same lifeless elements both vegetable and animal life. But even the evolutionist has not yet claimed that the animal comes directly from the mineral. The vegetable is the link between the two. The mineral first becomes a vegetable, and then the vegetable becomes an animal, according to the materialistic physics. Our Lord's words in Mark 4:28 explain the words *let the earth bring forth grass*: "The earth brings forth fruit of herself (*automatē*),<sup>30</sup> first the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear." The earth today "brings forth fruit spontaneously of itself" only because of the seed planted in it. And on the third creative day, the earth "brought forth grass spontaneously" only because of the new vegetable species then created by God "before it was in the earth and before it grew" (Gen. 2:5).

The sun and moon now appear in the vault of heaven, that is, in the atmosphere entirely cleared of the primeval vapor. The seasons are now arranged, since the sun can exert its power, and the vegetable world in its higher as well as its lower forms is developed. This agrees with Gen. 1:14–19.

Animal life in the waters and in the air is then created (Gen. 1:20–23). It is acknowledged that marine life is the oldest of all animal life. The coral formations of the Florida reefs are the work of living creatures. Agassiz (*Graham Lectures*, 68) thinks that they are "hundreds of thousands of years old." This distinguished naturalist, in his *Fossil Fishes*, shows that of the vertebrate animals fishes alone existed at first; that amphibious animals came later; and that birds and mammals appeared still later, the lower orders first and the higher afterward. Haeckel p 378 (*Creation* 1.68) concedes that Agassiz has shown this. The fiat "let the waters bring forth" is to be explained like "let the earth bring forth." A specific animal principle is created *ex nihilo*, which builds up out of the vegetable and other elements now in the waters a particular form of fish or bird: "The causality of 'the swarming of the swarm' cannot lie in the water itself" ("Genesis" in *Lange's Commentary*, 171; Philo, *Works* 4.284 [ed. Bohn]).

Animal life on the land is then created: (a) irrational animals and (b) man (Gen. 1:24–31). Geology shows that man is latest in the series.

The six days of Gen. 1 are six creative periods, each having its evening and morning and each one of these marked by a particular manifestation of divine power: some more distinctly than others, but all really so marked. This is indicated in the Hebrew: "There was [an] evening,

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earth could not "bring forth" what was not "in the earth," except by the intervention of a creative act.

<sup>29</sup> 29. WS: Philo (*Questions on Genesis*) so explains: "Moses here (Gen. 2:5) intimates, in enigmatic expressions, the incorporeal species which were created first in accordance with the intellectual nature which those things which are upon the earth perceptible to the outward senses were to imitate."

<sup>30</sup> 30. αὐτομάτη

and there was [a] morning: one day.” The first, second, and fourth days exhibit the Creator operating through those mechanical laws and chemical properties of matter, which he established “in the beginning” spoken of in Gen. 1:1. The effects in these three days are brought about by radiation of heat, condensation of vapor, chemical affinity and repulsion, attraction of cohesion, gravitation, etc. The third, fifth, and sixth days are periods during which life—vegetable, animal, and mental—is originated *ex nihilo* by creative energy. Neither of these forms of life can be accounted for by the operation of those laws and properties of matter which were employed on the first, second, and fourth days. The first, second, and fourth are inorganic days during which nothing vital is originated. The third, fifth, and sixth are organic days during which the vegetable, animal, and rational kingdoms are originated.

The Mosaic record mentions four and perhaps five creative fiats by which the living species in the organic world were originated *ex nihilo*. The first fiat creates the vegetable species (Gen. 1:11–12). The second creates the animal species in its lower forms, namely, fishes, reptiles, and birds (1:20–22). The third creates the animal in the higher forms of the quadruped (1:24–25). The fourth creates man (1:26–28). It is somewhat uncertain whether the bird is included under the same fiat with the fish and reptile because the Hebrew reads, “Let the waters bring forth abundantly the moving creature that has life, and let fowl fly above the earth in the open firmament of heaven” (Revised Version). In this case, the “fowl” are not necessarily the product of the “waters.” The Authorized rendering “and fowl that may fly” represents the “waters” as bringing forth the “fowl.” St. Paul teaches the doctrine of distinct living species when he says, “All flesh is not the same flesh; but there is one kind of flesh of man, another of fishes, and another of birds” (1 Cor. 15:39).

These several fiats establish and fix the limits that separate the vegetable from the animal kingdom and the several species in the animal kingdom from each other. The result of each fiat is distinct from that of the others. The fiat that created the vegetable did not create the fish. The fiat that created the quadruped did not create man. No mere evolution of that which was created by the first fiat will yield that which was created by the second; in other words, no one of these distinct species can be transmuted into another by merely natural causes. The supernatural power of God must intervene in order to account for an absolutely new species. God must say: “Fiat.” The theory of evolution as presented either by Haeckel in its extreme form or by Darwin in its more moderate form unquestionably contradicts the Mosaic physics: “The divine word of power creates not merely a force in general; each [p 379](#) new and distinct creative word introduces a new and distinct principle into the already existing sphere of nature—a principle which hitherto had not been present in it” (*Lange’s Commentary* on Gen. 1:9–13). Agassiz (*Graham Lectures*, 13) comes to the same conclusion from considering the diversities of structure in the kingdom of animal life: “It must be mind acting among these material elements, making them subservient to its purpose, and not the elements themselves working out higher combinations of structure.” (See supplement 3.7.5.)

At the same time, the Mosaic physics does not needlessly multiply the miracle, but admits the evolution of varieties under a species. If but one fiat is intended in Gen. 1:11–12 and no subdivisions are implied under it, then all the innumerable varieties of plants in the vegetable kingdom have been evolved by propagation from one original vegetable principle. Vegetable protoplasm, in this case, has developed into the endless variety of plants. The mention, however, of “kinds” of grass, herb, and tree looks like subdivisions under the general fiat. So, likewise, if only a single fiat without subdivisions is mentioned in 1:20–21, it would not contradict the Mosaic physics to concede that reptiles have developed from fishes and even birds from reptiles.

But the mention of “kinds” (1:21) appears rather to imply subdivisions under the general fiat. Again, if in 1:24–25 but a single fiat without subdivisions is intended by the sacred writer, then the species quadruped originated on the sixth day has developed, under the law of propagation and by the influences of environment, into the innumerable varieties that now fill the earth. The fact, however, that the quadruped is produced “after its kind” would seem to indicate particular creative acts under the general.

While there is this amount of indefiniteness and flexibility in the Mosaic account respecting the breadth of a species, there is the strictest definiteness and inflexibility respecting the fact. While, according to Moses, the vegetable may evolve from the vegetable and the animal from the animal, it would utterly contradict the Mosaic physics to concede that fishes, reptiles, and birds have evolved from the plant or vegetable; that quadrupeds have evolved from fish, reptile, and bird; that man has developed from irrational biped or quadruped. The products of two general fiats cannot be brought under a single one. The species man, originated by a distinct fiat on the sixth day, has developed under the law of propagation and by the influence of environment into the several varieties or races of men. This fiat is distinguished from all the others in that God addresses himself, not the earth or the waters. It is certain, also, that no subdivisions under it are implied, as in the case of the others, because man is not said to have been produced “after his kind.”

This creation and fixedness of species is corroborated by the observations of the physicist. There are botanical and zoological provinces and groups on the globe. Each species has its own center and is propagated from it. Plants, fishes, reptiles, birds, and quadrupeds have their own habitat. The lion is not found in every zone nor the horse. Neither is the pine nor the palm. Man differs in this respect from all other species. He is found in all zones; and this because he has a higher grade of intelligence found in no other species by which he can supplement nature and counteract what is unfavorable or deadly in his environment. He can build a fire—a thing no other animal can do. He can sow and reap grain—which no other animal can do. He can make clothing to protect himself from cold, can build a house, can cook food.

### p 380 **Eternity of Matter vs. Creation *Ex Nihilo***

The first theory antagonistic to creation *ex nihilo* is that of the eternity of matter. One or the other doctrine must be adopted. Something is now and has been from eternity: “The very words *there is nothing* or *there was a time when there was nothing* are self-contradictory. There is that within us which repels the proposition with as full and instantaneous a light, as if it bore evidence against it in the light of its own eternity” (Coleridge, *Friend* in *Works* 2.464). If this “something” is not mind, then it is matter. The objections to the eternity of matter are the following:

1. The idea of matter does not imply absolute perfection. Matter is not the most perfect substance or being that we can conceive of. The idea of matter does not include all kinds of perfection. Rational intelligence is a quality of which matter is destitute. So, also, is free will.
2. The idea of matter does not imply necessary existence. This follows from its not being the absolutely perfect. Matter is contingent being. The supposition of the nonexistence of matter is not in conflict with the proposition that something is from eternity. We could

still suppose the eternal existence of mind and account for the temporal existence of matter as its created product. But the converse is not supposable. For should we suppose the primary nonexistence of mind and its subsequent creation by matter, this would imply that the nonintelligent originates the intelligent, which is as difficult to believe as that nonentity originates entity.

3. The idea of matter does not imply eternal existence, because it does not imply perfection and necessity of existence. The three conceptions stand or fall together.
4. If matter is eternal it must be the first cause; but matter cannot be the first cause since this must be self-moving and perpetually moving. Matter is marked by the force of inertia.<sup>31</sup> It must be moved *ab extra*;<sup>32</sup> and its motion diminishes if not perpetuated *ab extra*.<sup>33</sup> The burden of proof lies upon him who denies this. The Newtonian physics and mathematics are inseparable from one another, and both must stand until they are refuted by a materialistic physics and mathematics. If therefore there was a time when there was nothing but matter, there could be no beginning of motion because there is nothing self-moving; and if there be no beginning of motion there can be no causation. Matter cannot therefore originate anything. Locke (*Understanding* 4.10.10) argues that inert matter, having no self-motion, can no more produce motion than nonentity can produce entity. If, in reply, the materialist should postulate an eternal motion along with an eternal matter, Locke replies that even if his postulate should be conceded matter and material motion could no more produce mind and mental motion or thought and will than nothing could produce something. Incogitative being, he says, cannot originate cogitative being. Matter cannot create p 381 mind. Locke sums up the whole in the following sentence: “If we suppose nothing to be eternal, matter can never begin to be; if we suppose bare matter without motion to be eternal, motion can never begin to be; if we suppose only matter and motion to be eternal, thought can never begin to be.” Says Henry More (*Immortality* 1.7): “If matter as matter had motion, that is, were self-moved, nothing would hold together; but flints, adamant, brass, iron, yea this whole earth would suddenly melt into a thinner substance than the subtle air, or rather, it would never have been condensed together to this consistency we find it.”

That self-motion is the characteristic of mind and that its contrary (*vis inertiae*) is the characteristic of matter has been the historical opinion. Plato (*Phaedo*) maintains that intellect is the only cause, in the strict meaning of the word. Matter is only apparently a cause. A material cause has another cause back of it and so backward indefinitely. We get no real cause until we get to a mind which is self-moved. Here we have real beginning and a true cause. Plato approves of and defends the dictum of Anaxagoras that *nous esti archē tēs kinēseōs*.<sup>34</sup> Berkeley has reproduced this view with great clearness and elegance. Cicero (*Scipio's Dream*) says: “That which is ever moving is eternal; that which communicates to another object a motion which it

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<sup>31</sup> 31. vis inertiae

<sup>32</sup> 32. from the outside

<sup>33</sup> 33. from the outside

<sup>34</sup> 34. νοῦς ἔστι ἀρχή τῆς κίνησεως = mind is the beginning of motion

received elsewhere must necessarily cease to live, as soon as its motion is at an end. The being which is self-moving is the only being that is eternal, because it is never abandoned by its own properties, neither is this self-motion ever at an end.”

Newton’s first axiom in the beginning of his *Principia* is that “every body continues in its state of resting or of moving uniformly in a straight line, except insofar as it, being acted upon by forces, is compelled to change its state.”<sup>35</sup> All matter uniformly remains in *status quo*, either of motion or of rest, unless it is made to change its state by external causes. The entire structure of the historical physics is built upon this foundation. That the distance between motion and rest is as great as between existence and nonexistence has from the first been the dictum of all physics that has a support in mathematics: “Matter has no inherent power, either of beginning to move when at rest, or of arresting its progress when in motion. Its indifference to either state has been expressed by the term *force of inertia*<sup>36</sup> (Turner, *Chemistry*, 1). The recent materialistic physics is anti-Newtonian in denying the *vis inertiae* and in postulating self-motion for matter. “Body and mind,” says Haeckel (*Creation* 2.360), “can in fact never be considered as distinct. As Goethe has clearly expressed it: ‘Matter never can exist and act without mind, and mind never without matter.’ ” The first part of Goethe’s remark is true, but not the last part. Goethe was a Spinozist, and Spinoza asserted one substance with the contradictory properties of thought and extension. Says Maudsley (*Physiology of Mind*, 148), “We must get rid of the notion of matter as inert. Matter is not inert.”

The hypothesis of the eternity of matter has been recently revived in that of molecular motion. This assumes that the ultimate atoms of matter have self-motion. A motive force is inherent in matter per se. p 382 The theorist postulates intrinsic motion along with his molecule. And he must, because he denies that there is any mental or intelligent source of motion. One molecule must impinge upon another molecule by its own motivity or not at all. The doctrine of self-motion is thus applied to atoms of matter. This is carried to its extreme in the so-called natural selection attributed to matter. Haeckel maintains that inorganic matter, by varying its molecular motion, becomes organic matter. Vegetable and animal life result from mechanical changes in dead matter, and these changes are “selected” and self-caused. Haeckel (*Creation* 1.18) quotes with approbation the following from Virchow: “Life is only a complicated kind of mechanics. A part of the sum total of matter emerges, from time to time, out of the usual course of its motions, into special chemico-organic combinations, and after having for a time continued therein, returns again to general modes of inorganic action.” Here, both self-motion and choice are ascribed to inorganic matter. Certain molecules, by their own election, pass or “emerge” from one kind of motion into a different kind and then go back or “return” to the first kind. Darwin confines this theory to organic matter. Only living protoplasm can effect such changes by its own motivity. Natural selection, according to him, is restricted to the molecules of living matter. A primitive protoplasm being supposed, all the varieties of vegetable, animal, and rational life can then be accounted for by natural selection—that is, by protoplasmic molecules altering their own motion. Huxley goes further and contends that the organic sprang from the inorganic: “What are called second causes produce all the phenomena of the universe” (*Man’s Place in Nature*, essay 2). (See supplement 3.7.6.)

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<sup>35</sup> 35. Corpus omne perseverare in statu quo quiescendi vel movendi uniformiter in directum, nisi quatenus illud, a viribus impressis, cogitur statum suum mutare.

<sup>36</sup> 36. vis inertiae

Upon the theory of Haeckel and Huxley, there is no need of an intelligent and personal mind in order to account for the phenomena of the universe.<sup>37</sup> Self-motion and natural selection in the molecules of matter are sufficient to explain all. The difference in the direction and velocity with which molecules choose to move is the key. When molecules elect to move in one way, the product is a mineral—inorganic and lifeless. When they elect to move in another way, the product is a vegetable; in still another way is an animal; in still another way is a human soul. “The soul of man,” says Haeckel (*Creation* 1.179, 237), “just like the soul of animals, is a purely mechanical activity, the sum of the molecular phenomena of motion in the particles of the brain. The will is the habit of molecular motion. The will is never free. It depends upon the material processes in the nervous system.”

Lamarck, in his 1809 *Zoological Philosophy*, anticipated this theory in these terms:

All the phenomena of life depend upon mechanical, physical, and chemical causes which are inherent in the nature of matter itself. The simplest animals and the simplest plants, which stand at the lowest point on the scale of organization, have originated, and still do, by spontaneous generation. All animate natural bodies or organisms are subject to the same laws as inanimate natural bodies. The ideas and activities of the understanding are the motional phenomena of the central nervous system. The will is in truth never free. Reason is only a higher degree of the development and combination of [senuous] judgments. p 383

Lamarck’s opinion that *infusoria* are vegetable and not animal was refuted by Ehrenberg and Spallanzani, the eminent microscopists (Kirby, *On Animals*, 80–81). Lamarck, however, extended the theory no further than Darwin does. He derived organized beings from the microscopically organic, not from the inorganic. In so doing, he is inconsistent with his theory that “all the phenomena of life depend upon the mechanical, physical, and chemical causes which are inherent in the nature of matter.”

As we have before remarked, the materialistic physics is anti-Newtonian. If it be the truth, the physics of the *Principia*, of Copernicus and Kepler, is exploded. Matter has the properties of mind, namely, self-motion and self-direction. If the molecular force, in the words of Virchow, “emerges out of the usual course of its motion into special chemico-organic combinations and, after having for a time continued therein, returns again to the general modes of inorganic motion,” this is a self-motion and self-direction as real as any act of the human will. And what is still more important than this antihistorical attitude, this physics has and can have no mathematics to support it. It is wholly disconnected from calculus. Yet it ought to have a mathematical basis, if it be indeed true that vital and voluntary forces are mechanical. Whatever is mechanical is subject to laws that can be expressed mathematically. But no vital or voluntary force can be formulated algebraically. The vital action of a plant or an animal, the volitions of the human will, the feelings of the human heart, the thoughts of the human intellect cannot like the fall of an apple or the rise of a fluid in a vacuum be expressed in mathematical terms. The

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<sup>37</sup> 37. WS: Darwin’s theory of evolution requires a Creator to account for the primitive protoplasm, though no Creator subsequently.

absence of a mathematics for the materialistic physics demonstrates its spuriousness.<sup>38</sup> (See supplement 3.7.7.)

The first objection to this theory is that mechanical motion obeys an invariable law and is incompatible with such varieties of motion as the theory requires. All observation shows that a material force left to itself never varies in any particular. Gravity never alters its direction, sidewise or upward. It is forever downward. And it never alters the rate of its velocity. Matter is marked in its motion by fixed necessity and immutability. To attribute a power of selection and of variability to it is to introduce imagination into science. The materialistic physics is as fanciful as that of the Middle Ages, which explained phenomena by the action of fairies and spirits. What is the difference between saying that a molecule moves of itself and “selects” the velocity and direction of its own motion and saying that the molecules of a gas rise and float on a sylph of the air and those of a mineral fall and sink in a gnome of the mine. The machinery of the Haeckel-Huxley physics is as fanciful as that of Pope’s *Rape of the Lock*.<sup>39</sup> p 384

Theorists of this school feel the difficulty and invent expedients for explaining how “selected” changes and varieties can occur within an immutable sphere like that of matter. Strauss, for example (*Old and New Faith*, 199), suggests that an adequate cause for such peculiar modes of motion among atoms “might exist in the conditions, the temperature, the atmospheric combinations of primeval times, so utterly different from ours.” But these themselves are all material causes. “Atmospheric combinations” are combinations of molecules, and why the “primeval” combinations should be “so utterly different from ours” is one of the difficulties to be explained and cannot therefore be introduced to explain a difficulty.

Another objection to the theory that explains all phenomena by matter and mechanical motion is that material motion is not perpetual. It gradually and surely exhausts itself. If observation and experiment have settled anything in physics, it is that the perpetual motion of matter by reason of a force inherent in matter is impossible. Friction finally brings moving matter to a rest. It may require millions of years to do it, but it will certainly be done. The motion of the bodies in the solar system approaches as nearly as anything does to perpetual motion. But the planets, says Newton, are marked by certain “small irregularities which appear to come from the

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<sup>38</sup> 38. WS: “The progress of science is incalculably promoted by the existence of a body of men, trained to the study of the higher mathematics, who are prepared when an abstruse theory comes before the world to appreciate its evidence, to take steady hold of its principles, to pursue its calculations, and to convert it into a portion of the permanent science of the world” (Whewell, *Inductive Sciences* 2.130). Pseudoevolution has had no endorsement of this kind.

<sup>39</sup> 39. WS: The theory that thought is nothing but cerebation and that all mental phenomena result from the motion of the molecules of the brain was taught in the University of Laputa, according to Swift. Among the various methods of instruction employed in that wonderful institution, Lemuel Gulliver mentions the following: “I was at the mathematical school, where the master taught his pupils after a method scarce imaginable to us in Europe. The proposition and demonstration were fairly written on a thin wafer, with ink composed of a cephalic tincture. This, the student was to swallow upon a fasting stomach, and for three days following eat nothing but bread and water. As the wafer digested, the tincture mounted to his brain, bearing the proposition along with it” (*Gulliver’s Travels*, 5).

mutual action of the planets and comets and which will probably become greater and greater in the course of time, until at last the system will again require its author to put it in order” (“Solar System” in *Penny Cyclopaedia*; Whewell, *Astronomy and Physics* 2.7–12). It is true that these irregularities caused by planetary and cometary attraction are very slight, because the great attraction of the vast mass of the sun overmasters and nullifies to a great extent. Still there is a disturbing element after all. Lagrange and Poisson have mathematically demonstrated the great stability of the solar system, but not its endless immutability (*Foreign Quarterly Review* 3.138). (See supplement 3.7.8.)

But this is not the whole difficulty. There is a positive resistance to the motion of the heavenly masses from the medium through which they pass. If this medium were as dense as atmospheric air, the motion would soon come to an end, unless reinforced *ab extra*.<sup>40</sup> It is not atmospheric air, but the so-called ether. Says a writer in the *Penny Cyclopaedia* (“Solar System”):

It has become highly probable that an external cause does exist which must, unless there be a counteracting force of which we know nothing, in time cause the destruction of the solar system. If the planets move in any medium which resists these motions, however little, the consequence must be a gradual diminution of their mean distances from the sun, and a gradual increase of their velocities, ending in their absolutely falling into the sun.<sup>41</sup> p 385

The doctrine of the “correlation of forces” does not relieve the difficulty, in respect to perpetual motion. The forces of nature may be correlated to each other, that is, convertible into one another, and yet be diminishing in amount. That all material forces may be found, ultimately, to be but one material force, is not incredible. Physical investigations tend to this view. But this fact, even if established, would not prove that the sum total of this one material force is suffering no loss from millennium to millennium. Five forms of anything might be demonstrated to be but one and the same thing, but this would not prove anything respecting the quantity of being at any one time in this thing. This fact seems to be seen by the theorist, and an attempt is made to conceal it by calling the “correlation of forces,” the “conservation of force,” or energy. Conservation is a different conception from correlation and a stronger term. The “conservation of energy” may mean that in the transmutation of one force into another the whole of the primary form is conserved in the second form; or it may mean that only a part of it is conserved. Which of the two is the fact is the question in dispute.

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<sup>40</sup> 40. from the outside

<sup>41</sup> 41. WS: The following facts go to prove the comparatively recent origin of the solar system. (1) The earth is cooling slowly, yet at such a rate as to make it impossible that it should have existed many millions of years. It would have been stone cold clear through, in that case. (2) There is reason to believe that the earth is not rotating on her axis with the same rapidity as in former ages, and inasmuch as her shape would have been different if, at the same time she was in a molten state, she had been rotating more rapidly than now, it follows that she has not been rotating so long as has been supposed. (3) The sun is parting with caloric at such a rate as to make it certain that it could not have continued to radiate heat at the same rate for more than a few millions of years. (4) The changes in the earth’s crust, stupendous and varied as they are, could be and probably were accomplished in shorter periods than some geologists consider possible (*Quarterly Review* 1876).

The “correlation of forces” really amounts only to the analysis of force. Whether the sum total of material force in the universe be greater or smaller cannot be determined unless the analysis demonstrates that the quantity remains unchanged under all the different forms which material force assumes. The motion of a cannonball is preceded by a certain amount of heat from ignited gunpowder and is followed by a certain amount of heat in the iron plate which it strikes. But no experiment thus far made has demonstrated that the amount of heat is mathematically the same in the second instance that it was in the first, that the heat in the iron plate is exactly equal to the heat in the gunpowder. Heat is converted into motion, and motion reconverted into heat. Here is correlation of forces. One force is convertible into another. And here also is conservation of force. But how much conservation is the question. How much of the heat in the powder is conserved in the heat of the iron plate remains to be shown. Before we can say that there has been absolutely no loss of material force in these transmutations, it must be demonstrated mathematically. No experiment is nice or delicate enough to establish it. At this point calculus should come in, as it always has in the historical physics at points when sensible experiments fail.<sup>42</sup> But, as yet, there is no mathematics for the new physics. A German investigator, Clausius, claims to have proved mathematically that motion when converted into heat is a mathematical equivalent, but that heat when converted into motion is not. There is, he says, some loss of motion in every instance in which heat is converted into motion. The final result, consequently, if there is no interference *ab extra*,<sup>43</sup> will be that motion will gradually diminish in the universe and finally cease; and heat or temperature will be uniform (Gardiner, *Bibliotheca sacra*, Jan. 1881).

This lack of demonstration is acknowledged by Balfour Stewart. He remarks (*Conservation of Energy*, 8) that [p 386](#)

we have the strongest possible evidence for the assertion, that all the various energies in the universe are a constant quantity, which the nature of the case admits. The assertion is, in truth, a peculiar one; peculiar in its magnitude, in its universality, in the subtle nature of the agents with which it deals. If true, its truth certainly cannot be proved after the manner in which we prove a proposition in Euclid. Nor does it admit a proof so rigid as that of the somewhat analogous principle of the conservation of matter; for in chemistry we may confine the products of our chemical combination so as to completely prove, beyond a doubt, that no heavy matter passes out of existence.

Stewart then gives some indirect proofs which, he contends, make the position probable.

Another objection to the theory that mechanical and vital forces are identical is the fact that mechanical forces never originate varieties, while the vegetable and animal kingdoms are full of them. In inorganic nature, there is no deviation from the typical form. Crystals are rigorously confined to their order. No new varieties arise. Gold and copper always crystallize in a cube; bismuth and antimony in a hexagon; iodine and sulfur in a rhomb. But flowers are not thus rigorously confined to their type. A white flower, in some individuals, shows a reddish tint. This is a so-called accidental variety. If seeds be taken from it, its offspring will be redder yet. In this

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<sup>42</sup> 42. WS: It is claimed that the same amount of heat produced by the combustion of the carbon in a man’s dinner would be produced by the same amount of carbon if burnt out of the body. But no experiment has proved that the vital heat in this instance is equivalent mathematically to the chemical heat or that the two are identical in kind. Cf. Cooke, *Credentials of Science*, 172–73.

<sup>43</sup> 43. from the outside

way, a new variety is artificially produced. But this cannot be done with a crystal. The geometrical form here is produced by a mechanical and inorganic, not a vital force; and it is unchangeable. There is no “accidental variety” of a crystal. No such alterations of typical form can be artificially produced in this inorganic province. A crystal can be produced artificially by chemical action, as well as by the natural action of mechanical forces. But in this case too, there can be no variation from the type. This proves a difference in kind between the inorganic and organic; the chemical and the vital.

A fourth objection to the hypothesis of the variation of mechanical motion is found in the immutability of the molecule. Maxwell, professor of Physics at Cambridge, in an address before the British Association, remarked as follows:

A molecule of hydrogen, whether on earth, in Sirius or Arcturus, executes its vibrations in the same time. No theory of evolution can be formed to account for this identity of molecules; for evolution implies continual change, and the molecule is incapable of growth or decay, of generation or destruction. None of the processes of nature have produced the slightest difference in the properties of any molecule. We are, therefore, unable to ascribe either the existence of the molecules, or the identity of their properties, to any of the causes we call natural. On the other hand, the exact equality of each molecule to all others of the same kind gives it, as John Herschel has well said, the essential character of a manufactured article and precludes the notion of its being eternal and self-existent. Though in the course of ages catastrophes have occurred, and may yet occur, in the heavens; though ancient systems may be dissolved, and new ones constructed out of their ruins, the molecules out of which these systems are built, the foundation stones of the material universe, remain unbroken and unworn. They continue this day as they were created, perfect in number, and measure, and weight; and from the ineffaceable characters impressed upon them, we may learn that those aspirations after accuracy in measurement, and justice in action, which we reckon among our noblest attributes as men, are ours because they are the essential p 387 qualities of him who, in the beginning created not only the heaven and earth, but the materials of which heaven and earth consist.

## Theory of Evolution vs. Creation *Ex Nihilo*

The second theory antagonistic to the doctrine of creation *ex nihilo* is that of pseudoevolution. There is a true and a false theory of evolution. The former defines evolution to be simply “the transformation of the homogeneous”; the latter defines it to be the “transformation [transmutation] of the homogeneous into the heterogeneous.” This is Spencer’s definition adopted from von Baer. The two definitions and the two theories are direct contraries and contradictories. Evolution in the historical physics of Linnaeus, Cuvier, Hunter, Blumenbach, and Agassiz wholly excludes the heterogeneous. It is the same substance in kind under new forms. A vegetable seed evolves or develops into a root and stalk; but the root and stalk are still vegetable. They are still homogeneous with the seed. A vegetable bud, again, becomes a flower, and the flower becomes fruit; but both flower and fruit are still homogeneous with the vegetable substance of the bud; they are vegetable. If anything mineral or animal, anything heterogeneous, should appear in this evolution of the seed and the bud, this would prove that it was no evolution. But pseudoevolution postulates what true evolution denies, namely, that homogeneous substance transmutes itself into heterogeneous. It asserts that a homogeneous mineral, by intrinsic force, slowly, by infinitesimal degrees, converts itself into a

heterogeneous vegetable. Evolution is thus not a mere change of form, but of matter. As this assertion is not supported by proof, it is surreptitiously introduced into a preliminary definition which the opposing party is expected to accept. But this is begging the question in dispute. The question is whether homogeneous substance ever does or can change itself into heterogeneous substance (Shedd, *Theological Essays*, 133–37, 154–67). (See supplement 3.7.9.)

According to this theory of evolution, all the kingdoms of nature issue out of each other without any intervening creative agency. The fiats in the Mosaic account are denied. The homogeneous mineral develops into the heterogeneous vegetable; the homogeneous vegetable into the heterogeneous animal; the homogeneous animal into the heterogeneous man. The doctrine is applied through the entire scale of existence. Vegetable life issues from the lifeless mineral. Sentient and conscious life evolves from the insentient and unconscious plant. Rational and moral life develops from an animal and brutal life that is utterly destitute of reason and morality. This accounts for and explains the universe of being. In each of these instances, the homogeneous substance is transmuted into the heterogeneous by purely material laws and causes. There is no rational act of an intelligent and personal Creator when the animal kingdom supervenes upon the vegetable or when the rational kingdom supervenes upon the animal. Impersonal, unintelligent, and unconscious evolution accounts for all varieties of being.

Several methods of explanation have been proposed. Lamarck explained by habit. The giraffe at first had a short neck. The habit of reaching up for the leaves of trees when the grass failed lengthened the neck. The frog's foot and that of the goose was at first without web. The attempt to swim finally produced it. When the long neck and the p 388 webfoot were thus produced, they were propagated, and a new species was the result. St. Hilaire explained by circumstances. Somehow or other the atmosphere lost carbon, and the proportion of oxygen was increased. This made the breathing quicker; this heated the blood; this made the nerves and muscles more active; this changed the scales of reptiles into feathers; and thus the reptile was transformed into the bird. This scheme, just now, is revived in that of "creation by environment."

The first objection to the theory of pseudoevolution is that it is contradicted by the whole course of scientific observation and experiment. It is a theory in the face of the facts. "Darwinism," says Agassiz (*On Classification*), "is an *a priori* conception" and "a burlesque of facts." It "shuts out almost the whole mass of acquired knowledge, in order to retain and use only that which may serve its purpose." Quatrefages (*Human Species* 1.1) asserts that

to attempt, under any pretext whatever, to confound the inorganic with the organic, is to go in direct opposition to all the progress made for more than a century, and especially during the last few years, in physics, chemistry, and physiology. It is inexplicable to me that some men, whose merits I otherwise acknowledge, should have recently again compared crystals to the simplest living forms: to the sarcodic organisms, as they are called by Du Jardin who discovered them. A change of name is useless; the things remain the same, and protoplasm has the same properties as sarcode. The animals whose entire substance they seem to form have not altered their nature; whether monera or amoebas, these forms are the antipodes of the crystal from every point of view.

"No conceivable combinations," says Roget (*Physiology* 2.582), "of mechanical or of chemical powers bear the slightest resemblance or the most remote analogy to organic reproduction or can afford the least clue to the solution of this dark enigma" (*Foreign Quarterly Review* 3.189–96).

No naturalist has ever discovered an instance of the transmutation of species. Varieties under a species have been seen to be changed into other varieties. Darwin shows how pigeons may be made to vary from pigeons, but not how pigeons can be evolved into the horse. No observer has

furnished even a scintilla of proof that the vital develops from the nonvital. It is an axiom older than Aristotle and always accepted in the historical physics that “every animal comes from an egg.”<sup>44</sup> Life supposes life. The living individual issues only from the living germ. A material molecule never transmutes itself into a vegetable germ. A mustard seed is never changed into the egg of animal life. A grain of wheat may be kept in a mummy for three thousand years, and upon being cast into the ground it will begin to sprout. A true evolution of this vegetable seed immediately begins. But no natural or artificial force can cause a diamond to bud and blossom, can transmute this homogeneous mineral into a heterogeneous vegetable. The vast geological ages which the theorist brings in do not help his theory. A force of nature is no stronger in a million years than it is in a hundred. What gravitation cannot do in a century it cannot do in a hundred centuries. A mechanical force is fixed. It does not increase with the lapse of time. Rousseau (*Dictionnaire botanique*) thus speaks of the *nouvelle physique* of his day, which confounded the mineral, vegetable, and animal kingdoms and maintained p 389 that “minerals live, and vegetables feel”: “I have often seen a tree die which before had been full of life; but the death of a stone is an idea that would never enter my mind. I see exquisite feeling in a dog, but never saw it in a cabbage. The paradoxes of Jean-Jacques are very celebrated, but I never advanced anything so absurd as this.” (See supplement 3.7.10.)

The experimental and scientific evidence for the transmutation of substance is so deficient that only enthusiasts like Haeckel, Huxley, and Maudsley venture to maintain the evolution of the organic from the inorganic. Darwin confines the transmutation of substance to the organic world. He postulates life, primarily given by the Creator. “I imagine,” he says in phraseology that is curiously unscientific: “I imagine that probably all organic beings that ever lived on this earth descended from some primitive form, which was first called into being by the Creator.” In the *Origin of Species* (577) he speaks of “the breathing of life, by the Creator, into a few forms, or into one.” He does not assert that the mollusk can be developed from inorganic molecules; though he maintains that man may be evolved from the mollusk. While he bridges by evolution the chasm between the oyster and man, he lets it stand between the mineral and the oyster. His work upon insectivorous animals looks like an attempt to prove that animal life can be developed from vegetable, but he makes no distinct statement to this effect.

That this spurious theory of evolution is contradicted by the general course of physical experiment and observation is proved by its failure to obtain general currency. Lamarck did not supersede Linnaeus. Eminent microscopists like Ehrenberg and Spallanzani demonstrated that the infusoria which Lamarck asserted to be vegetable were animal (Kirby, *On Animals* 1.4). St. Hilaire made no impression upon the established zoology of Cuvier, so that to this day French physics is even more unanimous than either German or English in affirming an impassable limit between the kingdoms of nature. In Germany, Kepler, Leibnitz, Kant, Haller, and Blumenbach are greater names in physical science than Goethe, Oken, Haeckel, and Büchner. In England, the physics of Newton, Linnaeus, Hunter, Cuvier, Faraday, Whewell, Herschel, Agassiz, Guyot, and Dana influences the educated and disciplined intellect of the nation far more than do the speculations of Darwin, Huxley, and Tyndall. Haeckel (*Creation* 1.34) mentions it as a discouraging sign that the views of Linnaeus, Cuvier, and Agassiz are adopted by “the great majority of both scientific and unscientific men” and that “the majority of French naturalists are the blind followers of Cuvier.” He adds that “in no country has Darwin’s doctrine had so little effect as in France.”

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<sup>44</sup> 44. omne animal ex ovo est

The opinions of Kant are entitled to great respect, for he began his remarkable philosophical career with the metaphysics of mathematics. He investigated inorganic nature before he investigated mind, and his attitude is firm in reference to theism and the doctrine of creation *ex nihilo*. In his *Critique of the Judgment* (§§74–79), while maintaining that the inorganic world is explainable by mechanical forces and laws, he is explicit in saying that these forces and laws themselves have a teleological character. They imply a designing mind beyond them. He holds that theism and creation *ex nihilo* are the truth and rejects the hylozoism of Spinoza and of atheism. Respecting the possibility of the evolution of the organic from the inorganic, he remarks that “it is absurd even to think of explaining organized creatures and their potentialities by purely mechanical principles, or to expect that a Newton will one day p 390 arise who will be able to explain the production of a blade of grass, according to a law ordained by no designing intelligence.” “Give me,” he said, “inorganic matter, and I will explain the formation of an inorganic world.” But he denied that it can be said, “Give me inorganic matter, and I will explain the production of a caterpillar” (this latter remark is quoted by Strauss, *Old Faith*, 196). (See supplement 3.7.11.)

Physical science can perhaps explain the formation of the solar system by the nebular hypothesis, but not the creation of it. For this hypothesis supposes a nebulous matter with its inherent force of gravity and other forces to be already in existence. Unless this postulate of fire mist and the attraction of gravitation, cohesion, etc., is granted, it cannot account for the solar system. The question immediately arises: “Whence is this fire mist with its properties?” If this is the origin of the solar system, what is the origin of this origin? If this is the explanation of the material universe, what is the explanation of this explanation? The nebular hypothesis may be a correct generalization from observed facts and have its place in the system of physics, but it cannot be a substitute for the first cause. The words of Whewell, respecting the nebular hypothesis, are true and forcible:

Let it be supposed that the point to which this hypothesis leads us is the ultimate point of physical science; that the farthest glimpse we can obtain of the material universe by our natural faculties, shows it to us as occupied by a boundless abyss of luminous matter; still we ask, how space came to be thus occupied, how matter came to be thus luminous? If we establish by physical proofs that the first fact that can be traced in the history of the world is that “there was light,” we shall still be led, even by our natural reason, to suppose that before this could occur, “God said, Let there be light.” (*Astronomy and General Physics* 2.7)

Since there is no proof of the theory of pseudoevolution from the past results of scientific inquiry, its advocates when called upon for the demonstration betake themselves either to an *a priori* method or else to prophecy. Haeckel, for example (*Creation* 1.169), replies in the following manner to the assertion of the opponent that the theory is a hypothesis which is yet to be proved: “That this assertion is completely unfounded may be perceived even from the outlines of the doctrine of selection.” But the “outlines of a doctrine” are the doctrine itself; and the doctrine itself cannot be the proof of the doctrine unless it be *a priori* and axiomatic in its nature. And this characteristic Haeckel actually claims for his theory of evolution in the following terms: “The origin of new species by natural selection, by the interaction of inheritance and adaptation, is a mathematical necessity of nature which needs no further proof. Whoever, in spite of the present state of our knowledge, still seeks for proofs of the theory of selection, only shows that he does not thoroughly understand the theory.” Haeckel, here, makes short work with the whole subject, by claiming an *a priori* necessity for the theory of pseudoevolution. Of course, if this be so, experiment and observed facts are not to be demanded. But such a claim for a science that

professes to rest upon experiment and observation and not upon *a priori* grounds is of a piece with Haeckel's assertion (*Creation*, 2) that *a posteriori* knowledge, by means of use and habit, can be transmuted into *a priori* knowledge; in other words, that a truth of experience becomes p 391 axiomatic when the experience is long continued—a notion similar to that mentioned by Coleridge “that a weathercock may form a habit of turning to the east, from the wind having been a long time in that quarter” (*Works* 3.227).

Respecting spontaneous generation, Haeckel (*Creation* 1.340–41) remarks that

experiments on autogeny have furnished no certain and positive results. Yet we must protest against the notion that these experiments have proved the impossibility of spontaneous generation. The impossibility of such a process can, in fact, never be proved. For how can we know that in remote primeval times there did not exist conditions quite different from those at present obtaining, which may have rendered spontaneous generation possible?

By such reasoning as this, any hypothesis whatever may be proved. Haeckel (*Creation* 1.335) explains vital growth by chemical action thus: “A crystal grows by the apposition of particle upon particle; a plant grows by the intussusception of particle into particle. The fluidity of the albuminous carbon, in the instance of the plant, permits this penetration, so that the addition is not mere accretion upon the outside or addition of surface to surface.” But why does a chemical force act so differently from a vital one? A salt in solution is as much a fluid as the albumen; but it yields a crystal instead of a plant. If the chemical and the vital are really one and the same mechanical force, why this diversity? A really mechanical force acts in only one way. The force of gravity does not sometimes lift bodies and sometimes cause them to fall.

As an example of the employment of prophecy in support of the theory of pseudoevolution, consider the following remark of Haeckel (*Creation* 1.32) respecting the production of albumen by a chemical process—thus far found to be impossible: “At some future time, we shall succeed in discovering, in the composition of albuminous matter, certain molecular relations as the remoter causes of these phenomena of life.” There is no logic against prophecy. Seers and soothsayers have an advantage over ordinary investigators, who have nothing but their understandings to work with.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> 45. WS: The hopefulness of the evolutionist is expressed in the words of Wagner in the second part of Goethe's *Faust*, act 2:

Look yonder! see the flashes from the hearth!  
Hope for the world dawns there, that, having laid  
The stuff together of which man is made,  
The hundredfold ingredients mixing, blending,  
(For upon mixture is the whole depending),  
If then in a retort we slowly mull it,  
Next to a philosophic temper dull it,  
Distil and redistil, at leisure thin it,

Second, the examples adduced by the advocate of pseudoevolution do not prove that species develops from species, but only that varieties p 392 develop from species—which no one denies.<sup>46</sup> Haeckel shows that many varieties of sponges spring from the one species *Olythrus*. But the difference between sponge and sponge is not the same as that between mineral and plant or between plant and animal. When one kind of sponge is transformed into another kind of sponge, this is not the transmutation of a homogenous substance into a heterogeneous. This does not answer to Spencer's definition of evolution, if the definition is to be taken as it reads. If the sponge should develop into the rose, or the rose into the worm, this would answer the definition. But nothing approaching to such a mortal leap as this is seen in nature. Darwin makes it seem probable that all varieties of pigeons may have sprung from one original pair of pigeons—say the blue rock pigeon; but this does not prove that the pigeon sprang from a fish, still less from a cabbage, and still less from a bit of granite.

Virchow, in an address at Munich, said that two doctrines are not yet proved, but are hypotheses still: (1) spontaneous generation of living from inorganic matter and (2) the descent of man from some nonhuman vertebrate animal. We may expect, he says, that these will hereafter be proved, but meanwhile must not teach them as scientific facts (*Nineteenth Century*, April 1878). Gray, though accepting the Darwinian theory of evolution as “fairly probable,” asserts that it is a “complex and loose hypothesis, less probable than the nebular hypothesis or the kinetic theory of gases” (*New York Times*, 6–7 Feb. 1880).

Third, if the doctrine of pseudoevolution be true, it should be supported, like that of gravitation, by a multitude of undisputed facts and phenomena. A law of nature—and this kind of evolution is claimed to be such, even the law of laws<sup>47</sup>—is a uniform and universal thing. The

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All will come right, in silence, to a minute.

*Turning again to the hearth.*

'Tis forming—every second brings it nearer—

And my conviction becomes stronger, clearer.

What nature veils in mystery, I expect

Through the plain understanding to effect;

What was organization will at last

Be with the art of making crystals classed.

<sup>46</sup> 46. WS: The loose use of the term *species* covers up much sophistical reasoning of the evolutionists. Quatrefages (*Human Species*, 96) says: “Darwin has formed no clear conception of the sense which he gave to the word *species*; I have been unable to find in any of his works a single precise statement on this point.” Darwin remarks that “it seems probable that allied species are descended from a common ancestor.” The connection in which this is said shows that by “allied species” he means only varieties of pigeons, dogs, etc.

<sup>47</sup> 47. *lex legum*

hypothesis of gravitation is not supported by a few doubtful and disputed facts, like those which are cited in proof of spontaneous generation. If there were really such a transition by development from the inorganic to the organic, from the vegetable to the animal, and from the animal to the rational, as is asserted, the process ought to be going on all the time and all around us in nature and before the eyes of everyone. A real and actual law of nature cannot be put under a bushel. The theorist should have millions of examples to show. But as yet he has not a single example. Darwin's pigeons, after all his efforts to transform them into another species, are pigeons still. Said Ambrose (*Hexaemeron* 3.10), "When wheat degenerates, it does not cease to be wheat; there is no alteration of species: 'It would seem that it ought to be attributed to a certain degeneration of the seed, not to a transformation of kind.'"<sup>48</sup>

Fourth, the well-known fact that hybrids between real species are infertile proves that there is no transmutation of species. A hybrid is an artificial, not a natural product. When man attempts to originate a new species by crossing breeds, as in the case of the horse and ass, he is working against nature and fails. "Domestication," says Agassiz (*Animal Life*, 51), "never produces forms which are self-perpetuating and is therefore p 393 in no way an index of the process by which species are produced." Quatrefages (*Human Species* 1.6–9) takes the same view. Haeckel (*Creation* 1.45) mentions as hybrids that can be propagated some between hares and rabbits and between different varieties of dog. Also of plants the willow, the thistle, and the mullein, he says, are hybrids. But hares and rabbits are varieties of the same species; and, as Macbeth says, "Hounds and greyhounds, mongrels, spaniels, curs, shoughs, waterrugs, and demiwolves are cleped all by the name of dogs." A true species is self-perpetuating. Says Dana: "When individuals multiply from generation to generation, it is but a repetition of the primordial type-idea, and the true notion of the species is not in the resulting group, but in the idea or potential element which is the basis of every individual of the group" (*Bibliotheca sacra* 1857: 861).

Fifth, this theory of evolution, conflicting as it does with the invariability of nature in the several kingdoms, conflicts also with the certainty of natural science. There can be no fixed laws of operation upon this scheme. Anything may originate out of anything. There is no certainty that mineral substance will always be mineral, for it may become vegetable substance. It is not certain that a vegetable species will always remain vegetable, for it may be transmuted into an animal species. Chance rules in nature, not invariable law. And the transmutation of substance may descend as well as ascend. Man may evolve into ape, as well as ape into man. As an example of the haphazard that is introduced into physical science by this theory, take its explanation of the origin of the eye as an organ of vision. Once there was no such organ in existence. It came into being in the following manner. A certain piece of nervous tissue happened in the lapse of ages to become sensitive to light; then, after another lapse of time, a transparent tissue happened to be formed over it; then, after other ages, a fluid happened to be formed which increased in density and adaptedness to vision; and thus changes at haphazard take place; and finally we have the eye of an animal.<sup>49</sup> The Duke of Argyll exposes the capriciousness of this kind of physics in the following terms:

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<sup>48</sup> 48. Non ad translationem generis, sed ad aegritudinem quandam seminis, videtur esse referendum.

<sup>49</sup> 49. WS: This supposes that in nature an eye can be found in isolation, by itself, separate from the body of which it is the eye. But nature never forms organs in this way. They are found only in connection with the organization and growth of the entire body.

Under the modes of applying the theory of evolution which have become commonplace, it is very easy to account for everything. We have only to assume some condition opposite to that which now exists and then to explain the change by showing that the existing conditions are useful and adapted to existing needs. Do we wish, for example, to explain why the female pheasant is dull colored? We have only to assume that once she was gaily colored and became dull by the gaudier hens being killed off when setting on eggs, and by the duller hens being saved. Do we wish, on the contrary, to explain the brilliant coloring of the male pheasant? We have only to make the reverse assumption—that once they were all dull colored, and that accidental dandies were preserved by the admiration and the consequent selection of the ladies. In like manner, the migration of birds is explained by assuming at once upon a time there were no migratory birds, although there must always have been the same changing seasons. Then a few birds came to travel a little way, and then a little farther, and so at last they came to go a great way, and finally the habit, “organized in the race,” became the migratory instinct. It is curious that in this and all similar explanations of what are admitted to be now pure instincts, p 394 the theory demands that the earliest beginnings were more rational than the last developments; the commencements were more in the nature of intelligent perception than the final results, which have become the mere mechanical effect of hereditary habits.

According to the theory of pseudoevolution, there is no preconceived plan and design by which the origin of living and organized objects in nature is accounted for. They come wholly by chance. Those varieties from which new species are claimed to spring are denominated “accidental.” If a piece of nervous tissue happens to become sensitive to light, the first step toward the production of the eye of animal life is taken; otherwise not. And so with the second step, by which a film is drawn over the sensitive tissue; and so with all the steps. The processes of nature are entirely fortuitous upon this scheme, and there is nothing possible but the calculation of chances. No invariable and uniform order of nature is possible, and therefore no science of nature is possible. Haeckel (*Creation* 1.167) would parry this objection, by the following self-stultifying remark: “The difference between the two forms of selection is this: In artificial selection, the will of man makes the selection according to a plan, whereas in natural selection, the struggle for life (that universal interrelation of organisms) acts without a plan, but produces quite the same result, namely, a selection of a particular kind of individual for propagation.” This is saying that nature’s acting by chance will produce “the same result” that man’s acting by plan does; and that nature would have the same regularity and order by the method of chance as by the method of design. (See supplement 3.7.12.)

Sixth, some evolutionists, for example, Darwin, Wallace, and Huxley, try to adopt a middle theory. They say that a species may be originated either by selection or by creation. But the alternative is impossible. One idea necessarily excludes the other. If a particular being is intrinsically such that creation *ex nihilo* accounts for it, then molecular motion and natural selection cannot and vice versa. If a thing is intrinsically such that it may be equal to four, it must be. It may not be equal to five. The ideas of creation and evolution are as incompatible with each other, as four and five are. Both cannot be true.

Seventh, the abundant proof of design in nature overthrows the theory of evolution. This design is executed even in an extreme manner. The mammary glands on man’s breast and the webfeet of the upland goose and the frigate bird show that the plan of structure is carried out with persistence, even when in particular circumstances there is no use for the organ itself. The symmetry of the species is preserved. Nature is punctilious in respect to design. Even in the deformed and irregular products of nature, the same respect for plan is observed. There is design in these. In a misgrowth of a vegetable, matter is organized methodically. It is not thrown

together at haphazard, as in a kaleidoscope. Holberg's (*Memoirs*, 196) anecdote of the priest and the humpback will apply here. The priest had said in his sermon that everything which God makes is well made. "Look at me," said a humpback, "Am I well made?" The priest looked at him, and replied that he was well made for a humpbacked man. The priest was wiser than he knew, and his answer had truth in it, as well as wit. The humpback was built upon the plan of a man, not of a dog. (See supplement 3.7.13.)

The theory of development is valid when properly applied. Take, for example, Linnaeus's arrangement of the *genus felis: felis domestica* p 395 (common cat), *felis catus* (wild cat), *felis pardus* (leopard), *felis onca* (jaguar), *felis tigris* (tiger), *felis leo* (lion). These six species of the one genus, as Linnaeus uses terms, may be developed from one original type. The same may be said also of the seven species of the one *genus pinus*<sup>50</sup> in the vegetable kingdom. But according to Linnaeus, *felis* could not develop from *equus*;<sup>51</sup> nor *pinus* from *pirus*.<sup>52</sup>

Species should not be multiplied or the creative act be introduced extravagantly often. The biblical phrases *let the earth bring forth* and *let the waters bring forth* imply that within the several kingdoms, after they have been established by creative power, much may then have been done in the production of varieties (not species) by the law of evolution impressed upon each kingdom. There is no objection to tracing all varieties of pigeon to one original, say the blue rock pigeon, as Darwin does, or all varieties of rabbit to one original type. John Hunter held that "the true distinction between different species of animals must ultimately be gathered from their incapacity of propagating with each other an offspring capable again of continuing itself by subsequent propagation." Hunter wrote a tract entitled "Observations Tending to Show That the Wolf, Jackal, and Dog are All of the Same Species."

It should be understood, moreover, how terms are employed. If "genus" is the base, then "species" are the divisions. If "species" is the base, then "varieties" are the divisions. In the first case, species can come from species; in the second, not (Quatrefages, *Human Species* 1.3). Dana defines a species as the "unit" in the organic world. Morton defines it as a "primordial organic form." The criteria of a species are (1) permanent fecundity; (2) sameness of external form (animals with teeth for eating flesh belong to a different species from those having teeth for eating vegetable food; animals with webbed feet are not of the same species with those having feet without a web); and (3) sameness of internal structure shown in habits and instincts. Of these three, the first is the surest criterion. The other two are less certain. Two animals of great similarity in external structure may be of wholly different species—for example, the ape and man. Hence all three criteria must be combined.

A plausible argument for the development of man from lower animals is derived from a comparison of the embryo of man at four weeks with that of the chick, or at eight weeks with that of the dog. There is a great similarity. The evolutionist asks: "Is it any more improbable that man should develop from the ape than that a Plato or a Shakespeare should develop from an embryo so like the dog's embryo?" It certainly is not any more improbable, upon the supposition that the human embryo contains nothing but what is in that of the chick or the dog. But if the human embryo contains, over and above the physical elements, a rational and spiritual principle;

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<sup>50</sup> 50. pine

<sup>51</sup> 51. horse

<sup>52</sup> 52. pear tree

if this embryo be a synthesis of mind and matter and not mere matter, then it is more probable that a Plato will come from it than from the canine embryo. This kind of argument proves too much. For not only the embryo, but the newborn babe itself has little more in its external appearance to suggest the career of a Newton or an Aristotle than a newborn dog has. The wailing unconsciousness of the one is as far from science and philosophy as the yelping unconsciousness of the other. But the babe possesses along with p 396 physical qualities the “image of God,” namely, a rational soul, while the dog has only an animal soul. There is an invisible rational principle in one that is not in the other. The maxim “judge not by the outward appearance” has full force here.

Resemblance in corporeal form has been overestimated. Similarity in the visible and material structure does not necessarily prove similarity in the invisible and mental structure. It is conceivable that a creature might be produced whose anatomy might be entirely like that of man and yet have no human as distinguished from brutal traits. The idiot is an example. A human body with only an animal soul would look like a man, but would be as far from man as is an ox. The gorilla is nearer to man in physical structure than is a dog; but he is not so near to man in respect to sagacity, affection, and other manlike traits. The monkey species is not so intelligent as the canine species. The elephant is nearer to man in respect to mental traits than is the gorilla, but his anatomy is farther off. The ant and bee have more intelligence than many animals have, yet are entirely destitute of brain. Naturalists notice that the period of infancy in man is much longer than in the brute. This is because there is a rational soul in the one and not in the other, which unfolds more slowly than a physical organism does. The animal takes care of itself in infancy; but the infant man must be taken care of. For example, the young calf, of itself, finds its nourishment from the dam; but the babe must be put to the breast of the mother. The latter if left to itself would die; but the former would not.

## Antiquity of Man

Respecting the time when man was created and his antiquity, the narrative in Genesis teaches that he is the last in the series of creations and that the Creator rested from creation *ex nihilo* after the origination of the human species.<sup>53</sup> While minerals, vegetables, and irrational animals, according to Genesis, may be referred back to a long duration in the first five days, man cannot be referred to any but the sixth day and to the “morning” or last part of that. From six to eight thousand years is the period during which the human species has existed. The Septuagint gives fifteen hundred years more from the creation of man than the Hebrew text. The Christian fathers generally adopted the Septuagint chronology. Theophilus of Antioch (*To Autolytus* 24–25, 28) makes the Scriptures to give 5,698 years from the creation of man to the death of the emperor Aurelius Verus in A.D. 69. Julius Africanus (230), the earliest Christian chronologist, dates the creation to 5499 B.C. Eusebius, Jerome, and Bede reckon 2,242 years between Adam and the

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<sup>53</sup> 53. WS: Lewis, “On the Early Populations of the Globe” in “Genesis” in *Lange’s Commentary*, 314–15; Southall, *Recent Origin of Man*; Pouchet, *Universe*, 609; Fraser, *Blinding Lights*; Lyell, *Antiquity of Man*; Quatrefages, *Human Species* 3.12–13; *British Quarterly Review* 1863 (review of Lyell); Cabell, *Unity of Mankind*.

deluge—following the Septuagint. The Hebrew text gives 1,656 years. Augustine (*City of God* 15.20) says: “From Adam to the deluge, there are reckoned according to our copies of the Scripture 2,262 years and according to the Hebrew text 1,656 years” (cf. *City of God* 20.7). Hales (*Chronology* 1.273–303) and Clinton (*Fasti hellenici* 1.283–301) defend the Septuagint chronology (see “Introduction to Jeremiah” in *Speaker’s Commentary*, 323–26, where Payne Smith favors the Septuagint recension). Murphy p 397 (*On Genesis*, 196) defends the Hebrew chronology. The Samaritan text gives only 1,307 years between the creation and the deluge. Desvignoles, in the preface to his *Chronology*, says that he has collected above two hundred calculations, of which the longest makes the time between the creation and the incarnation to have been 6,984 years and the shortest 3,483 years. (See supplement 3.7.14.)

Extravagant statements respecting the great antiquity of man are not found in the Greek and Roman literatures. Plato (*Laws* 2.656; 3.676) speaks of “ten thousand years ago” and “thousands and thousands of cities.” But this is indefinite description; and the first instance relates to Egypt. Mythical and fabulous representations appear in the Egyptian and Hindu traditions. The Egyptian priests told Herodotus that they possessed a history going back 11,340 years; and they also told him that during this period the sun had four times altered its regular course, having been twice observed to rise in the west and to set in the east (cf. Spenser’s *Faery Queen* 5). The zodiac of Denderah, according to Dupuis, went back 15,000 years. The astronomer Delambre thought it to be later than the time of Alexander; and Biot demonstrated that it represented the state of the heavens in 700 B.C. Furthermore, it was discovered in an Egyptian temple that proved to have been built during Roman rule (Pouchet, *Universe*, 610). The conclusions of Lepsius from the monuments of Egypt make that civilization 20,000 years old. But the dates on the Babylonian and Assyrian tablets disprove this chronology. Even if it be conceded that Egypt is older than Assyria, it cannot be so immensely older.

Smith (*Assyrian Discoveries*, 51) gives 1850 B.C. as the date for Assur, the first capital of Assyria, and 1350 B.C. for Nineveh, the second capital. He makes Babylon “the capital of the whole country” in the sixteenth century B.C. “The enormous reigns ascribed by Berosus of Babylon to his ten kings, making a total of 432,000 years, force us to discard the idea that the details are historical” (Smith, *Chaldean Genesis*, 307). This scholar thinks the representation of ancient authors that the walls of Babylon were from forty to sixty miles in circumference to be an exaggeration and infers from the ruins that they were “about eight miles around, making Babylon nearly the same size with Nineveh.” He believes that the Babylonian records “reach to the 24th century B.C.,” adding that “some scholars are of opinion that they stretch nearly 2,000 years beyond that time.” The oldest date assigned by Smith is 2500 B.C. He places the early Babylonian monarchy 2500–1500 B.C. and refers the Izdubar (Nimrod) legends to 2000 B.C. (*Assyrian Discoveries*, 166–67). By the Septuagint reckoning, according to Theophilus, there would be 887 years from the deluge to 2500 B.C. and from the creation to the deluge 2,242 years (“Introduction to Kings” §8 and “Hosea” in *Speaker’s Commentary*; Conder, *Syrian Stone Lore*).

The Vedas, according to Max Müller (*Origin of Religion*, 147), go back to 1000 B.C.; how much earlier is uncertain. Whitney (*Oriental Studies*, 21) places them between 1500 B.C. and 2000 B.C. The Brahmins asserted that the astronomical tables of India were compiled more than 20,000,000 years ago. But Laplace proved that the calculations had been made after the alleged events and moreover that they were incorrect (Pouchet, *Universe*, 610).

Had man existed 20,000 years upon the globe, its population would be immensely greater than it is. Remains of ancient cities would be found all over the planet. But there are only 1.2 billion or 1.4 billion men now on the globe, and remains of cities are found mostly around the p

398 Mediterranean and in Asia. If we go back to the beginning of profane history (say, to 1000 B.C.), we find most of the globe uninhabited by man. All of the Western hemisphere, all of middle and northern Europe, all of northern Asia, all of Africa south of Sahara, and all of Australia and the islands of the sea were without human population. At the time of the advent, the majority of the population of the globe was still gathered about the Mediterranean Sea. Probably there were not more than 100,000,000 people on the globe, at that date. Man is very recent upon the American continents. South America has only about 30,000,000 inhabitants. North America at the time of its discovery had but a handful of men, compared with the vast extent of territory. We cannot assume an extravagant antiquity for man, because by this time the globe would be overrunning with population; as we cannot assume an extravagant antiquity even for the material globe, because by this time it would have parted with all its caloric and would be stone-cold at the center. The small number of human bones that have been found, compared with the large number of the bones of animals, shows that man was of late origin. Were the earth now to be subjected to earthquake and deluge, human bones would be the most numerous of any in some of the strata that would be opened a thousand years hence. Few fossil human bones have been discovered; but there are multitudes of animal and vegetable fossils. (See supplement 3.7.15.)

Even if the shorter biblical chronology be adopted, Manetho's Egyptian chronology might possibly be harmonized with it. The following is one explanation of it. Placing the flood in 2348 B.C., according to Ussher's reckoning, there are 450 years between the flood and the call of Abraham in 1900 B.C. The first twelve dynasties of Manetho (280 B.C.) can be placed here, giving 37 years to each dynasty. This would be the Old Empire of Menes and his successors. The pyramids of Gizeh were built in this age. There is, however, great difference of opinion. Mariette Bey makes the Old Empire a period of 2,700 years; Brugsch Bey says 2,400 years; Bunsen 1,076 years (making its beginning 3059 B.C.); Wilkinson and Poole say 650 years, beginning 2700 B.C. The second period from Abraham to Joseph, 1900–1637 B.C., is that of the Middle Empire and the Shepherd kings, embracing five dynasties of 52 years each (Manetho's dynasties 13–17). According to the Bible, Egypt during this period had a settled government. Abraham comes into contact with its pharaoh for the first time (Gen. 12). Rawlinson (*Ancient Egypt* 2.22) regards the Middle Empire as beginning about 1840 B.C. and terminating about 1640 B.C. The third period, 1637–1117 B.C., includes Egyptian history from Joseph downward, in which the remaining thirteen of Manetho's thirty dynasties may be placed. This is the New Empire, commencing with the eighteenth dynasty. This period includes the ascendancy of Joseph and of all the pharaohs mentioned in Scripture, excepting the one contemporary with Abraham (Gen. 12). The 520 years of this period would give forty years to each dynasty.

The alleged great antiquity of Egypt must be found, if at all, in the first period of the Old Empire. The data here are in utter obscurity. "For times anterior to 700 B.C., Egypt has no fixed chronology" ("Manetho" in *Kitto's Encyclopedia*). De Rougé says that "Manetho's texts are significantly changed, and the series of monumental dates is very incomplete."<sup>54</sup> Rawlinson (*Ancient Egypt* 2.9, 21) says that p 399

the chronological riddle in respect to early Egypt is insoluble. Manetho's general scheme, being so differently reported, is in reality unknown to us; its details, being frequently contradicted by

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<sup>54</sup> 54. Les textes de Manéthou sont profondément altérés, et la série des dates monumentales est très incomplète.

the monuments, are untrustworthy; and the method of the scheme, the general principles upon which it was constructed, was so faulty, that even if we had it before us in its entirety, we could derive from it no exact or satisfactory chronology. (See supplement 3.7.16.)

The repopulation of the globe after the deluge presents no serious difficulty. Population is rapid. According to Malthus, the increase of the means of subsistence is in arithmetical proportion; that of population is in geometrical.<sup>55</sup> “Every man,” says Blackstone (*Commentaries* 2.14), “has above one million lineal ancestors, if he reckons back to the twentieth generation.” Blackstone’s table gives 1,048,576 descendants from a single pair in the twentieth generation, or 660 years, supposing only two children to each pair. But supposing four children to each pair, the twentieth generation would yield a vast population. Petavius, taking only seven hundred years of the sixteen hundred between the creation and the deluge and supposing that seven hundred years is the average of patriarchal life and that twenty children are born to a single pair in each century, makes the total product 1,347,368,420. The increase is very great in the last century. The sixth century has 64,000,000; the seventh has twenty times this: 1,347,368,420. But in every generation, this total number of descendants is diminished by death. Supposing, continues Petavius, that Noah and his wife and his three sons and their wives had six children (Gen. 10 mentions sixteen children of Shem, Ham, and Japhet) to each pair and that this ratio continues to give 12,937,284 descendants in fourteen generations of thirty-three years each or 462 years. But six children is a low estimate in view of the longevity of man in this period and the easiness of subsistence in the simplicity of the East and of early civilization. The United States census shows that in 250 years, the 20,000 Puritans who emigrated from England between 1620 and 1640 have now 13,000,000 descendants.

The objections to the biblical account of the origin of man drawn from varieties of color and of race are not serious. Climatic influence is very great, especially in a state of barbarism. When man is not protected from the sun and the elements by the appliances of civilization, when he is a savage, changes go on very rapidly (see Quatrefages, *Human Species*, 7): “The Portuguese during a 300 years’ residence in India have become as black as Caffres, yet they form connections among themselves alone, or if they can, with Europeans” (Heber, *Indian Journal*, 53–55; *Quarterly Review* 37.100; see Carpenter, *Physiology*, 17). (See supplement 3.7.17.)

The argument from languages is strong for the unity of the race. The oldest form of Sanskrit, the Vedic, strikingly resembles its next neighbors to the westward: the language of the Avesta called the Zend and that of the Persian inscriptions. The later form of the Sanskrit has less resemblance (Whitney, *Oriental Studies*, 8): “The mutual agreement of the Indo-Germanic or Aryan languages is complete enough to justify the conclusion that all the nations of this family of languages are only branches of one great nation, which was settled in Upper Asia and p 400 included the ancestors of the Indians, Persians, Greeks, Italians, Germans, Slavs, and Celts” (Curtius, *Greece* 1.1).

The opinions of scientific zoologists favor the recent origin of man: “Cuvier does not date the appearance of man farther back than tradition. According to this illustrious zoologist, the history of the human race attests that man has not ruled over the surface of the globe for more than a limited number of years” (Pouchet, *Universe*, 609). “Man,” says Quatrefages (*Human Species*

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<sup>55</sup> 55. WS: Hume, *Populousness of Ancient Nations*; “Population” in *Penny Cyclopaedia*; Wallace, *Dissertation on the Numbers of Mankind*; Petavius, *Computation* in Thomas Brown’s *Pseudodoxia* 6.6.

2.12.13), “was most certainly in existence during the quaternary period; has in all probability seen Miocene (middle tertiary) times and, consequently, the entire Pliocene (later tertiary) epoch.” As to the question whether man was earlier than this, Quatrefages says it is possible: “Man is a mammal, and the conditions of existence sufficient for mammals ought to have been sufficient for him. Man is intelligent and can protect himself against cold. There is nothing then impossible in the idea that he should have survived other species of the same class. But this is a question to be proved by facts. Before we can even suppose it to be so, we must wait for information from observation” (152–53). “The discoveries of Bourgeois testify, in my opinion, to the existence of a tertiary man. But everything seems to show that, as yet, his representatives were few in number. The quaternary population, on the contrary, were, at least in distribution, quite as numerous as the life of the hunter permitted” (177). man is known to us only from a few faint traces of his industry. Of tertiary man himself, we know nothing. Portions of his skeleton have been discovered, it has been thought, in France, Switzerland, and especially in Italy. Closer study has, however, always forced us to refer to a comparatively much later period these human remains, which at first sight, were regarded as tertiary” (286). Arcelin makes the age of quaternary clay 6,750 years. Quatrefages thinks this rather too low and says that the present geological period goes much farther back than 7,000 to 8,000 years (140). “No facts have as yet been discovered which authorize us to place the cradle of the human race otherwise than in Asia” (178).

The discovery of human bones and implements in situations and connections that seem to imply a great antiquity for man is not a sufficient reason for rejecting the biblical account, owing to the uncertainty of the data. Human bones found in juxtaposition with the bones of the cave bear and the elephant are not conclusive. (a) They may not have been deposited contemporaneously. The action of floods and of violent convulsions makes it very difficult to say with certainty when deposits were made or to tell the order in which they occurred. The bear may have laid his bones in the cave hundreds of years before the man laid his, and yet the two now be found side by side. When the bones of extinct animals and stone implements are found together in a gravel bed, who can be certain whether the gravel was deposited upon them or whether they were deposited upon the gravel and subsequently mingled and buried under it by earthquakes and inundations? (b) The now extinct animal may not have been extinct four or five thousand years ago. He and early man may have been contemporaneous. The elephant has been found encased in ice in Siberia during the nineteenth century. It had long hair and was adapted to a cold climate. This specimen could not have been many thousands of years old (see *Life of Agassiz*, 708–10). (See supplement 3.7.18.)

Agassiz found in the deep waters of the West Indies “three characteristic genera of sponges from the secondary formation, till now p 401 supposed to be extinct.” He also caught in his dredge “three specimens of the *genus micrestor* of the cretaceous formation, of which no living species had been previously found.”

Antiquity is fabricated for things that are recent. The so-called lake dwellings are an instance. Gibbon (*Rome*, 42) relates that the Bulgarians in the time of Justinian (A.D. 525) lived in lacustrine structures. It is probable that no remains of them are earlier than the time of Julius Caesar. Herodotus (§5, beginning) speaks of lake dwellings among a people in Asia Minor in 450 B.C. Robert Gray, an English traveler, speaks of seeing them in 1794 on the borders of Lake Wallenstadt. The skeleton discovered at Mentone has all the characteristic marks of the Ligurian Gaul, who was a man of large skeleton according to Livy’s account of the Gauls. Livingstone (*Last Journal*, 442) says that he never found a single flint arrowhead or any other flint implement

in Africa. No flint exists south of the equator, but quartz might have been used. Iron, he says, was smelted in the remotest ages in Africa. According to this, the iron age was the earliest.

There is great uncertainty in the conclusions drawn from the varieties of implements used by men in past ages. Three kinds have been discovered: (a) rude stone implements, (b) finished stone implements, and (c) bronze and iron implements. Some theorists give this as the natural order. Geikie, however (*Ice Age*, 405), remarks that the difference between the rude flint arrowheads and axes of Paleolithic men and the polished and finely finished tools of the Neolithic men is too great to have no intermediate. And yet, no intermediate, he says, has been found. But may not the bronze implements be this intermediate? In the history of arts, the cutting of gems did not begin until after much skill had been acquired in the use of metals; and the finish of the “elegantly shaped” stone implements is more like that of gem cutting than like that of the rude Paleolithic implements. May not the order, consequently, be (1) Paleolithic, (2) bronze, (3) Neolithic instead of, as the geologist claims, (1) Paleolithic, (2) Neolithic, (3) bronze. It is difficult to suppose that the polished stone implement could have been made by the rude stone implement. It requires iron tools. (See supplement 3.7.19.)

Again, the use of rude stone implements is no proof of the great antiquity of a people. There are tribes of men now on the globe who are using them. Should these tribes become extinct and their implements be discovered one thousand years hence, it would be a false inference to assert that they belonged to a race that lived before Adam. The stone implement is an index of a particular period in the history of a nation’s civilization, rather than of its antiquity. A nation may be in its barbarous state and its stone age at almost any time in the history of the world. “Neobarbarism,” says Mahaffy (*Greece*, 16), “means the occurrence in later times of the manners and customs which generally mark very old and primitive times. Some few things of the kind survive everywhere; thus in the Irish Island of Arran, a group of famous savants mistook a stone donkey shed of two years’ standing for the building of an extinct race of great antiquity. As a matter of fact, the construction had not changed from the oldest type.” Says Turner (*Anglo-Saxons* 1.10), “we even now, at this late age, see the Eskimo, the wild Indian, the Backsettler, and the cultivated Philadelphian existing at the same time in North America; so did the Egyptian, the Scythian, and the Greek; so did high polish and rude barbarism at all p 402 times appear in disparted but coeval existence.” A contributor to the public press remarks that

scientific teachers who hold to the succession of stone, bronze, and iron ages, in the development of early civilization, have found a peculiarly incorrigible scholar in Dr. Schliemann. From a very careful study of the store of stone and bronze weapons and implements treasured in the prehistoric portion of the museum in Leiden, he has become convinced that the distinction between the different stone, bronze, and iron ages is purely artificial and imaginary and concludes that there never was a time, when the earliest inhabitants of Denmark (from whence the proofs were derived), were totally unacquainted with bronze or used only unpolished, rude stone weapons and implements.

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## S U P P L E M E N T S

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**3.7.1** (see p. 367). Creation *ex nihilo* more than any other metaphysical idea differences and separates the Bible from all human cosmogonies. All of these latter exclude this idea by their postulate of an eternal,

amorphous, and chaotic matter, which is formed by the operation of its own intrinsic properties and forces into the universe. Scripture refers all chaotic matter, with its properties and laws, to a personal deity who is other than it and before it. The creative power of God, according to the biblical conception, is as much needed to account for the forces and laws of material nature as the voluntary power of the watchmaker is needed to account for the watch. In the case of an artificial product like a watch, both the working force and the intelligent art by which it is made are in the artificer. In the case of a natural product like a tree, both the working force and the formative art by which it is constructed are in the tree; the watch is manufactured; the tree grows. But in both cases a Creator other than the watchmaker and the informing vegetable life is requisite. The watch cannot make the watchmaker; and the principle of vegetable life cannot make itself. Both artificial and natural products must therefore ultimately be referred to a first cause, who from nothing, by an absolutely originating act, creates the artificer who makes the watch and the vital principle which builds up the tree.

Augustine (*Faith and Creed* 2) teaches the creation of matter *ex nihilo* and of matter in its visible and invisible modes: “You did make the world out of ‘matter unseen,’ or also ‘without form,’ as some copies give it; yet we are not to believe that this material of which the universe was made, although it might be ‘without form’ [chaotic], although it might be ‘unseen,’ whatever might be the mode of its subsistence, could possibly have subsisted of itself, as if it were coeternal and coeval with God. For even although the world was made of some sort of material, this self-same material itself was made of nothing.”

Neander (*History* 1.372) directs attention to the radical difference between creation and evolution or emanation as constituting the difference in kind between the Christian cosmogony and the pagan or ethic: “Christianity separated entirely what belongs to the province of religion from what belongs to speculation and a merely speculative interest. And just by so doing Christianity preserved religion from the danger of confounding things divine with the things of this world; the idea of God with that of nature. It directed the eye of the mind beyond that whole series of the phenomena of the world, where, in the chain of causes and effects, one thing ever evolves out of another, to that almighty creative word of God by which the worlds were framed; so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear (Heb. 11:3). The creation was here apprehended as an incomprehensible fact by the upward gaze of faith, which rose above the position of the understanding, the faculty which would derive all things from one another, which would explain everything [sensuously] and hence denies all immediate [or intuitive] truth. This one practically important truth the church was for holding fast in the doctrine of creation from nothing; taking her stand in opposition to the ancient view, which would condition God’s act of creation by a previously existing matter; and which, in an anthropopathic manner conceived of him, not as the free, self-sufficient author of all existence, but as the fashioner of a material already extant. Gnosticism would not acknowledge any such limits to speculation. It would explain, clear up to the mental vision, how God is the source and ground of all existence. It was thus compelled to place in the essence of God himself a process of development, through which God is the source and ground of all existence. From overlooking the negative sense of the doctrine concerning creation from nothing, it was led to oppose against it the old principle ‘nothing can come out of nothing.’ It substituted in place of this doctrine the sensuous imageable idea of an efflux of all existence out of the Supreme Being of the deity. This idea of an emanation admits being presented under a great variety of images; of an irradiation of light from an original light; of a development of spiritual powers or ideas acquiring self-subsistence; of an expression in a series of syllables and tones, dying away gradually to an echo.”

Pagan cosmogonies postulate a germ or egg when they explain “creation.” Absolute origination of entity from nonentity is not only denied, but asserted to be impossible. On this scheme there is nothing but second causes. The eternal germ is operated upon by secondary agents and agencies, and the so-called creation is merely the emanation and evolution of an existing substance. There is no first cause originating substance itself. Charnock (*Power of God*, 419) thus notices the need of a Creator in order to such an evolution: “Nature, or the order of second causes, has a vast power; and the sun and the earth bring forth harvests of corn, but from seed first sown in the earth; were there no seed in the earth, the power of the earth would be idle and the influence of the sun insignificant. All the united strength of nature cannot produce the least thing out of nothing. It may multiply and increase things by the powerful

blessing God gave it at the first erecting of the world, but it cannot create.” Pagan cosmogonies which account for the universe by emanation reappear in the modern materialism which accounts for it by evolution.

**3.7.2** (see p. 369). Spinoza, often and with emphasis, denies that substance can be created. In a letter to Oldenburg (*Letter 2*) he says: “In the universe there cannot exist two substances without their differing utterly in essence. Substance cannot be created. All substance must be infinite or supremely perfect.” The p 403 assertion that “there cannot be two substances without their differing utterly in essence” is true. One must be infinite, and the other finite. But as Spinoza assumes that the postulate upon which his whole system depends, namely, that there is only one substance and that infinite, is axiomatic and needs no proof, it follows from his assumption that there cannot be two substances. Two infinities are impossible.

**3.7.3** (see p. 371). Howe (*Oracles* 2.9) thus explains the phrase *heaven and earth* in Gen. 1:1: “The first and most obvious distribution of the created universe is into these two heads, matter and mind. This is the distribution in Col. 1:16: ‘By him were all things made that are in heaven or that are in earth, visible and invisible.’ We may well enough suppose all matter to be, some way or other, visible, though there be indeed a finer sort of matter than is visible to us. [Howe refers here to the invisible material forces—gravitation, electricity, attraction, etc.—and the invisible physical principles, namely, vegetable and animal life; see p.157 n.16.] But then there is the other head of things that are absolutely invisible; as it is altogether impossible that any sense can perceive a mind or a thought which is the immediate product of that mind. Some, indeed, will have by ‘heavens’ all intellectual beings that are created to be comprehended and meant; and by ‘earth,’ all matter whatsoever. We shall not dispute the propriety of that conjecture or what probability it has or has not; but take what is more obvious to ourselves. And so, by ‘heaven’ must be understood not only all the several superior orbs, but all their inhabitants, unto which our own minds and spirits do originally appertain, as being nearer of kin and more allied to the world of spirits than they are to this world of flesh and earth. And then, by ‘earth’ is meant this lower orb, which is replenished with numerous sorts of creatures with one or another sort of lives; either that do live an intellectual life or from an intelligent soul as we live; or else that live a merely sensitive life as all the brutes do; or else that live a merely vegetable life as the plants do; and then there are inanimate things that have no proper life at all. Of such extent is this created universe; it takes in all these several sorts of things.” Pearson (*On the Creed*, art. 1) explains similarly, “The two terms *heaven* and *earth* taken together signify the universe or that which is called the world, in which are contained all things material and immaterial, visible and invisible. Under the name of ‘heaven and earth’ are comprehended all things contained in them, which are of two classes. Some were made immediately out of nothing by a proper creation; and some only mediately, as out of something formerly made out of nothing by an improper kind of creation. By the first were made all immaterial substances, all the orders of angels, and the souls of men, the heavens, and the simple or elemental bodies, as the earth, the water, and the air. By the second were made all the ‘hosts of earth’ (Gen. 2:1), the grass and herb yielding seed, the fowls of the air, and the fishes of the sea: ‘Let the earth bring forth grass; let the waters bring forth the moving creature that has life and fowl that may fly above the earth.’ As well may we grant these plants and animals to have their origination from such principles [namely, earth, water, and air] when we read, ‘God formed man out of the dust of the ground’ and said unto him whom he created in his own image, ‘Dust you are.’ ” This statement needs qualification. Plants and animals and the body of man did not “originate” from earth, water, and air in the strict sense of the term; for a vital principle was required to vitalize and organize these nonvital and inorganic elements. “Nothing is satisfactory,” says Bell (*Hand*, chap. 2), “until it is declared that it has been the will of God to create life; and that it was he who gave the animating principle to produce organization.” This animating principle was as much an immediate creation from nothing as the spirits of angels and men or the simple elements of matter. When it is said, “Let the earth bring forth grass; let the waters bring forth the moving creature,” the meaning is that the earth and waters furnish the nonvital material elements that constitute the visibility of a plant or animal, which are vivified and

assimilated by an invisible principle of vegetable or animal life created *ex nihilo* (p. 377). The vegetable and animal kingdoms fall into Pearson's first class.

Augustine (*City of God* 11.33) sums up as follows: "Under these names *heaven* and *earth* the whole creation is signified, either as divided into spiritual and material, which seems the more likely, or into the two great parts of the world [universe] in which all created things are contained, so that, first of all, the creation is presented in sum and then its parts are enumerated, according to the mystic number of the days."

**3.7.4** (see p. 374). Grabe, in his *Spicilegium patrum*<sup>56</sup> (2.195), gives a fragment from the commentary of Anastasius upon the six days' work, in which the latter remarks that "Justin Martyr says that all things which were made by God are sextuply divided: Into immortal and intelligent things such as angels; into mortal things endowed with reason such as men; into sentient things destitute of reason such as cattle, birds, and fishes; into insentient things that move such as winds, clouds, waters, and stars; into things that grow but do not move such as trees; and into insentient things that do not move such as mountains, land, and the like. All the creatures of God fall into one of these divisions and are circumscribed by them." This shows that the classification of the works of creation was a familiar conception at a very early date. This would harmonize with the theory of long periods and creative days and would naturally suggest it.

**3.7.5** (see p. 379). The tendency to explain the kingdoms of vegetable and animal life by evolution of the one from the other, instead of by a divine fiat creating them from nothing, is seen in the following remark of Coleridge (*Table Talk* for 30 April 1823): "There are only two acts of creation, properly so called, in the Mosaic account: the material universe and man. The intermediate acts [the origination of vegetables and animals] seem more as the results of secondary causes or, at any rate, of a modification of prepared materials." Bacon (*Natural History*, century 5), on the contrary, calls attention to the creation from nothing of life as the organizing principle and power which vivifies and assimilates the lifeless elements of earth, air, and water. "Plants or vegetables are the principal part of the third day's work. They are the first *producat*,<sup>57</sup> which is the word of animation; for the other words [of the inorganic days] are but words of essence [inorganic substance]." Agassiz, also, during the recent revival by Darwin of the pseudoevolution of Lamarck and St. Hilaire, has maintained the historical physics of Linnaeus, Blumenbach, Cuvier, and Hunter: "To Agassiz, as the leading opponent of the development or Darwinian theories, development meant development of plan as expressed in structure, not the change of one structure into another. To his apprehension this change was based upon intellectual not upon material causes" (*Life of Agassiz* 1.244). Similarly, Davy (*Consolations*, dialogue 4) remarks: "I can never believe that any division or refinement or subtilization or juxtaposition or arrangement of the particles of matter can give them sensibility; or that intelligence can result from the combinations of insensate and brute atoms. I can as easily imagine that the planets are moving by their will or design round the sun or that a cannonball is reasoning in making its parabolic curve." Charles Bell (*Hand*, chap. 6) says, "Everything declares the diversity of species to have its origin in distinct creations; and not to be owing to a process of gradual transition from some original type. Any other hypothesis than that of new creations of animals, suited to the successive changes in the inorganic matter of the globe; the condition of the water, atmosphere, and temperature; brings with it only an p 404 accumulation of difficulties. Life preserves the materials of the body free from the influence of those affinities which hold the inorganic world together; and it not only does that, but it substitutes other laws. Of the wonders of the microscope none exceed those presented on looking at the early rudiments of an animal. This rudimentary structure will appear but a homogeneous, transparent, soft jelly; there will be visible in it only a single pulsating point; yet this mass possesses within it a principle of life; and it is not only ordered what this principle shall perform in

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<sup>56</sup> 56. Gleaning of the fathers

<sup>57</sup> 57. let it bring forth

attracting matter, and building up the complex structure of the body, but even the duration of the animal's existence is from the beginning defined. The term may be limited to a day, and the life be truly ephemeral; or it may be prolonged to a hundred years; but the period is adjusted according to the condition and enjoyment of the individual and to the continuance of its species, as perfectly as are the mechanism and structure themselves.... There is nothing like this in inanimate nature. It is beautiful to see the shooting of a crystal; to note the formation of the integrant particles from their elements in solution, and these, under the influence of attraction or crystalline polarity, assuming a determinate shape; but the form here is permanent. In the different processes of elective attraction and in fermentation we perceive a commotion; but in a little time the products are formed, and the particles are rigidly at rest. In these instances there is nothing like the revolutions of the living animal substance, where the material is alternately arranged, decomposed, and rearranged. The changes in the embryo state are a remarkable example of the latter. The human brain in its earlier stage of growth resembles that of a fish; next, it bears a resemblance to the cerebral mass of the reptile; in its increase it is like that of a bird; and slowly, and only after birth, does it assume the proper form and consistence of the human brain." Such is the judgment of the eminent naturalist to whom "the honor is exclusively due of having demonstrated for the first time that the nerve of motion is distinct from the nerve of sensation, and that when a nerve, apparently simple, possesses both properties, it is a sign that it is really compound and consists of fibrils derived from distinct divisions of the brain or spinal cord"—a discovery with which, in respect to originality and influence upon biology, nothing in the entire results of the recent materialistic physics can be compared for a moment.

Haeckel (*Evolution of Man* 1.73–74) calls attention to the fact that the current pseudoevolutionary theory is a revival of that of Lamarck and St. Hilaire and until recently had so sway in biology: "As an instance how utterly biologists refrained from inquiries into the origin of organisms and the creation of the animal and vegetable species during the period from 1830 to 1859, I mention from my own experience the fact that during the whole course of my studies at the university I never heard a single word on these most important and fundamental questions of biology. During the time from 1852 to 1857 I had the good fortune to listen to the most distinguished teachers in all branches of the science of organic nature; but not one of them even once alluded to the question of the origin of the vegetable and animal species. It was never thought worth while to allude to Lamarck's valuable *Zoological Philosophy*, in which the attempt to answer it had been made in 1809. The enormous opposition which Darwin met with when he first took up this question again may therefore be understood. His attempt seemed at first to be unsubstantial and unsupported by previous labors. Even in 1859 the entire problem of creation, the whole question of the origin of organisms, was considered by biologists as supernatural and transcendental. The dualistic position taken by Kant, and the extraordinary importance attached during the whole of the nineteenth century to this most influential of modern philosophers, probably offer the best explanation of this fact. For while this great genius, equally excellent as a naturalist and a philosopher, in the field of inorganic nature made a successful attempt in his theory of the heavens to treat the constitution and mechanical origin of the material universe according to Newtonian principles, in other words, to treat it mechanically and to conceive it monistically, he for the most part adopted the supernatural view of the origin of organisms. He maintained that 'the principle of the mechanism of [inorganic] nature, without which there could be no science of [inorganic] nature, was wholly inadequate to explain the origin of living organisms and that it was necessary to assume supernatural causes effecting a design (*causae finales*)<sup>58</sup> for the origin of these.' " Haeckel then adds that Kant sometimes departed from this view and "expressed himself in quite the opposite or monistic sense." But he gives no passages in proof and remarks that "these monistic utterances are but stray rays of light; as a rule Kant adhered in biology to those obscure dualistic notions according to which the powers which operate in organic nature are entirely

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<sup>58</sup> 58. final causes. In the Aristotelian scheme of causality, a final cause refers to the goal or end toward which an entity or activity tends.

different from those which prevail in the inorganic world.” The assertion that Kant in his theory of the heavens adopted monism or Spinoza’s doctrine of only one substance is contradicted by Haeckel’s own statement that Kant explained the material universe “according to Newtonian principles.” Newton held with energy to the dualism of mind and matter and to theism, and his *Principia* is the strongest of all demonstrations of the truth of this theory, because it is mathematical. Haeckel has confounded Newton’s explanation of inorganic nature by the operation of inorganic and mechanical forces employed by the Creator with the very different theory which explains it by the operation of these inorganic forces of themselves and without a superintending mind. The fact that Kant accounted for the inorganic world by the operation of nonvital and mechanical forces and of the organic world by the operation of vital and nonmechanical forces—the forces in both instances being created, upheld, and controlled by the Creator—by no means proves that in the former domain he adopted pantheistic monism and in the latter theistic dualism.

**3.7.6** (see p. 382). Haeckel (*Evolution of Man* 2.391) endows matter with the intelligent properties of mind, namely, self-motion and choice, in the most extreme form conceivable. Even the germ cell, he maintains, decides for itself whether it will be male or female: “At first two united cells may have been entirely alike. Soon, however, by natural selection a contrast must have arisen between them. One cell became a female egg cell, the other a male seed or sperm cell.”

**3.7.7** (see p. 383). The discussions respecting the scientific value of the theory of pseudoevolution which makes all the phenomena of the mineral, vegetable, animal, and rational kingdoms to be alike the mechanical motion of molecules of matter have overlooked the fact that it has no foundation or support in mathematics. A really mechanical force and motion can be investigated and enunciated arithmetically and algebraically. Gravitation is expressed in the well-known formula that its attraction is inversely as the square of the distance. The motion of light, in the refraction and dispersion of its rays, is governed by laws that have been demonstrated by the employment of calculus. Mathematical optics is one of the most striking examples of the manner in which material nature operates mathematically. The motion of heat has been subjected to the tests of mathematics, and Clausius by this method has proved that when the heat-motion of ignited gunpowder is converted into the motion of the cannonball and then is reconverted into heat-motion by impact upon an iron plate, there is an actual loss of heat and consequently of motion. This is something which no observation of the senses, naked or armed, could have demonstrated. Electricity and magnetism are likewise beginning to be measured by this method. “Geometers,” says a French journalist, p 405 “who are the continuators of Ampère, Fourier, Ohm, Gauss, Helmholtz, Thompson, and Maxwell and have helped so much in connecting electricity with the laws of mechanics are preparing a great synthesis which will mark an epoch in the history of natural philosophy. They are very near demonstrating that the electromagnetic phenomena are subjected to the same elementary laws as the optical; that they are two manifestations of a motion in the same element, namely, ether; the problems of optics are solved by equations of electromagnetism; and the speed of light, determined by optical methods, is measured also by purely electrical measures.”

It is owing to the fact that whatsoever is really mechanical is also mathematical that it has from the first been the aim of the natural philosopher to introduce as much as possible the calculations and methods of mathematical science into physics, because in this way a precision and certainty are secured such as the most careful observations by the senses, even when aided by instruments, cannot afford. In some instances the algebraic process demonstrates irrefragably a result that contradicts the notices of the senses. An eminent geometer has demonstrated that the center of the shadow made by a circular plate of metal in a ray of light coming through an aperture is in fact no shadow, but an illumination as bright as if the metal plate were away. The remark of Euler, after demonstrating certain properties of the arch, that “all experience is in contradiction to this, but that this is no reason for doubting its truth,” paradoxical as it sounds, is scientific certainty.

Accordingly, the progress of genuine, in distinction from spurious, physics has invariably been accompanied with that of mathematics. Newton’s theory of gravitation immediately resulted in the

*Principia*—that wonderful treatise of which the full title is *Mathematical Principles of Natural Philosophy*—in which calculus is employed by an intellect never excelled in the power of concentrated reflection to demonstrate the truth of a hypothesis which without this method of proof would be open to doubt and denial. For subtract the evidence furnished by the theorems and calculations of the *Principia* and leave the law of gravitation to be accepted merely on the ground of what can be observed and measured of its operations by the naked or the armed eye, and it would no longer have the certainty which it now has for the scientific mind.

Now if, as the materialist contends, the phenomena of the vegetable, animal, and rational kingdoms are really and truly mechanical, like those of gravitation, cohesion, chemical affinity, light, heat, electricity, and magnetism, they should like these latter be capable of mathematical expression and demonstration. If it indeed be true, as Haeckel (*Creation* 1.21) asserts that “when a stone falls by certain laws to the ground, or a solution of salt forms a crystal, the result is no less a mechanical manifestation of life than the flowering of a plant, the generation or sensibility of animals, or the feelings or mental activity of man”—if it be indeed true that all these phenomena are alike the effect of molecular motion, then the vitality of the plant, the sensibility of the animal, and the rationality of the man can be examined mathematically and the results expressed in mathematical formulas. In this case treatises in biology and psychology should be as full of mathematical propositions and calculations as those in chemistry and mechanics. But the mere assertion of such a possibility is the refutation of the theory of pseudoevolution. The law of vegetable life has nothing in common with that of gravitation, and to attempt to express it in mathematical terms is absurd. The same is true of the law of animal life, and still more of rational. How would a scientist set about describing the motion of the sap or the circulation of the blood in terms of calculus? How would he express the thinking of the human mind or the feeling of the human heart by algebraic equations? No evolutionist has yet gone to the length of asserting that one sense can evolve from another; that smelling can transmute itself into hearing, or seeing into tasting; and no one of this class has attempted to explain one sensation by another; but the task would not be greater than to explain vegetable life in the blooming of a rose or animal life in the crawling of a worm or rational life in “the thoughts that wander through eternity” and are “too deep for tears” by the mechanical motion of atoms algebraically formulated by some Newton or Laplace.

When one considers the great amount of publication by materialistic physicists during the last twenty years upon subjects in physics and how little of mathematics there is in it all, he is made suspicious respecting its credibility. Former periods in the history of science that were distinguished, as the last two decades have not been, for real discoveries and additions to the knowledge of nature were marked by the cultivation of mathematical analysis. But the present is a time when the most novel and improbable theories of matter and mind are broached without a particle of this highest order of proof. Let anyone read the *History of the Physical Sciences* by Whewell, one of the first mathematicians of the century and a natural philosopher in the line of Newton and Leibnitz, and see how constantly and inextricably mathematical calculation is in-woven with all that is really mechanical and inorganic in them, and then let him turn to the physics of Haeckel, Huxley, Maudsley, and Büchner and see how destitute their schematizing is of all support from the exact sciences and how contradictory it is to the demonstrated and established results of past investigation, and he will perceive the immense difference between the historical and the provincial physics.

A striking instance of the error introduced into the physics of inorganic nature by theories that not merely lack corroboration by mathematics, but are refuted by it, is seen in Goethe’s theory of colors. He contended, in opposition to Newton and physicists generally, that color is not a particular mode of light, but a mixture of light and darkness. He held that darkness is a positive quality and not the mere negation of light and that colors are composed of light and darkness—which, as his biographer Lewis remarks, is “like saying that tones are composed of sound and silence.” He prosecuted his experiments and observations with great industry, but in a purely empirical way, without any knowledge or employment of mathematical optics. On the contrary, he rejected the aid of this science and actually took credit to himself for so doing: “I raised,” he said, “the whole school of mathematicians against me, and people were greatly amazed that one who had no insight into mathematics could venture to contradict Newton. For that

physics could exist independently of mathematics, no one seemed to have the slightest suspicion.” His biographer, who shared in the exaggerated estimate of Goethe common to all his devotees, was nevertheless too sound a physicist to fall in with this view of mathematics. Respecting Goethe’s theory of color and those sciences which are concerned with really mechanical forces, he remarks: “On Goethe’s theory, the phenomena are not measurable; and whoever glances into a modern work on optics will see that the precision and extent to which calculation has been carried are themselves sufficient ground for preferring the theory which admits such calculation. No amount of observation will render observation precise, unless it can be measured. You may watch falling bodies for an eternity, but without mathematics mere watching will yield no law of gravitation. You may mix acids and alkalies together with prodigality, but no amount of experiment will yield the secret of their composition if you have flung away the balance. Goethe flung away the balance” (Lewis, *Life of Goethe* 5.9). It is worthy of particular notice that this error of the poet was endorsed by the philosophers Schelling and Hegel, both of whom, like Goethe, adopted the monism of Spinoza, which explains all the phenomena of the universe by the doctrine of one infinite substance. This accounts for the agreement between them.

Goethe was more successful in botany than in optics. His *Metamorphoses of Plants*, in which he developed a theory that had been suggested but not adopted by Linnaeus, namely, that p 406 all the parts of a plant are varieties of the leaf, has met with favor among scientific botanists. But botany is within the domain of life, not of mechanics, if the historical physics is to be accepted rather than that of the materialistic schools. Because botany is concerned with a vital force, it cannot be constructed mathematically, and consequently Goethe’s ignorance of the exact sciences did no great harm in this instance, as it did in that of optics.

The inability of the materialist to ground his theory that mind is matter and that thought, like heat, is a mode of molecular motion in the mathematics that support all genuine mechanics is proof that it will be short lived, that the pseudoevolution of Darwin at the close of the nineteenth century will share the fate of the pseudoevolution of Lamarck at the beginning of it.

A writer in the *Foreign Quarterly Review* (3.194–95) makes the following objections to the position that life is a property of inorganic matter and the effect of the arrangement of its atoms: “(1) If the living principle is an essential property of inorganic matter, it would follow that this property would increase with the quantity of matter. This, however, is not the fact. Nature nowhere manifests more living energy than in its most minute productions. The insect, for example, the spider, with its instincts performs more remarkable functions than many a larger animal; the dog more than the horse, and man more than the elephant, and this more than the whale. (2) The first rudiment of all living forms, whether animal or vegetable, is a fluid in which a few globules are found. If the arrangement of particles or structural organization were the cause of life, this cause would have little energy in a fluid in which no organ at all is to be detected; and yet the reverse is the fact, for in no state does the living principle act so energetically as in the first periods of existence. In the first month of conception the human embryo weighs only a few grains; at the ninth month it weighs eight pounds and is twenty inches in length. In the first month it is as simple as a worm in its structure; at the ninth it has all the characteristic complication of the human species. In the early periods of our existence, therefore, the living principle operates with much greater intensity than in the later; being employed not so much in merely preserving as in the later periods, but in forming and building up from the beginning. Every most minute artery, nerve, or vein is then laid out with uniform skill; parts are planned and formed which had no previous existence; and it seems as unreasonable to assert from a contemplation of such facts that organization or structure is the cause of life as that the house is the cause of the architect. If the arrangement of particles is the cause of life, then the consistent materialist must in physics give up the axiom that the effect is in proportion to the cause. The effects and changes are far greater in the embryo and uterine existence than they are in the body after birth; but the number of the particles of matter that are arranged is far smaller. (3) In the mechanical sciences, we say that certain substances are the conductors of electricity, but we do not say that they cause electricity; they develop its phenomena, and that is all. Now life, like electricity, or any other mechanical force, though it does not exist separate from matter, yet is transferable from one body to another. The plant, for example, collects from air, earth, and water that which it transforms into wood,

sap, leaf, and fruit, thus vivifying these elements. The animal collects from the plant its material for nerve, blood, and muscle. Man converts bread and meat into blood, muscle, nerve, and bone, all of which are capable of vital motion. In all these instances a piece of inanimate matter has received the gift of life; it has acquired vital properties. Is it not a distinct transfer of something from one substance to another, which something cannot be a mere property of the substance to which it is transferred? Is the principle of life any more a property of the matter which is vitalized by it than the principle of heat is the property of the iron that is melted by it? If the two things are entirely diverse in the latter case, are they not also in the former? (4) Extension, figure, impenetrability are properties of matter, and we never see them leave matter; but the dead nerve, although to all appearance the same as the living, loses sensation, and the dead muscle loses irritability. If it be replied that the dead muscle or nerve is not the same as the living, but that death has been accompanied by a cessation of motion in the fluids or atoms, this implies that the motion of the fluids or atoms produces life. But is there a single instance in nature of motion producing anything but motion of identically the same kind? Is there any proof from observed phenomena that mechanical motion sometimes does more than this and produces sensation, thought, and volition?"

In agreement with this last remark, Quatrefages (*Human Species*, 13) remarks: "We do not find in the application of the laws of life and in the results to which they lead the mathematical precision of the laws of gravitation and ethero-dynamy [sound and light]. Crystals, when similar in composition and when formed under similar circumstances, resemble each other perfectly; but we never find two leaves exactly alike upon the same tree."

Regarding spontaneous generation, "Pasteur proves and Tyndall corroborates that if all germs of life are excluded, inorganic matter never ferments, never of itself produces life, and remains inorganic" (*Popular Science Monthly*, Dec. 1876: 135).

**3.7.8** (see p. 384). The effect of friction in diminishing force is seen even in the provinces of imponderable matter. Every reflection of a ray of light diminishes its intensity; going in a direct line it is stronger, in a zigzag it is weaker. Moonlight is paler than sunlight. But reflection is resistance by friction. The deflection of a bullet diminishes its motion. When it glances from a rock its movement is less swift than before the glancing. The same is true of sound when deflected and of heat when reflected.

**3.7.9** (see p. 387). The fallacy in pseudoevolution is the assumption that variation is identical with transmutation, that the rise of new varieties is the same thing as the rise of new species. Quatrefages (*Human Species*, 37) notices this: "Lamarck, St. Hilaire, Darwin and his school consider the species not only as variable but as transmutable. The specific types are not merely modified, they are replaced by new types. Variation is, in their estimation, only a phase of the very different phenomena of transmutation." Consider, for illustration of this remark of Quatrefages, Darwin's explanation of the moral sense out of the gregarious instinct in animals, and this latter from animal instinct. Animals associate; thence cooperation, as in the instance of beavers; then the wishes of others of the same community are perceived; then the idea of a common good; then the notion of obligation to consult the common good. There are the following objections to this genesis of the moral sense. (1) This process stops with the animal, but moral obligation stops with God. Even if the improbable supposition be granted that a beaver may come to feel obliged and bound by a sense of duty to another beaver, this would not make him feel obliged and bound to a Supreme Being; if for no other reason, that there is nothing in Darwin's account of the matter by which the beaver can get the idea of such a being. The only idea the beaver has is the idea of another beaver. But a "moral sense" without a knowledge of a Supreme Being and a sense of duty to him is nonsense. (2) This process surreptitiously injects elements into succeeding parts of it that cannot be derived out of the preceding. This destroys the alleged evolution. There is a leap from actual fact to mere imagination of a fact. An examination shows this. Animals "associate" from animal instinct and "cooperate" from animal instinct. But they do not "perceive the wishes of others" from animal instinct or "have the idea of a common good" from animal instinct or "the notion of obligation to consult the common good" from animal instinct. Association and cooperation are action; but perception of others' wishes, the idea of a common good, and the notion of obligation to consult the common good are

reflection. The former may be explained by animal instinct; but the latter p 407 require human reason to account for them. This pedigree of the moral sense is like Irving's derivation of mango from Jeremiah King: "Jerry King, gherkin, cucumber, mango."

This criticism applies also to Spencer's explanation of the moral sense by the idea of utility: "Experiences of utility organized and consolidated in generations by transmission become experiences of morality; of right and wrong." The mere "organization" and "consolidation" of a thing does not alter the nature and substance of it. It only changes its form. Utility condensed *ad infinitum* is only infinite utility.

**3.7.10** (see p. 389). The materialist when pressed with the fact that there is no visible transmutation of species within the period of time that man has existed replies that the asserted change requires vast ages. This implies that natural forces grow stronger as they grow older. But the inherent force of matter is no more augmented by the increase of time than by the increase of size. If a minute atom of matter cannot start itself into motion today, it cannot in three hundred and sixty-five days; and the same is true of a granite boulder or the plant Jupiter. Longer duration will add no new and additional force to either of these which it does not intrinsically have. So also with the increase of bulk. If a grain of sand cannot begin motion from a state of rest, neither can the entire globe of which it is a part. Size, greater or smaller, is of no account in such a case, and neither is time.

**3.7.11** (see p. 390). J. W. Dawson (*Salient Points in the Science of the Earth*, chap. 7) presents the following view of the succession of animal forms, as the teaching of scientific paleontology. "(1) The existence of life and organization on the earth is not eternal or even coeval with the beginning of the physical universe, but may possibly date from Laurentinian or immediately pre-Laurentinian ages. (2) The introduction of new species of animals and plants has been a continuous process, not in the sense of derivation of one species from another, but in the higher sense of the continued operation of the cause or causes which introduced life at first. (3) Though thus continuous the process has not been uniform; but periods of rapid production of species have alternated with others in which many disappeared and few were introduced. This may have been an effect of physical cycles reacting on the progress of life. (4) Species, like individuals, have greater energy and vitality in their younger stages and rapidly assume all their varietal forms and extend themselves as widely as external circumstances will permit. Like individuals, also, they have their periods of old age and decay, though the life of some species has been of enormous duration in comparison with that of others; the difference appearing to be connected with degrees of adaptation to different conditions of life. (5) Many allied species, constituting groups of animals and plants, have made their appearance at once in various parts of the earth, and these groups have obeyed the same laws with the individual and the species in culminating rapidly and then slowly diminishing, though a large group once introduced has rarely disappeared together. (6) Groups of species, as genera and orders, do not usually begin with their highest or lowest forms, but with intermediate and generalized types, and they show a capacity for both elevation and degradation in their subsequent history. (7) The history of life presents a progress from the lower to the higher and from the simpler to the more complex and from the more generalized to the more specialized. In this progress new types are introduced and take the place of the older ones, which sink to a relatively subordinate place and thus become degraded. But the physical and organic changes have been so correlated and adjusted that life has been enabled to assume more complex forms, and thus older forms have been made to prepare the way for newer, so that there has been, on the whole, a steady elevation culminating in man. Elevation and specialization have, however, been secured at the expense of vital energy and range of adaptation, until the new element of a rational and spiritual nature was introduced in the case of man. (8) In regard to the larger and more distinct types, we cannot find evidence that they have in their introduction been preceded by similar forms connecting them with previous groups; but there is reason to believe that many supposed representative species in successive formations are really only races or varieties. (9) Insofar as we can trace their history, specific types are permanent in their characters from their introduction to their extinction, and their earlier varietal forms are similar to their later ones. (10) Paleontology furnishes no direct evidence, perhaps never can furnish any, as to the actual transmutation of one species into another;

but the drift of its testimony is to show that species come in *per saltum*,<sup>59</sup> rather than by any slow and gradual process. (11) The origin and history of life cannot, any more than the origin and determination of matter, be explained on purely material grounds, but involve the consideration of power referable to the unseen and spiritual world. There is a creative force above and beyond them, to the threshold of which we shall inevitably be brought.”

**3.7.12** (see p. 394). Respecting Haeckel’s assertion that “natural selection, which acts without a plan, produces quite the same result as artificial selection, which the will of man makes according to a plan,” Janet (*Materialism of the Present: A Critique of Büchner*, 174) remarks: “The true stumbling block of Darwin’s theory is the passage from artificial to natural selection; it is when he wishes to prove that a blind and designless nature has been able to obtain, by the fortuitous occurrence of circumstances, the same results which man obtains by well-calculated industry.”

**3.7.13** (see p. 394). A striking example of the punctilious carrying out of the plan of structure when there is no use for the organ is seen in the whale. The whale is not a fish, but a mammal. It has lungs, not gills; cannot live continually under water, but must come to the surface to breathe; is warm blooded, having a bilocular heart, movable eyelids, ears opening externally, viviparous generation, and suckles its young. In all these respects it is like a quadruped, yet there are no external legs. “But,” observes Roget (*Physiology* 1.485), “although the bones of the legs do not exist, yet there are found in the hinder and lower part of the trunk, concealed in the flesh and quite detached from the spine, two small bones, apparently corresponding to pelvic bones, for the presence of which no more probable reason can be assigned than the tendency to preserve an analogy with the more developed structures of the same type. A similar adherence to the law of uniformity in the plan and construction of all the animals belonging to the same class is strikingly shown in the conformation of the bones of the anterior extremities of the cetacea; for although they present, externally, no resemblance to the leg and foot of a quadruped, being fashioned into finlike members, with a flat oval surface for striking the water, yet when the bones are stripped of the thick integument which covers them and conceals their real form, we find them exhibiting the same divisions into carpal and metacarpal bones, and phalanxes of fingers, as exist in the most highly developed organization, not merely of a quadruped, but also of a monkey, and even of a man.”

**3.7.14** (see p. 397). The biblical chronology, while forbidding the immense antiquity for the existence of man on the globe attributed to him by one class of geologists, does not require an exact mathematical definiteness, but allows an uncertain margin of one or two thousand years. This is due to the difference between the two texts from which the contents of Scripture are derived. The following account of the case is given by a learned writer in the *London Quarterly Review* (43.120–21): “We are accustomed to p 408 suppose that we possess an undoubted, precise canon of chronology in the Holy Scriptures; but perhaps next to a clear acquaintance with what the sacred volume does undoubtedly contain, the most valuable knowledge is of what it does not. In the *Universal History* above one hundred and twenty dates are given for the creation, most of them made out by persons who regard with sincere reverence, and derive their arguments from, the sacred writings. The first of these places that event 6984 B.C.; the last, 3616 B.C.; differing by the amount of more than 3,000 years. The period of the deluge is fixed with no greater uniformity. The Septuagint gives 3246 B.C.; the Hebrew text, according to Ussher, gives 2348 B.C. The extreme dates assigned to the exodus are those of Josephus, according to Hales, who agrees nearly with Des Vignolles, 1648 B.C.; of the English Bible, according to Ussher, 1491 B.C.; and by the common Jewish chronology, 1312 B.C.

“Our object is to show that the longer of these chronologies is the best supported and affords ample space for the highest antiquity which the great Egyptian kingdom can claim. For the period between the

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<sup>59</sup> 59. in through a leap, suddenly. The meaning here is that species arise suddenly rather than gradually.

flood and the first connection of sacred history with Egypt we have four distinct authorities: the Septuagint version; the Samaritan text; Josephus, who professes to have adhered faithfully to the sacred volume; and the Hebrew chronology adopted in our Bibles. None of these, strictly speaking, agree, but the first three concur in assigning a much longer period between the deluge and the birth of Abraham: the Septuagint, 1,070 years; the Hebrew, only 292. If it should be urged that the translators of the Septuagint, environed on all sides by Egyptian antiquities and standing in awe of Alexandrian learning, endeavored to conform their national annals to the more extended chronological system and that Josephus, either influenced by their authority or actuated by the same motives, may have adopted the same views, yet the ancient Samaritan text still remains an unexceptionable witness to the high antiquity of the longer period. In fact, we are perhaps wasting our time in contesting this point, as we may fairly consider the Hebrew chronology of this period between the deluge and the call of Abraham almost exploded. In our own country, most of those who have investigated the subject, men who certainly cannot be suspected of want of reverence for the sacred volume—Bryant, Faber, and Hales—concur in reverting to the system which generally prevailed in the early Christian church; and, last, Russell, in an essay prefixed to his work on the connection of sacred and profane history, has shown, with great probability, not only the late construction of what may perhaps fairly be called the rabbinic chronology, in the second century of Christianity, but also, following the steps of the ancient Christian writers on the subject, the peculiar object for which it was framed.

“It would be difficult, indeed, to conceive the vast extension and multiplication of the human race, the slow development of civilization, the revolutions in the forms of government, the rise of mighty empires, the splendor of great cities, within the narrow limits of two or three centuries; but in above a thousand years what changes might not be wrought. Compare the France and England, the Paris and London, of the days of William the Conqueror with their present state; or the wild woods of America, inhabited by wandering tribes of savages, with her present populous cities. Nor must it be forgotten that from the visit of Abraham to Egypt, above two centuries more elapsed before the migration of his descendants; and of the state of Egypt in the days of the patriarch we know little more than that a king was ruling, with some degree of state, in some part of Lower Egypt—probably at Tanis or Zoan; and that the valley of the Nile had begun to make its rich return to the toil of the agricultural cultivator.”

**3.7.15** (see p. 398). In corroboration of the position that the population of the globe at the beginning of profane history was comparatively sparse, the following estimates are noteworthy. Caesar states that the population of Helvetia, or Switzerland, in his time was 368,000. In 1880 it was 2,846,000. Gibbon (chap. 9) asserts that the populousness of northern Europe in the time of Caesar has been much exaggerated. Robertson (*Charles V*, 1) says the same; and so does Hume (*Populousness of Ancient Nations*). In 1756 Burke says: “I think the numbers of men now upon earth are computed at five hundred millions, at the most” (*Vindication of Natural Society*). The Abbé Raynal (*History* 6) says concerning the Mexican Empire: “The Castilian historians tell us that before the tenth century after Christ this vast space was inhabited only by some wandering hordes that were entirely savage. They tell us that about this period some tribes issuing from the north and northwest occupied parts of the territories and introduced milder manners. They tell us that three hundred years after, a people still more advanced in civilization and coming from the neighborhood of California, settled on the borders of the lakes and built Mexico there.”

**3.7.16** (see p. 399). Whether some of the dynasties of Manetho were contemporaneous or all of them were successive makes a great difference with the antiquity of Egypt. Eratosthenes (died 194 B.C.), adopting the first view, reduced Manetho’s Old Empire from 2,900 years to 1,076. Panodorus (?) reduced the 5,000 or more years of the thirty dynasties to 3,555. The total number of years assigned by Manetho to his thirty dynasties is given in the Eusebius of Syncellus (A.D. 800) as 4,728, in the Armenian Eusebius as 5,205, in the Africanus of Syncellus as 5,374. Eusebius (*Chronicle* 1.20) says: “We are told that there were, perhaps, at one and the same time several kings of Egypt” (Rawlinson, *Egypt* 2.6–8).

**3.7.17** (see p. 399). Carpenter (*Physiology* §§941–48) mentions the following facts in proof of the original unity of the human species and of the variations produced by climate and manner of life: “The influence

of habits of life, continued from generation to generation, upon the form of the head is remarkably evinced by the transition from one type to another [namely, the prognathous, pyramidal, and elliptical skulls], which may be observed in nations that have undergone a change in their manners and customs and have made an advance in civilization. Thus, to mention but one instance, the Turks at present inhabiting the Ottoman and Persian empires are undoubtedly descended from the same stock with those nomadic races which are still spread through Central Asia. The former, however, having conquered the countries which they now inhabit, eight centuries since, have gradually settled down to the fixed and regular habits of the Indo-European race and have made corresponding advances in civilization; while the latter have continued their wandering mode of life and can scarcely be said to have made any decided advance during the same interval. Now the long-since civilized Turks have undergone a complete transformation into the likeness of Europeans, while their nomadic relatives retain the pyramidal configuration of the skull in a very marked degree. Some have attributed this change in the physical structure of the Turkish race to the introduction of Circassian slaves into the harems of the Turks; but this could only affect the opulent and powerful among the race; and the great mass of the Turkish population have always intermarried among themselves. In like manner, even the Negro prognathous head and face may become assimilated to the European by long subjection to similar influences. Thus, in some of our older West Indian colonies, it is not uncommon to meet with Negroes, the descendants of those first introduced there, who exhibit a very European physiognomy; and it has even been asserted that a Negro belonging to the Dutch portion of Guiana may be distinguished from another belonging to the British settlements by the similarity of the features and expression of each to those which respectively characterize his masters. The effect could not be here produced by the intermixture of bloods, since this would be made apparent by alteration of color. But not only may the pyramidal and prognathous types be elevated toward the elliptical; the elliptical may be degraded toward [p 409](#) either of these. Want, squalor, and ignorance have a special tendency to induce that diminution of the cranial portion of the skull and that increase of the facial, which characterizes the prognathous type, as cannot but be observed by anyone who takes an accurate and candid survey of the condition of the most degraded part of the population of the great towns of Great Britain and as it is seen to be preeminently the case with regard to the lowest class of Irish emigrants. A certain degree of retrogression to the pyramidal type is also to be noticed among the nomadic tribes which are to be found in every civilized community. Among these, as has been remarked by a very acute observer (Mayhew, in *London Labor and the London Poor*), according as they partake more or less of the purely vagabond nature, doing nothing whatsoever for their living, but moving from place to place, preying on the earnings of the more industrious portion of the community, so will the attributes of the nomadic races be found more or less marked in them; and they are all more or less distinguished for their high cheekbones and protruding jaws, thus showing that kind of mixture of the pyramidal with the prognathous type, which is to be seen among the lowest of the Indian and Malayo-Polynesian race. Hence we are led to conclude that, so far as regards their anatomical structure, there is no such difference among the different races of mankind as would justify to the zoologist the assertion of their distinct origin. The variations which they present in physical respects are not greater than those which we meet with between the individuals of any one race. Thus, we not only find the average duration of life to be the same, making allowance for the circumstances which induce disease, but the various epochs of life—such as the times of the first and second dentition, the period of puberty, the duration of pregnancy, the intervals of catamenia, and the time of their final cessation—present a marked general uniformity such as does not exist among similar epochs in the lives of species allied but unquestionably distinct. Further, the different races of man are all subject to the same diseases—to the sporadic, endemic, and epidemic; the only exceptions being those in which the constitution of a race has grown to a certain set of influences (as that of the Negro to the malaria which generates certain pernicious fevers in the Europeans) producing a hereditary immunity in the race, which is capable of being acquired by individuals of other races by acclimatization begun sufficiently early. Although the comparison of the structural characters of the human races does not furnish any positive evidence of their descent from a common stock, it yet justifies the assertion that even if their stocks were originally distinct, there could have been no essential difference between them—the descendants of any one stock being able to assume

the characteristics of the other. The most important physiological test, however, of specific unity or diversity is that furnished by the generative process. It may be considered as a fundamental fact, alike in the vegetable and in the animal kingdom, that hybrid races originating in the sexual connection of individuals of two different species, do not tend to self-perpetuation; the hybrids being nearly sterile with each other, although they may propagate with either of their parent races, in which the hybrid race will soon merge; while, on the other hand, if the parents be themselves varieties of the same species, the hybrid constitutes but another variety, and its powers of reproduction are rather increased than diminished, so that it may continue to propagate its own race or may be used for the production of other varieties almost *ad infinitum*. The application of this principle to the human races leaves no doubt with respect to their specific unity; for, as is well known, not only do all the races of men breed freely with each other, but the mixed race is generally superior in physical development and in tendency to rapid multiplication to either of the parent stocks. Finally, the question of psychical conformity or difference among the races of mankind is one which has a most direct bearing upon the question of their specific unity or diversity; but it has an importance of its own, even greater than that which it derives from this source. For, as has been recently argued with great justice and power by Agassiz, the real unity of mankind does not lie in the consanguinity of a common descent, but has its basis in the participation of every race in the same moral nature and in the community of moral rights which hence becomes the privilege of all. ‘This is a bond,’ says Agassiz, ‘which every man feels more and more the further he advances in his intellectual and moral culture and which in this development is continually placed upon higher and higher ground; so much so that the physical relation arising from a common descent is finally lost sight of in the consciousness of higher moral obligations. It is in these obligations that the moral rights of men have their foundation; and thus while Africans have the hearts and consciences of human beings, it could never be right to treat them as domestic cattle or as wild fowl, even if it were ever so abundantly demonstrated that their race was but an improved species of ape and ours a degenerate kind of god.’ The psychical comparison of the various races of mankind is really, therefore, the most important part of the whole investigation; but it has been, nevertheless, the most imperfectly pursued until the inquiry was taken up by Dr. Prichard. The mass of evidence which he has accumulated on this subject leaves no reasonable doubt that no more ‘impassable barrier’ really exists between the different races with respect to their psychical than in regard to their physical peculiarities; the variations in the development of their respective psychical powers and capacities not being greater, either in kind or degree, than those which present themselves between individuals of our own or of any other race, by some members of which a high intellectual and moral standard has been attained. The tests by which we recognize the claims of the outcast and degraded of our own or any other highly civilized community to a common humanity are the same as those by which we should estimate the true relation of the Negro, the Bushman, or the Australian to the cultivated European. If, on the one hand, we admit the influence of want, ignorance, and neglect in accounting for the debasement of the savages of our own great cities and if we witness the same effects occurring under the same conditions among the Bushmen of Southern Africa, we can scarcely hesitate in admitting that the long-continued operation of the same agencies has had much to do with the psychical as well as the physical deterioration of the Negro, Australian, and other degraded races.”

**3.7.18** (see p. 400). The following article upon the antiquity of man by John A. Zahn was published in the *American Catholic Review*:

“Archeologists divide the first period of human history into three ages called, in the order of succession, the Stone Age, the Bronze Age, and the Iron Age.

“If the evolution theory of the origin of man and the development of civilization be true, we should expect to find the archeological division universally true and applicable equally to all peoples in all parts of the world. There does not seem to be any doubt that in certain parts of Europe, perhaps throughout the greater portion of it, the Stone Age preceded the Ages of Bronze and Iron. It would be a mistake, however, to imagine that the Stone Age marks a fixed period in human history and that it prevailed at the same time in all lands and among all peoples. Nothing could be farther from the truth. While one nation

or one tribe was living in the Age of Stone, its next neighbors may have been enjoying the advantages of the Age of Bronze or of Iron.

“If there is no fixed period in time for the Stone Age, neither is there a hard-and-fast line of demarcation between the Age of Stone and that of Bronze or between the Age of Bronze and that of Iron. They frequently overlap one another and are, in many instances, quite synchronous.

“Again, it would be equally wide of the truth to assert that all peoples passed through the three phases of civilization indicated by the Ages of Stone, Bronze, and Iron. This is so far from being p 410 the case that numerous instances are citable when there were but two ages, and sometimes only one. Some of the more barbarous tribes of the earth are still in the Stone Age and have never known any other. There are others, in Europe, that have never known a Bronze Age, but who passed directly from the Stone to the Iron Age. From the fact that stone, bronze, and iron implements are found together in the most ancient Chaldean tombs and Assyrian ruins, archeologists have inferred that neither Chaldea nor Assyria ever knew the Ages of Bronze and Iron as distinct from that of Stone. More remarkable still, we find that, in the case of the majority of the tribes of Africa, excluding the Egyptians, the only age that has ever existed is the Age of Iron. Stone has been used, but from the most remote period that archeology has been able to reach, iron has been in common use, while bronze has been entirely unknown.

“Yet more. According to the researches of Dr. Schliemann, there was neither a Stone Age nor a Metal Age in Greece and Asia Minor. In the finds at Troy, especially, there is the most striking evidence of devolution. Here, as well as at Mycenae, the ornaments and implements discovered, even in the lowest strata, far from indicating a state of savagery and degradation, betoken one of high civilization. In the light of Schliemann’s discoveries, not to speak of others pointing in the same direction made in Egypt and among the ruins of Assyria and Babylonia, bearing on the condition of primitive man in the Orient, the conclusion seems to be inevitable that the modern evolution school is wrong—that the history of our race is not one of development, but one of degeneration. Thus the story of the fall, as recorded in Holy Writ, is corroborated by the declarations of the newest of sciences—prehistoric archeology.

“The Age of Iron, even according to those who claim a great antiquity for our race, was posterior to the alleged Age of Bronze. But when, in European countries, was the Age of Bronze ushered in, and when did it close? The bronze used in Europe in prehistoric times and even in historic times was brought by the Phoenicians. The period of commercial prosperity for Phoenicia, it is thought, extended approximately from the twelfth to the fifth century before the Christian era. And this is the epoch, according to the latest and most reliable researches, during which the many objects of bronze, mostly of Phoenician design and manufacture, were distributed over western, central, and northern Europe. This would place the so-called Bronze Age in the neighborhood of 1000 B.C. But this, probably, is assigning it a maximum antiquity.

“As to the Iron Age in Scandinavia, it belonged, if we are to credit the ablest authorities on the subject, to the fourth and sixth centuries after Christ. The Age of Iron in Gaul dates back, probably, to the fourth century before our era. Judging from the finds in the necropolis of Hallstatt, the Iron Age began in Austria one or two centuries earlier. The Stone Age terminated in Denmark about 500 B.C. or 600 B.C.

“But the fact is, it is utterly impossible to arrive at anything even approximating exact dates for any of the three Ages. They are different for different peoples. For this reason, therefore, to construct a system of chronology based on the implements of stone, bronze, and iron that have been used by man in the prehistoric past is, at least in the present state of science, clearly impracticable.

“What has been said of the futility of all attempts to arrive at a system of chronology based on the various objects of human industry obviously applies with equal force to the skulls and other bones of primitive man that have attracted so much attention during the past few decades. They can, no more than the implements of stone and bronze and iron so far discovered, be accepted as evidence of the great antiquity of the human race.

“We heartily endorse the words of W. H. Holmes, of the Smithsonian Institution, when he says: ‘The whole discussion of early man has been so surcharged with misconception of facts and errors of interpretation that all is vitiated, as a stream with impurities about its source. Until an exhaustive scientific study of the origin, form, genesis, and meaning of all the handiwork of man made use of in the discussion

is completed, the discussion of man and culture is worse than useless, and speculation can lead but to embarrassment and disaster.’

“When examining some of the evidence presented by geologists in favor of the antiquity of man, one cannot help saying with Goethe, ‘The thing the most terrible to hear is the constantly reiterated assurance that geologists agree on a given point.’ In 1857 the famous Neanderthal skull was discovered near Düsseldorf. Professor Schaaffhausen adjudged it to be ‘the most ancient memorial of the early inhabitants of Europe.’ Professor Fuhbrott wrote a book on it in which he declared the age of the relic to be from 200,000 to 300,000 years, but Dr. Mayer, of Bonn, after a critical examination of the ‘fossil’ and the locality in which it was found came to the conclusion that it was the skull of a Cossack killed in 1814!”

The conclusions that are drawn within the province of paleontology are of a very uncertain nature because the data are largely conjecture and are also exposed to misrepresentation and forgery. The following extract from the public press illustrates this:

“In those parts of England and Europe where relics of the Stone Age have been found and where new discoveries occasionally come to light, the manufacture of counterfeit Paleolithic implements has become a fine art. Forgeries of prehistoric antiquities, both in stone and bronze, are numerous. The chipping of the English imitations is said to be superior to that of the French, but in each case the lancelet form is the favorite. The appearance of antiquity is usually given by a thin coating of fine clay, but at Amiens a plan of whitening the flint by long boiling in the family kettle has been introduced. In some of the bone caves of the reindeer period, both in France and Germany, ancient bones have had designs engraved upon them by modern forgers, and ancient flint tools have been inserted in sockets of ancient bone so as together to form a composite falsification. Something of the same kind has been practiced with regard to relics from the Swiss lake dwellings, many of the bronze objects from which have also been imitated by casting. Of Neolithic implements forgeries are equally abundant and in some instances equally difficult to detect. Large perforated axheads when made of soft sandstone, which could not possibly be used for cutting purposes, of course betray themselves; but the modern flint axes and arrowheads are not so easily distinguishable from the ancient. To the experienced eye there is, however, a difference both in the workmanship and the character of the surface, the ancient arrowheads having probably been worked into shape by pressure with a tool of stag’s horn and not by blows of an iron hammer. The grinding of the edges of modern imitations has usually been effected on a revolving grindstone; in ancient times a fixed stone was always used, on which the surface and edges of axes or hatchets were ground by friction.”

**3.7.19** (see p. 401). In some nations civilization is found to be very ancient and in others barbarism very modern. Two thousand years before Christ, Egypt, Babylon, and Assyria were far advanced in the knowledge of the mechanical arts and inventions. Two thousand years after Christ the barbarous tribes of the islands of the sea and of portions of the continents, like Alaska and Greenland, have little or no knowledge of them. “The tools of the pyramid builders,” says Petrie, “show that the Egyptian stoneworkers of 4,000 years ago had a surprising acquaintance with what have been considered modern tools. Among the many tools used by the pyramid builders were both solid and tubular drills and straight and circular saws. The drills, like those of today, were set with jewels (probably coriandrum, as the diamond was very scarce), and even lathe tools had such cutting edges. So remarkable was the quality of the tubular drills and the skill of the workmen that the cutting marks in hard granite give no indication of wear of the tool, p 411 while a cut of a tenth of an inch was made in the hardest rock at each revolution, and a hole through both the hardest and softest material was bored perfectly smooth and uniform throughout. Of the material and method of making the tools nothing is known.” Even in semibarbarous tribes a considerable inventiveness is found. “We were shown,” says Lady Brassy (*Last Voyage*, 148), “one of the ingenious air-compressing tubes which have been used by the natives of Borneo for hundreds of years to produce fire. Professor Faraday alluded in one of his lectures to the possibility of producing fire by means of compressed air as a discovery of comparatively modern science; whereas the fact has long been known and put to use in these obscure regions of the earth.”

Respecting the high degree of civilization in Egypt and Babylon at a very early date, corroborating the representations of the Pentateuch and Job, J. W. Dawson (*London Expositor*) says: “We are only

beginning to understand the height of civilization to which Egypt and other ancient countries around the Mediterranean had attained even before the time of Moses. Maspero and Tomkins have illustrated the extent and accuracy of the geographical knowledge of the Egyptians of this period. The latter closes a paper on this subject with the following words: 'The Egyptians, dwelling in their green, warm river course, and on the watered levels of their El Faiyûm and Delta, were yet a very enterprising people, full of curiosity, literary, scientific in method, admirable delineators of nature, skilled surveyors, makers of maps, trained and methodical administrators of domestic and foreign affairs, kept alert by the movements of their great river and by the necessities of commerce, which forced them to the Syrian forests for their building timber and to Kush and Pun for their precious furniture woods and ivory, to say nothing of incense, aromatics, cosmetics, asphalt, exotic plants, and pet and strange animals, with a hundred other needful things.' The heads copied by Petrie from Egyptian tombs show that the physical features of all the people inhabiting the surrounding countries, as well as their manners, industries, and arts, were well known to the Egyptians. The papers of Lockyer have shown that long before the Mosaic age the dwellers by the Euphrates and the Nile had mapped out the heavens, ascertained the movements of the moon and planets, established the zodiacal signs, discriminated the poles of the ecliptic and the equator, ascertained the law of eclipses and the precession of the equinoxes, and, in fact, had worked out all the astronomical data which can be learned by observation and had applied them to practical uses. Lockyer would even ask us to trace this knowledge as far back as 6000 B.C. or into the postglacial or antediluvian period; but, however this may be, astronomy was a very old science in the time of Moses, and it is quite unnecessary to postulate a late date for the references to the heavens in Genesis or Job. In geodesy and allied arts also, the Egyptians had long before this time attained to a perfection never since excelled, so that our best instruments can detect no errors in very old measurements and levelings. The arts of architecture, metallurgy, and weaving had attained to the highest development; civilization and irrigation, with their consequent agriculture and cattle breeding, were old and well-understood arts; and how much of science and practical sagacity is needed for regulating the distribution of Nile water, anyone may learn who will refer to the reports of Colin Scott Moncrieff and his assistants. Sculpture and painting in the age of Moses had attained their acme and were falling into conventional styles. Law and the acts of government had become fixed and settled. Theology and morals and the doctrine of rewards and punishments had been elaborated into complex systems. Ample material existed for history, not only in monuments and temple inscriptions, but in detailed writings on papyrus. Egypt has left a wealth of records of this kind, unsurpassed by any nation, and very much of these belongs to the time before Moses; while, as Birch has truly said, the Egyptian historical texts are 'in most instances contemporaneous with the events they record and written and executed under public control.' There was also abundance of poetical and imaginative literature and treatises on medicine and other useful arts. At the court of Pharaoh correspondence was carried on with all parts of the civilized world in many languages and in various forms of writing, including that of Egypt itself, that of Chaldea, and probably also the alphabetical writing afterward used by the Hebrews, Phoenicians, and Greeks, but which seems to have originated at a very early period among the Mineans or Punites of South Arabia. Educations were carried on in institutions of various grades, from ordinary schools to universities. In the latter, we are told, were professors or 'mystery teachers' of astronomy, geography, mining, theology, history, and languages, as well as many of the higher technical arts."

According to a correspondent of the *London Daily Chronicle*, an exhibition of exceeding interest has just been opened at the Vienna Museum: "This consists of a collection of upward of 10,000 Egyptian papyrus documents, which were discovered at El Faiyûm and purchased by the Austrian Archduke Rainer several years ago. The collection is unique, and the documents, which are written in eleven different languages, have all been deciphered and arranged scientifically. They cover a period of 2,500 years and furnish remarkable evidence as to the culture and public and private life of the ancient Egyptians and other nations. They are also said to contain evidence that printing from type was known to the Egyptians as far back as the tenth century B.C. Other documents show that a flourishing trade in the manufacture of paper from linen rags existed six centuries before the process was known in Europe. Another interesting

feature in the collection is a number of commercial letters, contracts, tax records, wills, novels, tailors' bills, and even love letters, dating from 1200 B.C.

“There are two documents in existence which sufficiently prove the wealth and civilization of Jerusalem in the time of Hezekiah (726 B.C.). The first contains evidence of wide commercial relations; the second gives indications of a considerable lapse of time since the first birth of Hebrew civilization. The first is the account given by Sennacherib of his unsuccessful siege of Jerusalem; the second is the celebrated Siloam inscription, the oldest monument of Hebrew literature still extant. In the face of these documents it is no longer possible to suppose that the Hebrews were merely rude tribes, which only attained to a knowledge of writing and to a national literature by adopting the civilization of their Assyrian and Babylonian captors. Hezekiah, we are told by Sennacherib, sent a tribute, including £15,000 of gold, 800 talents (£400,000) of silver, precious stones, a chain of ivory, elephants' hides and tusks, rare woods, etc. The mention of ivory is important. We know that Egyptian ivory objects have been found in Nineveh and in the oldest remains of Troy. It appears, therefore, that during, or more probably before, the time of Hezekiah, a trade with Egypt existed. We learn that Sargon took 27,280 prisoners from the city of Samaria in 772 B.C. This would make Jerusalem, which was a city certainly as important as Samaria, cover about 200 acres of ground, representing a population of at least 20,000 souls. The Siloam inscription has been placed by Dr. Taylor as late as the time of Manasseh; but if we accept the Old Testament account of the great waterworks of Hezekiah (2 Chron. 39:30), it seems more probable that the date should be earlier than 703 B.C.” (Conder, *Syrian Stone Lore*, 116–17).

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## 8 Providence

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“God’s works of providence are his most holy, wise, and powerful, preserving and governing all his creatures and all their actions” (Westminster Larger Catechism 18). Preservation and government are the two functions in the eternal providence of God. They presuppose creation. Preservation is described in Heb. 1:3 as an “upholding.” The Son of God “upholds all things by the word of his power.” Nothing that is created *ex nihilo* is self-sustaining. Consequently, it must be sustained in being. It would not require a positive act of omnipotence, antithetic to that exerted in creation from nothing, in order to annihilate created existences. Simple cessation to uphold would result in annihilation. For to suppose that matter, for example, could persist in being after the withdrawal of God’s preserving power, with such an intensity as to necessitate a direct act of omnipotence to annihilate it, would imply that matter has self-existence and self-continuance. But this is an attribute that is incommunicable to the creature. This is true of finite mind, as well as of matter. Created spiritual substance is not immortal because it has self-subsistence imparted to it by the Creator, but because he intends to uphold and sustain it in being forever:

When we speak of the soul as created naturally immortal, we mean that it is by divine pleasure created such a substance as not having in itself any composition or other particles of corruption will naturally or of itself continue forever, that is, will not by any natural decay or by any power of nature be dissolved or destroyed; but yet nevertheless depends continually upon God, who has power to destroy or annihilate it if he should think fit (Clarke, *Letter to Dodwell*). (See supplement 3.8.1.)

Preservation is more than merely imparting to matter certain properties and placing it under certain invariable laws. This is the deistical view of providence. God is not immediately present nor does he operate directly, but only at a distance. This amounts to communicating self-subsistence to the creature. God so constitutes the creation that it can continue to exist and move by means of its own inherent properties and laws. But the elements and laws of matter are only another name for matter itself; another aspect or mode of matter. The deistical theory, consequently, implies that matter, after its creation, is self-sustaining and self-governing. But self-subsistence and self-sustenance are incommunicable properties. They can characterize only the Creator. Neither is preservation the immediate presence and operation of God, as the soul of the world. This is the pantheistic view of providence. According to this theory, God is the informing life, the plastic force in mind and matter. God is the only agent in this case; as he is the only substance, of which his life is the life. This allows no secondary substance and no second causes. [p 413](#)

According to the Scriptures, preservation is the immediate operation of God as a distinct and different being upon, in, and with the creature as a different and distinct being and always in accordance with the nature of the creature. In the material world, God immediately works in and through material properties and laws. In the mental world, God immediately works in and through the properties and faculties of mind. Preservation never runs counter to creation. God does not violate in providence what he has established in creation. The Creator, if we may so say, adjusts and accommodates himself to his creature in his providential operation. “God,” says Cardinal Toletus, “concurrit with second causes in accordance with their nature. To work out his own most agreeable arrangement of everything, he concurs freely with free causes; with necessary causes, necessarily; with weak causes, weakly; and with powerful causes, powerfully.”<sup>1</sup> The best illustration of the mode in which God operates in providence is found in the action of the human soul upon the body. The soul is immediately present to and with the body, yet a different essence from it. The mental force that moves a muscle is not physical, but different in kind from physical force. The soul is not the mere animal vitality which inheres in the muscle and in the body generally. If it were, it would not be mental force. If the human soul moved the human body, not voluntarily, but in the same way that the vegetable life moves the atoms of the plant or the animal life moves the molecules of animal protoplasm, it would be only a plastic and informing force that would die with the plant or the animal. It would not be a distinct and different subject or substance from the body. The soul as an ego and a whole exists in every part of the body and operates immediately at every point of the body, yet as an entity other than the body and controlling it. It is present at every point where there is bodily sensation and works at every point where there is bodily motion. So, also, in the instance of God and the

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<sup>1</sup> 1. Deus concurrat cum causis secundis juxta ipsarum naturam; cum liberis libere, cum necessariis necessario, cum debilibus debiliter, cum fortibus fortiter, pro sua suavissima dispositione universali operando.

created universe, there are two beings of different substance and nature, one of which is immediately present with the other, directly operating in and upon it, upholding, and governing. The immediate operation of God in his providence is taught in Acts 17:28: “In him we live and move and have our being (*kai esmen*).”<sup>2</sup> God preserves (a) the being, that is, the substance, both mental and material, of the creature; (b) the inherent properties and qualities of the substance given in creation; (c) the properties and qualities acquired by use, development, and habit.

Thus providential agency relates (a) to physical nature generally: “He causes grass to grow” (Ps. 104:14); “he causes vapors to ascend” (135:5–7; 147:8–15); “he removes the mountains and shakes the earth out of her place” (Job 9:5–9); “he gives rain from heaven and fruitful seasons” (Acts 14:17); (b) to the animal creation (Ps. 104:21–29; 147:9): “Not a sparrow falls to the ground without your father” (Matt. 6:26; 10:29); (c) to the events of human history (1 Chron. 16:31; Ps. 47:7; Prov. 21:1; Job 12:23; Isa. 10:12–15; Dan. 2:21); (d) to individual life (1 Sam. 2:6; Ps. 18:30; Prov. 16:9; Isa. 45:5; James 4:13–14); (e) to so-called fortuitous events (Exod. 21:13; Ps. 75:6–7): “Trouble does not spring out of the ground” p 414 (Job 5:6); “the lot is cast into the lap, but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord” (Prov. 16:33):

All nature is but art unknown to thee,  
And chance direction which you cannot see.  
—Pope

(f) to particulars as well as universals: “The hairs of your head are all numbered” (Matt. 10:29; 10:20); universal providence logically implies particular providence because the universal is composed of particulars and depends upon them more or less; moreover, in reference to the infinite being, great and small are alike; the pagan view of providence made it universal only: “The gods are concerned with weighty matters and ignore what is inconsequential”<sup>3</sup> (Cicero, *Concerning the Nature of the Gods* 2.66); (g) to the free actions of men (Exod. 12:36; 1 Sam. 24:9–15; Prov. 16:1; 19:21; 20:24; Jer. 10:23; Phil. 2:13); and (h) to the sinful actions of men (2 Sam. 16:10; 24:1; Ps. 76:10; Rom. 11:32; Acts 4:27–28).

The second part of providence is government. This follows from creation and preservation. He who originates a substance or being from nothing and upholds it must have absolute control over it: “His kingdom rules over all” (Ps. 103:19). The government of God in the physical universe is administered by means of physical laws. A law of nature is the manner in which the material elements invariably act and react upon each other under the present arrangement of divine providence. The law of gravitation, for example, is the fact that matter, as man now knows it, attracts matter inversely as the square of the distance.

The following particulars are to be noticed in respect to all the laws of nature, in distinction from mental and moral laws. A law of nature is a positive statute as much so as the statute of circumcision or the law of the Sabbath. Physical laws have no *a priori* necessity. They might have been otherwise than they are had the Creator of them so determined. God could have originated from nonentity a kind of matter that should have attracted directly as the distance or inversely as the cube of the distance. He might have established the law of chemical affinity upon a different numerical basis from the present. Supposing certain gases to combine with others in the proportion of 1, 3, 5, 7, etc., God might have created instead of them, gases that

<sup>2</sup> 2. καὶ ἔσμεν = and we are/exist

<sup>3</sup> 3. magna dii curant, parva negligunt

combine with others in the proportions of 1, 2, 4, 6, etc. This follows from the fact that creation is *ex nihilo* and consequently is absolutely untrammelled by any preexisting substance which necessitates the qualities of the thing created. He who creates matter from nonentity has the most absolute and arbitrary power conceivable, in respect to the properties which matter shall possess. A demiurge who merely molds an existing *hylē*<sup>4</sup> has no such option and freedom as this. He must take the properties of the *hylē*<sup>5</sup> into consideration. But a Creator is not thus conditioned. Galileo, in his *Dialogues on the Ptolemaic and Copernican Systems*, says, through Simplicio: “It is not to be denied that the heavens may surpass in bigness the capacity of our p 415 imaginations nor that God might have created them a thousand times larger than they are” (*Private Life of Galileo*, 237). Whewell remarks that “some writers have treated the laws of motion as self-evident and necessarily flowing from the nature of our conceptions. We conceive that this is an erroneous view and that these laws are known to us to be what they are by experience only; that the laws of motion might, so far as we can discover, have been any others” (*Astronomy and General Physics* 2.2) (see p. 59).

It follows from this that the so-called invariableness of natural laws is relative, not absolute. They are invariable under the present constitution of matter and arrangement of the material system. Suppose another constitution and arrangement, and they would be different from what they are. And such a supposition is possible, unless we assume that he who creates something from nonentity is limited and conditioned by nonentity. And surely those who can conceive that there may be a world in which two and two do not make five can conceive of more than one constitution of matter and course of nature.

The government of God in the mental world is administered (a) mediately through the properties and laws of mind and (b) immediately by the direct operation of the Holy Spirit. Moral agents are governed and controlled by all the varieties of moral influence, such as circumstances, motives, instruction, persuasion, and example, and also by the personal efficiency of the Holy Spirit upon the heart and will.

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## SUPPLEMENT

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**3.8.1** (see p. 412). Taylor (*Physical Theory of Another Life*, chap. 18) affirms that all material motion is the effect ultimately of mental volition: “Motion in the natural universe in all cases originates from mind; or, in other words, is the effect of will, either the supreme will or the will of created minds. Motion is either constant and uniform, obeying what we call a law, or it is incidental and intermittent. The visible and palpable world then, according to this theory, is motion, constant and uniform, emanating from infinite centers and springing during every instant of its continuance from the creative energy. The instantaneous cessation of this energy, at any period, is therefore abstractly quite as easily conceived of as its continuance; and whether in the next instant it shall continue or shall cease; whether the material universe shall stand or vanish, is an alternative of which, irrespective of other reasons, the one member may be as easily taken as the other; just as the moving of the hand, or the not moving it, in the next

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<sup>4</sup> 4. ὕλη = matter

<sup>5</sup> 5. ὕλη = matter

moment, depends upon nothing but our volition. The annihilation of the solid spheres, the planets and the suns, that occupy the celestial spaces, would not, on this supposition, be an act of irresistible force, crushing that which resists compression or dissipating and reducing to an ether that which firmly coheres; but it would simply be the nonexertion in the next instant of a power which has been exerted in this instant; it would be, not a destruction, but a rest; not a crash and ruin, but a pause.”

p 416<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> William Greenough Thayer Shedd and Alan W. Gomes, *Dogmatic Theology*, 3rd ed. (Phillipsburg, N.J.: P & R Pub., 2003), 311-416.

# Creation

*Why, how, and when did God create the universe?*

## EXPLANATION AND SCRIPTURAL BASIS<sup>1</sup>

How did God create the world? Did he create every different kind of plant and animal directly, or did he use some kind of evolutionary process, guiding the development of living things from the simplest to the most complex? And how quickly did God bring about creation? Was it all completed within six twenty-four-hour days, or did he use thousands or perhaps millions of years? How old is the earth, and how old is the human race?

These questions face us when we deal with the doctrine of creation. Unlike most of the earlier material in this book, this chapter treats several questions on which evangelical Christians have differing viewpoints, sometimes very strongly held ones.

This chapter is organized to move from those aspects of creation that are most clearly taught in Scripture, and on which almost all evangelicals would agree (creation out of nothing, special creation of Adam and Eve, and the goodness of the universe), to other aspects of creation about which evangelicals have had disagreements (whether God used a process of evolution to bring about much of creation, and how old the earth and the human race are).

We may define the doctrine of creation as follows: *God created the entire universe out of nothing; it was originally very good; and he created it to glorify himself.*

### A. God Created the Universe Out of Nothing

**1. Biblical Evidence for Creation Out of Nothing.** The Bible clearly requires us to believe that God created the universe out of nothing. (Sometimes the Latin phrase *ex nihilo* “out of nothing” is used; it is then said that the Bible teaches creation *ex nihilo*.) This means that before God began to create the universe, nothing else existed except God himself.<sup>2</sup>

This is the implication of Genesis 1:1, which says, “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” The phrase “the heavens and the earth” includes the entire universe. Psalm 33 also tells us, “By the word of the LORD the heavens were made, and all their host by the breath of his mouth . . . For he spoke, and it came to be; he commanded, and it stood forth” (Ps. 33:6, 9). In the New Testament, we find a universal statement at the beginning of John’s gospel: “*All things* were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made” (John 1:3). The phrase “all things” is best taken to refer to the entire universe (cf. Acts 17:24; Heb. 11:3). Paul is

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<sup>1</sup> I am grateful for many helpful comments on this chapter made by friends with specialized knowledge about some aspects of it, especially Steve Figard, Doug Brandt, and Terry Mortenson.

<sup>2</sup> When we say that the universe was created “out of nothing,” it is important to guard against a possible misunderstanding. The word *nothing* does not imply some kind of existence, as some philosophers have taken it to mean. We mean rather that God did not use any previously existing materials when he created the universe.

cf cf.—compare

quite explicit in Colossians 1 when he specifies all the parts of the universe, both visible and invisible things: “For in him *all things* were created, in heaven and on earth, *visible and invisible* whether thrones or dominions or principalities or authorities—all things were created through him and for him” (Col. 1:16). The song of the twenty-four elders in heaven likewise affirms this truth:

“You are worthy, our Lord and God,  
to receive glory and honor and power,  
for you created *all things*  
and by your will they existed and were created.” (Rev. 4:11)

In the last phrase God’s will is said to be the reason why things even “existed” at all and why they “were created.”

That God created both the heavens and the earth and everything in them is affirmed several other times in the New Testament. For instance, Acts 4:24 speaks of God as the “Sovereign Lord, who made *the heaven and the earth and the sea and everything in them.*” One of the first ways of identifying God is to say that he is the one who created all things. Barnabas and Paul explain to the pagan audience at Lystra that they are messengers of “a living God who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and all that is in them” (Acts 14:15). Similarly, when Paul is speaking to pagan Greek philosophers in Athens, he identifies the true God as “The God who made the world and everything in it” and says that this God “gives to all men life and breath and everything” (Acts 17:24–25; cf. Isa. 45:18; Rev. 10:6).

Hebrews 11:3 says, “By faith we understand that the worlds were prepared by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things which are visible” (NASB). This translation (as well as the NIV) most accurately reflects the Greek text.<sup>3</sup> Though the text does not quite teach the doctrine of creation out of nothing, it comes close to doing so, since it says that God did not create the universe out of anything that is visible. The somewhat strange idea that the universe might have been created out of something that was invisible is probably not in the author’s mind. He is contradicting the idea of creation out of previously existing matter, and for that purpose the verse is quite clear.

Romans 4:17 also implies that God created out of nothing, even if it does not exactly state it. The Greek text literally speaks of God as one who “calls things not existing as existing.” The

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cf cf.—compare

NASB NASB—New American Standard Bible

NIV NIV—New International Version

<sup>3</sup> The RSV translation (“so that what is seen was made out of things which do not appear”) apparently affirms that God made the universe out of invisible matter of some sort, but the word order of the Greek text (μη̄ ἐκ φαينوμένων) shows that the word “not” negates the phrase “out of appearing things.” The RSV translation reads as if the word “not” negated the participle “appearing,” but it would need to appear immediately before it in order to do that. See discussion in Philip Hughes, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977), pp. 443–52.

RSV translation, “calls into existence the things that do not exist” (similarly NASB) is unusual but possible grammatically,<sup>4</sup> and it makes an explicit affirmation of creation out of nothing. Yet even if we translate it so that the Greek word ὡς takes its common sense “as,” the verse says that God “calls the things which do not exist as existing” (NASB mg.). But if God speaks to or calls something that does not exist, as if in fact it did exist, then what is implied? If he calls things that do not exist as though they existed, it must mean that they will soon exist, irresistibly called into existence.

Because God created the entire universe out of nothing there is no matter in the universe that is eternal. All that we see—the mountains, the oceans, the stars, the earth itself—all came into existence when God created them. There was a time when they did not exist:

“Before the mountains were brought forth,  
or ever you had formed the earth and the world,  
from everlasting to everlasting you are God.” (Ps. 90:2)

This reminds us that God rules over all the universe and that nothing in creation is to be worshiped instead of God or in addition to him. However, were we to deny creation out of nothing, we would have to say that some matter has always existed and that it is eternal like God. This idea would challenge God’s independence, his sovereignty, and the fact that worship is due to him alone: if matter existed apart from God, then what inherent right would God have to rule over it and use it for his glory? And what confidence could we have that every aspect of the universe will ultimately fulfill God’s purposes, if some parts of it were not created by him?

The positive side of the fact that God created the universe out of nothing is that it has meaning and a purpose. God, in his wisdom, created it for something. We should try to understand that purpose and use creation in ways that fit that purpose, namely, to bring glory to God himself.<sup>5</sup> Moreover, whenever the creation brings us joy (cf. 1 Tim. 6:17), we should give thanks to the God who made it all.

**2. The Creation of the Spiritual Universe.** This creation of the entire universe includes the creation of an unseen, spiritual realm of existence: God created the angels and other kinds of heavenly beings as well as animals and man. He also created heaven as a place where his presence is especially evident. The creation of the spiritual realm is certainly implied in all the

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RSV RSV—Revised Standard Version

NASB NASB—New American Standard Bible

<sup>4</sup> See C.E.B. Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* ICC, vol. 1 (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1975), p. 244: Greek ὡς (G6055) as expressing consequence.

NASB NASB—New American Standard Bible

mg mg.—margin or marginal notes

<sup>5</sup> See section C below (pp. 271–72) on God’s purpose for creation.

cf cf.—compare

verses above that speak of God creating not only the earth but also “heaven and what is in it” (Rev. 10:6; cf. Acts 4:24), but it is also explicitly affirmed in a number of other verses. The prayer of Ezra says very clearly: “You are the LORD, you alone; you have made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth and all that is on it, the seas and all that is in them; and you preserve all of them; and the host of heaven worships you” (Neh. 9:6). The “host of heaven” in this verse seems to refer to the angels and other heavenly creatures, since Ezra says that they engage in the activity of worshiping God (the same term *host* is used to speak of angels who worship God in Ps. 103:21 and 148:2).<sup>6</sup>

In the New Testament, Paul specifies that in Christ “all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible *and invisible* whether thrones or dominions or principalities or authorities—all things were created through him and for him” (Col. 1:16; cf. Ps. 148:2–5). Here the creation of invisible heavenly beings is also explicitly affirmed.

**3. The Direct Creation of Adam and Eve.** The Bible also teaches that God created Adam and Eve in a special, personal way. “The LORD God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being” (Gen. 2:7). After that, God created Eve from Adam’s body: “So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh; and the rib which the LORD God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man” (Gen. 2:21–22). God apparently let Adam know something of what had happened, for Adam said,

“This at last is bone of my bones  
and flesh of my flesh;  
she shall be called Woman,  
because she was taken out of Man.” (Gen. 2:23)

As we shall see below, Christians differ on the extent to which evolutionary developments may have occurred after creation, perhaps (according to some) leading to the development of more and more complex organisms. While there are sincerely held differences on that question among some Christians with respect to the plant and animal kingdoms, these texts are so explicit that it would be very difficult for someone to hold to the complete truthfulness of Scripture and still hold that human beings are the result of a long evolutionary process. This is because when Scripture says that the Lord “formed man of dust from the ground” (Gen. 2:7), it does not seem possible to understand that to mean that he did it over a process that took millions of years and employed the random development of thousands of increasingly complex organisms.<sup>7</sup> Even more

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<sup>6</sup> The word translated “host” (Heb. אֲצִיָּוָה, H7372) is sometimes used to refer to the planets and stars (Deut. 4:19; Isa. 34:4; 40:26), but none of the examples cited in BDB, p. 839 (1.c) speak of the stars worshiping God, and most speak of the heavenly bodies as “the host of heaven” who are wrongly worshiped by pagans (Deut. 17:3; 2 Kings 17:16; 21:3; Jer. 8:2; et al.).

cf cf.—compare

<sup>7</sup> In spite of this explicit statement in Gen. 2:7, Derek Kidner (who holds a view of the truthfulness of Scripture compatible with that advocated in this book), does advocate the possibility of evolutionary development of a long line of pre-Adamite creatures into one of whom God finally “breathed human

impossible to reconcile with an evolutionary view is the fact that this narrative clearly portrays Eve as having no female parent: she was created directly from Adam's rib while Adam slept (Gen. 2:21). But on a purely evolutionary view, this would not be possible, for even the very first female "human being" would have been descended from some nearly human creature that was still an animal. The New Testament reaffirms the historicity of this special creation of Eve from Adam when Paul says, "For man was not made from woman, but *woman from man*. Neither was man created for woman, but woman for man" (1 Cor. 11:8–9).

The special creation of Adam and Eve shows that, though we may be like animals in many respects in our physical bodies, nonetheless we are very different from animals. We are created "in God's image," the pinnacle of God's creation, more like God than any other creature, appointed to rule over the rest of creation. Even the brevity of the Genesis account of creation places a wonderful emphasis on the importance of man in distinction from the rest of the universe. It thus resists modern tendencies to see man as meaningless against the immensity of the universe. Derek Kidner notes that Scripture stands

against every tendency to empty human history of meaning ... in presenting the tremendous acts of creation as a mere curtain-raiser to the drama that slowly unfolds throughout the length of the Bible. The prologue is over in a page; there are a thousand to follow.

By contrast, Kidner notes that the modern scientific account of the universe, true though it may be,

overwhelms us with statistics that reduce our apparent significance to a vanishing-point. Not the prologue, but the human story itself, is now the single page in a thousand, and the whole terrestrial volume is lost among uncataloged millions.<sup>8</sup>

Scripture gives us the perspective on human significance that God intends us to have. (This fact will be discussed in more detail in chapter 21, below.)

**4. The Creation of Time.** One other aspect of God's creation is the creation of time (the succession of moments one after another). This idea was discussed with respect to God's attribute of eternity in chapter 11,<sup>9</sup> and we need only summarize it here. When we speak of God's existence "before" the creation of the world, we should not think of God as existing in an unending extension of time. Rather, God's eternity means that he has a different kind of existence, an existence without the passage of time, a kind of existence that is difficult for us even to imagine. (See Job 36:26; Ps. 90:2, 4; John 8:58; 2 Peter 3:8; Rev. 1:8). The fact that God created time reminds us of his lordship over it and our obligation to use it for his glory.

**5. The Work of the Son and of the Holy Spirit in Creation.** God the Father was the primary agent in initiating the act of creation. But the Son and the Holy Spirit were also active. The Son

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life" (*Genesis: An Introduction and Commentary* TOTC [London and Chicago: InterVarsity Press, 1967], p. 28). But he then affirms a special creation of Eve (p. 29).

<sup>8</sup> Kidner, *Genesis* p. 57.

<sup>9</sup> See p. 169.

is often described as the one “through” whom creation came about. “All things were made *through* him, and without him was not anything made that was made” (John 1:3). Paul says there is “one Lord, Jesus Christ, *through* whom are all things and *through* whom we exist” (1 Cor. 8:6), and, “all things were created *through* him and for him” (Col. 1:16). We read also that the Son is the one “through whom” God “created the world” (Heb. 1:2). These passages give a consistent picture of the Son as the active agent carrying out the plans and directions of the Father.

The Holy Spirit was also at work in creation. He is generally pictured as completing, filling, and giving life to God’s creation. In Genesis 1:2, “the Spirit of God was moving over the face of the waters,” indicating a preserving, sustaining, governing function. Job says, “The spirit of God has made me, and the breath of the Almighty gives me life” (Job 33:4). In a number of Old Testament passages, it is important to realize that the same Hebrew word (רוּחַ, H8120) can mean, in different contexts, “spirit,” or “breath,” or “wind.” But in many cases there is not much difference in meaning, for even if one decided to translate some phrases as the “breath of God” or even the “wind of God,” it would still seem to be a figurative way of referring to the activity of the Holy Spirit in creation. So the psalmist, in speaking of the great variety of creatures on the earth and in the sea, says, “When you send forth your Spirit, they are created” (Ps. 104:30; note also, on the Holy Spirit’s work, Job 26:13; Isa. 40:13; 1 Cor. 2:10). However, the testimony of Scripture to the specific activity of the Holy Spirit in creation is scarce. The work of the Holy Spirit is brought into much greater prominence in connection with the inspiring of the authors of Scripture and the applying of Christ’s redemptive work to the people of God.<sup>10</sup>

## **B. Creation Is Distinct From God Yet Always Dependent on God**

The teaching of Scripture about the relationship between God and creation is unique among the religions of the world. The Bible teaches that God is distinct from his creation. He is not part of it, for he has made it and rules over it. The term often used to say that God is much greater than creation is the word *transcendent*. Very simply, this means that God is far “above” the creation in the sense that he is greater than the creation and he is independent of it.

God is also very much involved in creation, for it is continually dependent on him for its existence and its functioning. The technical term used to speak of God’s involvement in creation is the word *immanent* meaning “remaining in” creation. The God of the Bible is no abstract deity removed from, and uninterested in his creation. The Bible is the story of God’s involvement with his creation, and particularly the people in it. Job affirms that even the animals and plants depend on God: “In his hand is the life of every living thing and the breath of all mankind” (Job 12:10). In the New Testament, Paul affirms that God “gives to all men life and breath and everything” and that “in him we live and move and have our being” (Acts 17:25, 28). Indeed, in Christ “all things hold together” (Col. 1:17), and he is continually “upholding the universe by his word of power” (Heb. 1:3). God’s transcendence and immanence are both affirmed in a single verse when Paul speaks of “one God and Father of us all, who is above all and through all and in all” (Eph. 4:6).

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<sup>10</sup> See chapter 30, pp. 637–54, on the work of the Holy Spirit.

The fact that creation is distinct from God yet always dependent on God, that God is far above creation yet always involved in it (in brief, that God is both transcendent and immanent), may be represented as in figure 15.1.

### **Figure 15.1: Creation Is Distinct from God Yet Always Dependent on God (God Is Both Transcendent and Immanent)**

This is clearly distinct from *materialism* which is the most common philosophy of unbelievers today, and which denies the existence of God altogether. Materialism would say that the material universe is all there is. It may be represented as in figure 15.2.

### **Figure 15.2: Materialism**

Christians today who focus almost the entire effort of their lives on earning more money and acquiring more possessions become “practical” materialists in their activity, since their lives would be not much different if they did not believe in God at all.

The scriptural account of God’s relation to his creation is also distinct from pantheism. The Greek word  $\pi\acute{\alpha}\nu$  (from  $\pi\acute{\alpha}\varsigma$ , G4246) means “all” or “every,” and *pantheism* is the idea that everything, the whole universe, is God, or is part of God. This can be pictured as in figure 15.3.

### **Figure 15.3: Pantheism**

Pantheism denies several essential aspects of God’s character. If the whole universe is God, then God has no distinct personality. God is no longer unchanging, because as the universe changes, God also changes. Moreover, God is no longer holy, because the evil in the universe is also part of God. Another difficulty is that ultimately most pantheistic systems (such as Buddhism and many other eastern religions) end up denying the importance of individual human personalities: since everything is God, the goal of an individual should be to blend in with the universe and become more and more united with it, thus losing his or her individual distinctiveness. If God himself (or itself) has no distinct personal identity separate from the universe, then we should certainly not strive to have one either. Thus, pantheism destroys not only the personal identity of God, but also, ultimately, of human beings as well.

Any philosophy that sees creation as an “emanation” out of God (that is, something that comes out of God but is still part of God and not distinct from him) would be similar to pantheism in most or all of the ways in which aspects of God’s character are denied.

The biblical account also rules out *dualism*. This is the idea that both God and the material universe have eternally existed side by side. Thus, there are two ultimate forces in the universe, God and matter. This may be represented as in figure 15.4.

### **Figure 15.4: Dualism**

The problem with dualism is that it indicates an eternal conflict between God and the evil aspects of the material universe. Will God ultimately triumph over evil in the universe? We cannot be sure, because both God and evil have apparently always existed side by side. This philosophy would deny both God's ultimate lordship over creation and also that creation came about because of God's will, that it is to be used solely for his purposes, and that it is to glorify him. This viewpoint would also deny that all of the universe was created inherently good (Gen. 1:31) and would encourage people to view material reality as somewhat evil in itself, in contrast with a genuine biblical account of a creation that God made to be good and that he rules over for his purposes.

One recent example of dualism in modern culture is the series of *Star Wars* movies, which postulate the existence of a universal "Force" that has both a good and an evil side. There is no concept of one holy and transcendent God who rules over all and will certainly triumph over all. When non-Christians today begin to be aware of a spiritual aspect to the universe, they often become dualists, merely acknowledging that there are good and evil aspects to the supernatural or spiritual world. Most "New Age" religion is dualistic. Of course, Satan is delighted to have people think that there is an evil force in the universe that is perhaps equal to God himself.

The Christian view of creation is also distinct from the viewpoint of *deism*. Deism is the view that God is not now directly involved in the creation. It may be represented as in figure 15.5.

### **Figure 15.5: Deism**

Deism generally holds that God created the universe and is far greater than the universe (God is "transcendent"). Some deists also agree that God has moral standards and will ultimately hold people accountable on a day of judgment. But they deny God's present involvement in the world, thus leaving no place for his immanence in the created order. Rather, God is viewed as a divine clock maker who wound up the "clock" of creation at the beginning but then left it to run on its own.

While deism does affirm God's transcendence in some ways, it denies almost the entire history of the Bible, which is the history of God's active involvement in the world. Many "lukewarm" or nominal Christians today are, in effect, practical deists, since they live lives almost totally devoid of genuine prayer, worship, fear of God, or moment-by-moment trust in God to care for needs that arise.

## **C. God Created the Universe to Show His Glory**

It is clear that God created his people for his own glory, for he speaks of his sons and daughters as those "whom I created *for my glory* whom I formed and made" (Isa. 43:7). But it is not only human beings that God created for this purpose. The entire creation is intended to show God's glory. Even the inanimate creation, the stars and sun and moon and sky, testify to God's greatness, "The heavens are telling the glory of God; and the firmament proclaims his handiwork. Day to day pours forth speech, and night to night declares knowledge" (Ps. 19:1–2). The song of heavenly worship in Revelation 4 connects God's creation of all things with the fact that he is worthy to receive glory from them:

“You are worthy, our Lord and God,  
to receive glory and honor and power,  
for you have created all things,  
and by your will they existed and were created.” (Rev. 4:11)

What does creation show about God? Primarily it shows his great power and wisdom, far above anything that could be imagined by any creature.<sup>11</sup> “It is he who made the earth by his power, who established the world by his wisdom, and by his understanding stretched out the heavens” (Jer. 10:12). In contrast to ignorant men and the “worthless” idols they make, Jeremiah says, “Not like these is he who is the portion of Jacob, for he is the one who formed all things ... the LORD of hosts is his name” (Jer. 10:16). One glance at the sun or the stars convinces us of God’s infinite power. And even a brief inspection of any leaf on a tree, or of the wonder of the human hand, or of any one living cell, convinces us of God’s great wisdom. Who could make all of this? Who could make it out of nothing? Who could sustain it day after day for endless years? Such infinite power, such intricate skill, is completely beyond our comprehension. When we meditate on it, we give glory to God.

When we affirm that God created the universe to show his glory, it is important that we realize that he did not need to create it. We should not think that God needed more glory than he had within the Trinity for all eternity, or that he was somehow incomplete without the glory that he would receive from the created universe. This would be to deny God’s independence and imply that God needed the universe in order to be fully God.<sup>12</sup> Rather, we must affirm that the creation of the universe was a *totally free act of God*. It was not a necessary act but something that God chose to do. “You created all things, and *by your will* they existed and were created” (Rev. 4:11). God desired to create the universe to demonstrate his excellence. The creation shows his great wisdom and power, and ultimately it shows all of his other attributes as well.<sup>13</sup> It seems that God created the universe, then, to take delight in his creation, for as creation shows forth various aspects of God’s character, to that extent he takes delight in it.

This explains why we take spontaneous delight in all sorts of creative activities ourselves. People with artistic or musical or literary skills enjoy creating things and seeing, hearing, or pondering their creative work. God has so made us to enjoy imitating, in a creaturely way, his creative activity. And one of the amazing aspects of humanity—in distinction from the rest of creation—is our ability to create new things. This also explains why we take delight in other kinds of “creative” activity: many people enjoy cooking, or decorating their home, or working with wood or other materials, or producing scientific inventions, or devising new solutions to problems in industrial production. Even children enjoy coloring pictures or building houses out of blocks. In all of these activities we reflect in small measure the creative activity of God, and we should delight in it and thank him for it.

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<sup>11</sup> See chapter 7, pp. 119–23, for a discussion of the necessity of Scripture if we are to interpret creation rightly.

<sup>12</sup> See the discussion of God’s independence in chapter 11, pp. 160–63.

<sup>13</sup> See the discussion in chapter 11, pp. 158–60, on the ways in which all of creation reveals various aspects of God’s character.

## **D. The Universe God Created Was “Very Good”**

This point follows from the previous point. If God created the universe to show his glory, then we would expect that the universe would fulfill the purpose for which he created it. In fact, when God finished his work of creation, he did take delight in it. At the end of each stage of creation God saw that what he had done was “good” (Gen. 1:4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25). Then at the end of the six days of creation, “God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good” (Gen. 1:31). God delighted in the creation that he had made, just as he had purposed to do.

Even though there is now sin in the world, the material creation is still good in God’s sight and should be seen as “good” by us as well. This knowledge will free of us from a false asceticism that sees the use and enjoyment of the material creation as wrong. Paul says that those who “forbid marriage,” and “enjoin abstinence from foods which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth” (1 Tim. 4:1–3) are giving heed to “doctrines of demons.” The apostle takes such a firm line because he understands that “everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving; for then it is consecrated by the word of God and prayer” (1 Tim. 4:4–5). Paul’s mention of “the word of God” that consecrates or “sanctifies” the foods and other things we enjoy in the material creation is probably a reference to the blessing of God spoken in Genesis 1:31, “It was very good.”

Though the created order can be used in sinful or selfish ways and can turn our affections away from God, nonetheless we must not let the danger of the abuse of God’s creation keep us from a positive, thankful, joyful use of it for our own enjoyment and for the good of his kingdom. Shortly after Paul has warned against the desire to be rich and the “love of money” (1 Tim. 6:9–10), he affirms that it is God himself “who richly furnishes us with everything to enjoy” (1 Tim. 6:17). This fact gives warrant for Christians to encourage proper industrial and technological development (together with care for the environment), and joyful and thankful use of all the products of the abundant earth that God has created—both by ourselves and by those with whom we are to share generously of our possessions (note 1 Tim. 6:18). Yet in all of this we are to remember that material possessions are only temporary, not eternal. We are to set our hopes on God (see Ps. 62:10; 1 Tim. 6:17) and on receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken (Col. 3:1–4; Heb. 12:28; 1 Peter 1:4).

## **E. The Relationship Between Scripture and the Findings of Modern Science**

At various times in history, Christians have found themselves dissenting from the accepted findings of contemporary science. In the vast majority of cases, sincere Christian faith and strong trust in the Bible have led scientists to the discovery of new facts about God’s universe, and these discoveries have changed scientific opinion for all of subsequent history. The lives of Isaac Newton, Galileo Galilei, Johannes Kepler, Blaise Pascal, Robert Boyle, Michael Faraday, James Clerk Maxwell, and many others are examples of this.<sup>14</sup>

On the other hand, there have been times when accepted scientific opinion has been in conflict with people’s understanding of what the Bible said. For example, when the Italian astronomer Galileo (1564–1642) began to teach that the earth was not the center of the universe

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<sup>14</sup> See August J. Kling, “Men of Science/ Men of Faith,” *HIS* May 1976, pp. 26–31, for a brief survey of the life and work of several of these scientists.

but that the earth and other planets revolved around the sun (thus following the theories of the Polish astronomer Copernicus [1472–1543]), he was criticized, and eventually his writings were condemned by the Roman Catholic Church. This was because many people thought that the Bible taught that the sun revolved about the earth. In fact, the Bible does not teach that at all, but it was Copernican astronomy that made people look again at Scripture to see if it really taught what they thought it taught. In fact, descriptions of the sun rising and setting (Eccl. 1:5; et al.) merely portray events as they appear from the perspective of the human observer, and, from that perspective, they give an accurate description. But they imply nothing about the relative motion of the earth and the sun, and nowhere does the Bible explain what makes the sun go “down” in the viewpoint of a human observer. Scripture says nothing at all about whether the earth or the sun or some other body is the “center” of the universe or the solar system—that is not a question Scripture addresses. Yet the lesson of Galileo, who was forced to recant his teachings and who had to live under house arrest for the last few years of his life, should remind us that careful observation of the natural world can cause us to go back to Scripture and reexamine whether Scripture actually teaches what we think it teaches. Sometimes, on closer examination of the text, we may find that our previous interpretations were incorrect.

Scientific investigation has helped Christians reevaluate what earlier generations thought about the age of the earth, for example, so that no evangelical scholar today would hold that the world was created in 4004 B.C. Yet that date was once widely believed to be the date of the creation because of the writings of Irish Archbishop James Ussher (1581–1656), one of the great scholars of his day, who carefully added together the dates in the genealogies of the Bible to find when Adam was created. Today it is widely acknowledged that the Bible does not tell us the precise date of the creation of the earth or of the human race (see below).

On the other hand, many people in the Christian community have steadfastly refused to agree with the dominant opinion of scientists today regarding evolution. On this matter, thousands of Christians have examined Scripture again and again in great detail, and many have concluded that Scripture is not silent on the process by which living organisms came into being. Moreover, careful observation of the facts of the created universe has produced widespread disagreement regarding theories of evolution (both from scientists who are Christians and from a number of non-Christian scientists as well).<sup>15</sup> So on both biblical and scientific grounds, theories of evolution have been challenged by Christians.

We should also remember that the question of the creation of the universe is unlike many other scientific questions because creation is not something that can be repeated in a laboratory experiment, nor were there any human observers of it. Therefore pronouncements by scientists about creation and the early history of the earth are at best educated speculation. If we are convinced, however, that the only observer of these events (God himself) has told us about them in the reliable words of the Bible, then we should pay careful attention to the biblical account.

In the following section, we have listed some principles by which the relationship between creation and the findings of modern science can be approached.

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<sup>15</sup> For analysis of the increasingly large body of scientific evidence against evolution, see especially the books by Michael Denton and Philp E. Johnson cited in the bibliography to this chapter and discussed on pp. 280–84 below.

**1. When All the Facts Are Rightly Understood, There Will Be “No Final Conflict” Between Scripture and Natural Science.** The phrase “no final conflict” is taken from a very helpful book by Francis Schaeffer, *No Final Conflict*.<sup>16</sup> Regarding questions about the creation of the universe, Schaeffer lists several areas where, in his judgment, there is room for disagreement among Christians who believe in the total truthfulness of Scripture:

1. There is a possibility that God created a “grown-up” universe.
2. There is a possibility of a break between Genesis 1:1 and 1:2 or between 1:2 and 1:3.
3. There is a possibility of a long day in Genesis 1.
4. There is a possibility that the flood affected the geological data.
5. The use of the word “kinds” in Genesis 1 may be quite broad.
6. There is a possibility of the death of animals before the fall.
7. Where the Hebrew word **בְּרֵאשִׁית**, H1343, is not used there is the possibility of sequence from previously existing things.<sup>17</sup>

Schaeffer makes clear that he is not saying that any of those positions is his own; only that they are theoretically possible. Schaeffer’s major point is that in both our understanding of the natural world and our understanding of Scripture, our knowledge is not perfect. But we can approach both scientific and biblical study with the confidence that when all the facts are correctly understood, and when we have understood Scripture rightly, our findings will never be in conflict with each other: there will be “no final conflict.” This is because God, who speaks in Scripture, knows all facts, and he has not spoken in a way that would contradict any true fact in the universe.

This is a very helpful perspective with which the Christian should begin any study of creation and modern science. We should not fear to investigate scientifically the facts of the created world but should do so eagerly and with complete honesty, confident that when facts are rightly understood, they will always turn out to be consistent with God’s inerrant words in Scripture. Similarly, we should approach the study of Scripture eagerly and with confidence that, when rightly understood, Scripture will never contradict facts in the natural world.<sup>18</sup>

Someone may object that this whole discussion is inappropriate, for the Bible is given to us to teach religious and ethical matters; it is not intended to teach “science.” However, as we noted in chapter 5 above, Scripture itself places no such restriction on the subjects to which it can speak. Although the Bible is of course not a “textbook” of science in a formal sense, it does nonetheless contain many affirmations about the natural world—its origin, its purposes, its ultimate destiny—and many statements about how it functions from day to day. If we take seriously the idea that it is God himself (as well as the human authors) who speaks all the words of Scripture, then we must take these statements seriously and believe them as well. Indeed,

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<sup>16</sup> Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1975.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 25–33.

<sup>18</sup> See the discussion in chapter 4, pp. 83–84, on the relationship between Scripture and natural revelation.

Scripture says that our understanding of some “scientific” facts is a matter of our faith! Hebrews 11:3 tells us, “*By faith* we understand that the worlds were prepared by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things which are visible” (NASB).

**2. Some Theories About Creation Seem Clearly Inconsistent With the Teachings of Scripture.** In this section we will examine three types of explanation of the origin of the universe that seem clearly inconsistent with Scripture.

**a. Secular Theories:** For the sake of completeness we mention here only briefly that any purely secular theories of the origin of the universe would be unacceptable for those who believe in Scripture. A “secular” theory is any theory of the origin of the universe that does not see an infinite-personal God as responsible for creating the universe by intelligent design. Thus, the “big bang” theory (in a secular form in which God is excluded), or any theories that hold that matter has always existed, would be inconsistent with the teaching of Scripture that God created the universe out of nothing, and that he did so for his own glory. (When Darwinian evolution is thought of in a totally materialistic sense, as it most often is, it would belong in this category also.)<sup>19</sup>

**b. Theistic Evolution:** Ever since the publication of Charles Darwin’s book *Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection* (1859), some Christians have proposed that living organisms came about by the process of evolution that Darwin proposed, but that God guided that process so that the result was just what he wanted it to be. This view is called *theistic evolution* because it advocates belief in God (it is “theistic”) and in evolution too. Many who hold to theistic evolution would propose that God intervened in the process at some crucial points, usually (1) the creation of matter at the beginning, (2) the creation of the simplest life form, and (3) the creation of man. But, with the possible exception of those points of intervention, theistic evolutionists hold that evolution proceeded in the ways now discovered by natural scientists, and that it was the process that God decided to use in allowing all of the other forms of life on earth to develop. They believe that the random mutation of living things led to the evolution of higher life forms through the fact that those that had an “adaptive advantage” (a mutation that allowed them to be better fitted to survive in their environment) lived when others did not.

Theistic evolutionists are quite prepared to change their views of the way evolution came about, because, according to their standpoint, the Bible does not specify how it happened. It is therefore up to us to discover this through ordinary scientific investigation. They would argue that as we learn more and more about the way in which evolution came about, we are simply learning more and more about the process that God used to bring about the development of life forms.

The objections to theistic evolution are as follows:

1. The clear teaching of Scripture that there is purposefulness in God’s work of creation seems incompatible with the randomness demanded by evolutionary theory. When Scripture reports that God said, “Let the earth bring forth living creatures according to their kinds: cattle and creeping things and beasts of the earth according to their kinds” (Gen. 1:24), it pictures God

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NASB NASB—New American Standard Bible

<sup>19</sup> See pp. 279–87 below, for a discussion of Darwinian evolution.

as doing things intentionally and with a purpose for each thing he does. But this is the opposite of allowing mutations to proceed entirely *randomly* with no purpose for the millions of mutations that would have to come about, under evolutionary theory, before a new species could emerge.

The fundamental difference between a biblical view of creation and theistic evolution lies here: the driving force that brings about change and the development of new species in all evolutionary schemes is *randomness*. Without the random mutation of organisms you do not have evolution in the modern scientific sense at all. Random mutation is the underlying force that brings about eventual development from the simplest to the most complex life forms. But the driving force in the development of new organisms according to Scripture is God's *intelligent design*. God created "the great creatures of the sea and every living and moving thing with which the water teems, according to their kinds, and every winged bird according to its kind" (Gen. 1:21 NIV). "God made the wild animals according to their kinds, the livestock according to their kinds, and all the creatures that move along the ground according to their kinds. And God saw that it was good" (Gen. 1:25 NIV). These statements seem inconsistent with the idea of God creating or directing or observing millions of random mutations, none of which were "very good" in the way he intended, none of which really were the kinds of plants or animals he wanted to have on the earth. Instead of the straightforward biblical account of God's creation, the theistic evolution view has to understand events to have occurred something like this:

And God said, "Let the earth bring forth living creatures according to their kinds." And after three hundred eighty-seven million four hundred ninety-two thousand eight hundred seventy-one attempts, God finally made a mouse that worked.

That may seem a strange explanation, but it is precisely what the theistic evolutionist must postulate for each of the hundreds of thousands of different kinds of plants and animals on the earth: they all developed through a process of random mutation over millions of years, gradually increasing in complexity as occasional mutations turned out to be advantageous to the creature.

A theistic evolutionist may object that God intervened in the process and guided it at many points in the direction he wanted it to go. But once this is allowed then there is purpose and intelligent design in the process—we no longer have evolution at all, because there is no longer random mutation (at the points of divine interaction). No secular evolutionist would accept such intervention by an intelligent, purposeful Creator. But once a Christian agrees to some active, purposeful design by God, then there is no longer any need for randomness or any development emerging from random mutation. Thus we may as well have God immediately creating each distinct creature without thousands of attempts that fail.

2. Scripture pictures God's creative word as bringing immediate response. When the Bible talks about God's creative word it emphasizes the power of his word and its ability to accomplish his purpose.

By the word of the LORD the heavens were made,  
and all their host by the breath of his mouth.  
... For he spoke, and it came to be;  
he commanded, and it stood forth. (Ps. 33:6, 9)

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NIV NIV—New International Version

NIV NIV—New International Version

This kind of statement seems incompatible with the idea that God spoke and after millions of years and millions of random mutations in living things his power brought about the result that he had called for. Rather, as soon as God says, “Let the earth put forth vegetation,” the very next sentence tells us, “And it was so” (Gen. 1:11).

3. When Scripture tells us that God made plants and animals to reproduce “*according to their kinds*” (Gen. 1:11, 24), it suggests that God created many different types of plants and animals and that, though there would be some differentiation among them (note many different sizes, races, and personal characteristics among human beings!), nonetheless there would be some narrow limits to the kind of change that could come about through genetic mutations.<sup>20</sup>

4. God’s present active role in creating or forming every living thing that now comes into being is hard to reconcile with the distant “hands off” kind of oversight of evolution that is proposed by theistic evolution. David is able to confess, “You formed my inward parts, you knit me together in my mother’s womb” (Ps. 139:13). And God said to Moses, “Who has made man’s mouth? Who makes him dumb, or deaf, or seeing, or blind? Is it not I, the LORD?” (Ex. 4:11). God makes the grass grow (Ps. 104:14; Matt. 6:30) and feeds the birds (Matt. 6:26) and the other creatures of the forest (Ps. 104:21, 27–30). If God is so involved in causing the growth and development of every step of every living thing even now, does it seem consistent with Scripture to say that these life forms were originally brought about by an evolutionary process directed by random mutation rather than by God’s direct, purposeful creation, and that only after they had been created did he begin his active involvement in directing them each moment?

5. The special creation of Adam, and Eve from him, is a strong reason to break with theistic evolution. Those theistic evolutionists who argue for a special creation of Adam and Eve because of the statements in Genesis 1–2 have really broken with evolutionary theory at the point that is of most concern to human beings anyway. But if, on the basis of Scripture, we insist upon God’s special intervention at the point of the creation of Adam and Eve, then what is to prevent our allowing that God intervened, in a similar way, in the creation of living organisms?

We must realize that the special creation of Adam and Eve as recorded in Scripture shows them to be far different from the nearly animal, just barely human creatures that evolutionists would say were the first humans, creatures who descended from ancestors that were highly

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<sup>20</sup> We do not need to insist that the Hebrew word **מִינֵהוּ** (H4786, “kind”) corresponds exactly with the biological category “species,” for that is simply a modern means of classifying different living things. But the Hebrew word does seem to indicate a narrow specification of various types of living things. It is used, for example, to speak of several very specific types of animals that bear young and are distinguished according to their “kind.” Scripture speaks of “the falcon according to its kind,” “every raven according to its kind,” “the hawk according to its kind,” “the heron according to its kind,” and “the locust according to its kind” (Lev. 11:14, 15, 16, 19, 22). Other animals that exist according to an individual “kind” are the cricket, grasshopper, great lizard, buzzard, kite, sea gull, and stork (Lev. 11:22, 29; Deut. 14:13, 14, 15, 18). These are very specific kinds of animals, and God created them so that they would reproduce only according to their own “kinds.” It seems that this would allow only for diversification within each of these types of animals (larger or smaller hawks, hawks of different color and with different shapes of beaks, etc.), but certainly not any “macroevolutionary” change into entirely different kinds of birds. (Frair and Davis, *A Case for Creation* p. 129, think that “kind” may correspond to family or order today, or else to no precise twentieth-century equivalent.)

developed nonhuman apelike creatures. Scripture pictures the first man and woman, Adam and Eve, as possessing highly developed linguistic, moral, and spiritual abilities from the moment they were created. They can talk with each other. They can even talk with God. They are very different from the nearly animal first humans, descended from nonhuman apelike creatures, of evolutionary theory.

Some may object that Genesis 1–2 does not intend to portray Adam and Eve as literal individuals, but (a) the historical narrative in Genesis continues without a break into the obviously historical material about Abraham (Gen. 12), showing that the author intended the entire section to be historical,<sup>21</sup> and (b) in Romans 5:12–21 and 1 Corinthians 15:21–22, 45–49, Paul affirms the existence of the “one man” Adam through whom sin came into the world, and bases his discussion of Christ’s representative work of earning salvation on the previous historical pattern of Adam being a representative for mankind as well. Moreover, the New Testament elsewhere clearly understands Adam and Eve to be historical figures (cf. Luke 3:38; Acts 17:26; 1 Cor. 11:8–9; 2 Cor. 11:3; 1 Tim. 2:13–14). The New Testament also assumes the historicity of the sons of Adam and Eve, Cain (Heb. 11:4; 1 John 3:12; Jude 11) and Abel (Matt. 23:35; Luke 11:51; Heb. 11:4; 12:24).

6. There are many scientific problems with evolutionary theory (see the following section). The increasing number of questions about the validity of the theory of evolution being raised even by non-Christians in various scientific disciplines indicates that anyone who claims to be forced to believe in evolution because the “scientific facts” leave no other option has simply not considered all the evidence on the other side. The scientific data do not force one to accept evolution, and if the scriptural record argues convincingly against it as well, it does not seem to be a valid theory for a Christian to adopt.

It seems most appropriate to conclude in the words of geologist Davis A. Young, “The position of theistic evolutionism as expressed by some of its proponents is not a consistently Christian position. It is not a truly biblical position, for it is based in part on principles that are imported into Christianity.”<sup>22</sup> According to Louis Berkhof “theistic evolution is really a child of

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<sup>21</sup> Note the phrase “These are the generations of” introducing successive sections in the Genesis narrative at Gen. 2:4 (heavens and the earth); 5:1 (Adam); 6:9 (Noah); 10:1 (the sons of Noah); 11:10 (Shem); 11:27 (Terah, the father of Abraham); 25:12 (Ishmael); 25:19 (Isaac); 36:1 (Esau); and 37:2 (Jacob). The translation of the phrase may differ in various English versions, but the Hebrew expression is the same and literally says, “These are the generations of ...” By this literary device the author has introduced various sections of his historical narrative, tying it all together in a unified whole, and indicating that it is to be understood as history-writing of the same sort throughout. If the author intends us to understand Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob as historical figures, then he also intends us to understand Adam and Eve as historical figures.

cf cf.—compare

<sup>22</sup> Davis A. Young, *Creation and the Flood: An Alternative to Flood Geology and Theistic Evolution* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1977), p. 38. Young includes a discussion of the views of Richard H. Bube, one of the leading proponents of theistic evolution today (pp. 33–35).

embarrassment, which calls God in at periodic intervals to help nature over the chasms that yawn at her feet. It is neither the biblical doctrine of creation, nor a consistent theory of evolution.”<sup>23</sup>

**c. Notes on the Darwinian Theory of Evolution:** The word *evolution* can be used in different ways. Sometimes it is used to refer to “micro-evolution—small developments within one species, so that we see flies or mosquitoes becoming immune to insecticides, or human beings growing taller, or different colors and varieties of roses being developed. Innumerable examples of such “micro-evolution” are evident today, and no one denies that they exist.<sup>24</sup> But that is not the sense in which the word *evolution* is usually used when discussing theories of creation and evolution.

The term *evolution* is more commonly used to refer to “macro-evolution”—that is, the “general theory of evolution” or the view that “nonliving substance gave rise to the first living material, which subsequently reproduced and diversified to produce all extinct and extant organisms.”<sup>25</sup> In this chapter, when we use the word *evolution* it is used to refer to macro-evolution or the general theory of evolution.

### (1) Current Challenges to Evolution:

Since Charles Darwin first published his *Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection* in 1859, there have been challenges to his theory by Christians and non-Christians alike. Current neo-Darwinian theory is still foundationally similar to Darwin’s original position, but with refinements and modifications due to over a hundred years of research. In modern Darwinian evolutionary theory, the history of the development of life began when a mix of chemicals present on the earth spontaneously produced a very simple, probably one-celled life form. This living cell reproduced itself, and eventually there were some mutations or differences in the new cells produced. These mutations led to the development of more complex life forms. A hostile environment meant that many of them would perish, but those that were better suited to their environment would survive and multiply. Thus, nature exercised a process of “natural selection” in which the differing organisms most fitted to the environment survived. More and more mutations eventually developed into more and more varieties of living things, so that from the

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<sup>23</sup> Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* pp. 139–40.

<sup>24</sup> Philp E. Johnson, *Darwin on Trial* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1991), points out that some studies frequently claimed as evidence of evolution are really just temporary population differences with no genetic change. For example, he mentions Kettlewell’s observation of “industrial melanism” in the peppered moth, whereby the prevailing color of the moths changed from white to black and back to white again when leaves on trees were light colored, then covered with soot from pollution, then again light colored when the pollution ended. But at every stage, both black and white moths were present, even though in differing proportions (moths that did not match the leaf color were more easily seen and eaten by predators). No evolutionary change occurred at all, for both black and white moths were still industrial moths, just as black and white horses are both still horses. In fact, the moth functioned to preserve its genetic identity in differing circumstances, rather than evolving or becoming extinct (see pp. 26–28, 160–61).

<sup>25</sup> Wayne Frair and Percival Davis, *A Case for Creation* (Norcross, Ga.: CRS Books, 1983), p. 25.

very simplest organism all the complex life forms on earth eventually developed through this process of mutation and natural selection.

The most recent, and perhaps most devastating, critique of current Darwinian theory comes from Philp E. Johnson, a law professor who specializes in analyzing the logic of arguments. In his book *Darwin on Trial*<sup>26</sup> he quotes extensively from current evolutionary theorists to demonstrate that:

1. After more than one hundred years of experimental breeding of various kinds of animals and plants, the amount of variation that can be produced (even with intentional, not random, breeding) is extremely limited, due to the limited range of genetic variation in each type of living thing: dogs who are selectively bred for generations are still dogs, fruit flies are still fruit flies, etc. And when allowed to return to the wild state, “the most highly specialized breeds quickly perish and the survivors revert to the original wild type.” He concludes that “natural selection,” claimed by Darwinists to account for the survival of new organisms, is really a conservative force that works to preserve the genetic fitness of a population, not to change its characteristics.<sup>27</sup>

2. In current evolutionary arguments, the idea of “survival of the fittest” (or “natural selection”) is popularly thought to mean that those animals whose different characteristics give them a comparative advantage will survive, and others will die out. But in actual practice almost any characteristic can be argued to be either an advantage or a disadvantage.<sup>28</sup> So how do Darwinists know which characteristics have given an advantage in survival to certain animals? By observing which kinds survive. But this means that natural selection is often at bottom not a powerful new insight into what happens in nature but simply a tautology (a meaningless repetition of the same idea), since it boils down to saying that the “fittest” animals are those who have the most offspring. In this sense, natural selection means: animals who have the most offspring have the most offspring.<sup>29</sup> But this proves nothing about any supposed mutations to produce different, more fit offspring over the course of many generations.

3. The vast and complex mutations required to produce complex organs such as an eye or a bird’s wing (or hundreds of other organs) could not have occurred in tiny mutations

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<sup>26</sup> Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1991.

<sup>27</sup> Johnson, pp. 15–20 (quotation from p. 18). Johnson notes that in a few cases new “species” have been produced, in the sense of a part of a population that is incapable of interbreeding with another part: this has happened with fruit flies and with some plant hybrids (p. 19). But even though incapable of interbreeding with some other fruit flies, the new fruit flies still are fruit flies, not some other kind of creature: the amount of variation the fruit fly is capable of is inherently limited by the range of variability in its gene pool.

<sup>28</sup> Johnson notes (pp. 29–30) that Darwinists have even accounted for obviously disadvantageous characteristics by invoking pleiotropy, the idea that several genetic changes may occur all at once, so that the negative ones come along with the positive ones. On this basis no existing characteristic in any animal could be cited to disprove the claim that the fittest survive, for it really becomes a claim that those that have survived have survived. But then how do we really know that survival of the fittest has been the mechanism that has led to current diversity of life forms?

<sup>29</sup> Johnson does not say that all evolutionists argue this way, but he quotes several who do (pp. 20–23).

accumulating over thousands of generations, because the individual parts of the organ are useless (and give no “advantage”) unless the entire organ is functioning. But the mathematical probability of such random mutations happening together in one generation is effectively zero. Darwinists are left saying that it must have happened because it happened.<sup>30</sup>

An amusing example of the need for all the parts of a complex organic system to be put in place at once is pointed out by Robert Kofahl and Kelly Segraves in their book, *The Creation Explanation: A Scientific Alternative to Evolution*.<sup>31</sup> They describe the “Bombardier beetle,” which repels enemies by firing a hot charge of chemicals from two swivel tubes in its tail. The chemicals fired by this beetle will spontaneously explode when mixed together in a laboratory, but apparently the beetle has an inhibitor substance that blocks the explosive reaction until the beetle squirts some of the liquid into its “combustion chambers,” where an enzyme is added to catalyze the reaction. An explosion takes place and the chemical repellent is fired at a temperature of 212 degree F at the beetle’s enemies. Kofahl and Segraves rightly ask whether any evolutionary explanation can account for this amazing mechanism:

Note that a rational evolutionary explanation for the development of this creature must assign some kind of adaptive advantage to each of the millions of hypothetical intermediate stages in the construction process. But would the stages of one-fourth, one-half, or two-thirds completion, for example, have conferred any advantage? After all, a rifle is useless without all of its parts functioning . . . Before this defensive mechanism could afford any protection to the beetle, all of its parts, together with the proper explosive mixture of chemicals, plus the instinctive behavior required for its use, would have to be assembled in the insect. The partially developed set of organs would be useless. Therefore, according to the principles of evolutionary theory, there would be no selective pressure to cause the system to evolve from a partially completed stage toward the final completed system . . . If a theory fails to explain the data in any science, that theory should be either revised or replaced with a theory that is in agreement with the data.<sup>32</sup>

In this case, of course, the amusing question is, What would happen if the explosive chemical mixture developed in the beetle without the chemical inhibitor?

4. The fossil record was Darwin’s greatest problem in 1859, and it has simply become a greater problem since then. In Darwin’s time, hundreds of fossils were available showing the existence of many distinct kinds of animals and plants in the distant past. But Darwin was unable to find any fossils from “intermediate types” to fill in the gaps between distinct kinds of animals—fossils showing some characteristics of one animal and a few characteristics of the next developmental type, for example. In fact, many ancient fossils exactly resembled present-day animals—showing that (according to the chronological assumptions of his view) numerous animals have persisted for millions of years essentially unchanged. Darwin realized that the

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<sup>30</sup> Johnson, pp. 32–44.

<sup>31</sup> Robert E. Kofahl and Kelly L. Segraves, *The Creation Explanation: A Scientific Alternative to Evolution* (Wheaton, Ill.: Harold Shaw, 1975). This book is a fascinating collection of scientific evidence favoring creation by intelligent design.

<sup>32</sup> Kofahl and Segraves, *The Creation Explanation* pp. 2–3. They give many other similar examples.

absence of “transitional types” in the fossil record weakened his theory, but he thought it was due to the fact that not enough fossils had been discovered, and was confident that further discoveries would unearth many transitional types of animals. However, the subsequent 130 years of intensive archaeological activity has still failed to produce one convincing example of a needed transitional type.<sup>33</sup>

Johnson quotes noted evolutionist Stephen Jay Gould of Harvard as saying that there are two characteristics of the fossil record that are inconsistent with the idea of gradual change through generations:

1. Stasis. Most species exhibit no directional change during their tenure on earth. They appear in the fossil record looking pretty much the same as when they disappear; morphological change is usually limited and directionless.
2. Sudden appearance. In any local area, a species does not arise gradually by the steady transformation of its ancestors; it appears all at once and “fully formed.”<sup>34</sup>

So difficult is this problem for Darwinian evolution that many evolutionary scientists today propose that evolution came about in sudden jumps to new life forms—so that each of the thirty-two known orders of mammals, for example, appeared quite suddenly in the history of Europe.<sup>35</sup>

But how could hundreds or thousands of genetic changes come about all at once? No explanation has been given other than to say that it must have happened, because it happened. (A glance at the dotted lines in any current biology textbook, showing the supposed transitions from one kind of animal to another, will indicate the nature of the gaps still unfilled after 130 years of investigation.) The significance of this problem is demonstrated forcefully in a recent book by a non-Christian writer, Michael Denton, *Evolution: A Theory in Crisis*.<sup>36</sup> Denton himself proposes

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<sup>33</sup> Johnson, pp. 73–85, discusses the two examples sometimes claimed out of perhaps 100 million fossils that have been discovered, Archaeopteryx (a bird with some characteristics that resemble reptiles), and some ape-like examples thought to be prehuman hominids. Archaeopteryx is still very much a bird, not a near-reptile, and studies of the characteristics of the supposedly prehuman fossils include large amounts of subjective speculation, resulting in strong differences among experts who have examined them.

A helpful discussion of the gaps that remain in the fossil record is found in Frair and Davis, *A Case for Creation* pp. 55–65. They note that the continued discovery and classification of fossils since Darwin’s time has resulted in the fact that “on the whole, the discontinuities have been emphasized with increased collecting. There appears to be little question that the gaps are real, and it seems increasingly less likely that they will be filled” (p. 57).

<sup>34</sup> Johnson, p. 50, apparently quoting a paper by Gould and Niles Eldredge, “Punctuated Equilibria, an Alternative to Phyletic Gradualism,” printed as an appendix to Eldredge’s book, *Time Frames* (Johnson, p. 167).

<sup>35</sup> This view is called “punctuated equilibrium,” meaning that the ordinary equilibrium of the natural world was occasionally interrupted (punctuated) by the sudden appearance of new life forms.

<sup>36</sup> Bethesda, Md.: Adler and Adler, 1986.

no alternative explanation for the emergence of life in its present form upon the earth, but he notes that since Darwin's time,

neither of the two fundamental axioms of Darwin's macroevolutionary theory—the concept of the continuity of nature, that is the idea of a functional continuum of all life forms linking all species together and ultimately leading back to a primeval cell, and the belief that all the adaptive design of life has resulted from a blind random process—have been validated by one single empirical discovery or scientific advance since 1859.<sup>37</sup>

5. The molecular structures of living organisms do show relationships, but Darwinists simply assume that relationships imply common ancestry, a claim that certainly has not been proven. Moreover, there are amazing molecular differences between living things, and no satisfactory explanation for the origin of those differences has been given.<sup>38</sup>

Of course, similarity of design at any level (including levels above the molecular level) has often been used as a argument for evolution. The assumption of evolutionists is that similarity of design between two species implies that the “lower” species evolved into the “higher” species, but the proof for that assumption has never been given. Gleason Archer illustrates this well by supposing that one visits a museum of science and industry and finds a display of how human beings evolved from earlier apelike creatures into progressively more human-looking beings and finally into modern man. But he rightly notes that

a continuity of basic design furnishes no evidence whatever that any “lower” species phased into the next “higher” species by any sort of internal dynamic, as evolution demands. For if the museum visitor were to go to another part of that museum of science and industry, he would find a completely analogous series of automobiles, commencing with 1900 and extending up until the present decade. Stage by stage, phase by phase, he could trace the development of the Ford from its earliest Model-T prototype to the large and luxurious LTD of the 1970s.<sup>39</sup>

Of course, a much better explanation for the similarities in various models of Ford automobiles is the fact that an intelligent designer (or group of designers) used similar structures in successively more complex automobiles—if a steering mechanism works well in one model, there is no need to invent a different kind of steering mechanism for another model. In the same way, similarities in design among all living things can equally well be taken as evidence of the work of an intelligent master craftsman, the Creator himself.

6. Probably the greatest difficulty of all for evolutionary theory is explaining how any life could have begun in the first place. The spontaneous generation of even the simplest living organism capable of independent life (the prokaryote bacterial cell) from inorganic materials on the earth could not happen by random mixing of chemicals: it requires intelligent design and craftsmanship so complex that no advanced scientific laboratory in the world has been able to do

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<sup>37</sup> Denton, p. 345. An earlier analysis of evolution by a respected British biologist who is himself an evolutionist is G.A. Kerkut, *Implications of Evolution* (New York: Pergamon, 1960). This is a very technical study pointing out numerous remaining difficulties in the theory of evolution.

<sup>38</sup> Johnson, pp. 86–99.

<sup>39</sup> Gleason L. Archer, *Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties* p. 57.

it. Johnson quotes a now-famous metaphor: “That a living organism emerged by chance from a pre-biotic soup is about as likely as that “a tornado sweeping through a junkyard might assemble a Boeing 747 from the materials therein.’ Chance assembly is just a naturalistic way of saying “miracle.”<sup>40</sup>

At a common-sense level, a simple illustration will show this. If I were to take my digital watch, hand it to someone, and say that I found it near an iron mine in northern Minnesota, and that it was my belief that the watch had come together by itself simply through the operation of random movement and environmental forces (plus some energy from a few bolts of lightning, perhaps), I would quickly be written off as mad. Yet any one living cell on the leaf of any tree, or any one cell in the human body, is thousands of times more complex than my digital watch. Even given 4.5 billion years the “chance” of even one living cell arising spontaneously is, for all practical purposes, zero.

In fact, some attempts have been made to calculate the probability of life arising spontaneously in this way. Kofahl and Segraves give a statistical model in which they begin with a very generous assumption: that every square foot of the earth’s surface was somehow covered with 95 pounds of protein molecules that could mix freely, and that are all replaced with fresh protein every year for one billion years. They then estimate the probability that even one enzyme molecule would develop in each one billion years of the earth’s history. The probability is 1.2 times  $10^{-11}$  or one chance in 80 billion. They note, however, that even with the generous assumptions and starting with fresh protein every year for a billion years, finding one enzyme molecule—for all practical purposes an impossible task—would not solve the problem at all:

The probability of finding two of the active molecules would be about 10 to the 22nd power, and the probability that they would be identical would be 10 to the 70th power. And could life start with just a single enzyme molecule? Furthermore, what is the possibility that an active enzyme molecule, once formed, could find its way through thousands of miles and millions of years to that randomly formed RNA or DNA molecule which contains the code for that particular enzyme molecule’s amino acid sequence, so that new copies of itself could be produced? Zero for all practical purposes.<sup>41</sup>

Kofahl and Segraves report a study by an evolutionary scientist who formulates a model to calculate the probability for the formation, not just of one enzyme molecule but the smallest likely living organism by random processes. He comes up with a probability of one chance in 10 to the 340,000,000th power—that is, one chance in 10 with 340 million zeros after it! But Kofahl and Segraves note, “Yet Dr. Morowitz and his fellow evolutionary scientists still believe that it happened!”<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Johnson, p. 104, quoting Fred Hoyle. In fact, one could argue that the 747 is more likely to occur accidentally, because intelligent human designers have been able to make a 747, but they have not been able to make one living cell.

<sup>41</sup> Kofahl and Segraves, *The Creation Explanation* pp. 99–100.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 101, quoting Harold J. Morowitz, *Energy Flow in Biology* (New York: Academic Press, 1968), p. 99. The classic study of the mathematical improbability of evolution is P.S. Moorehead and M.M. Kaplan, eds., *Mathematical Challenges to the Neo-Darwinian Interpretation of Evolution* (Philadelphia: The Wistar Institute Symposium Monograph, no. 5, 1967). See also the article “Heresy in the Halls of Biology:

If someone were to ask me to entrust my life to ride on an airplane, and then explained that the airline company completed its flights safely once in every 10 to the 340,000,000th power times—or even one in every 80 billion flights—I certainly would not get on board, nor would anyone else in his or her right mind. Yet it is tragic that the common opinion, perpetuated in many science textbooks today, that evolution is an established “fact,” has continued to persuade many people that they should not consider the total truthfulness of the Bible to be an intellectually acceptable viewpoint for responsible, thinking individuals to hold today. The myth that “evolution has disproved the Bible” persists and keeps many from considering Christianity as a valid option.

But what if some day life were actually “created” in the laboratory by scientists? Here it is important to understand what is meant. First, this would not be “creation” in the pure sense of the word, since all laboratory experiments begin with some kinds of previously existing matter. It would not give an explanation of the origin of matter itself, nor would it be the kind of creating that the Bible says God did. Second, most contemporary attempts to “create life” are really just very small steps in the gigantic process of moving from nonliving materials to an independently living organism, even one consisting of only one cell. The construction of a protein molecule or an amino acid nowhere approaches the complexity of a single living cell. But most importantly, what would it demonstrate if the collective work of thousands of the most intelligent scientists in the world, with the most expensive and complex laboratory equipment available, working over the course of several decades, actually did produce a living organism? Would that “prove” that God did not create life? Quite the opposite: it would demonstrate that life simply does not come about by chance but must be intentionally created by an intelligent designer. In theory at least, it is not impossible that human beings, created in the image of God and using their God-given intelligence could someday create a living organism out of nonliving substances (though the complexity of the task far surpasses any technology that exists today). But that would only show that God made us to be “God-like—that in biological research as in many other areas of life we in a very small way can imitate God’s activity. All such scientific research in this direction really ought to be done out of reverence for God and with gratitude for the scientific capability with which he has endowed us.

Many unbelieving scientists have been so influenced by the cumulative force of the objections brought against evolution that they have openly advocated novel positions for one part or another of the proposed evolutionary development of living things. Francis Crick, who won the Nobel Prize for helping to discover the structure of DNA molecules, proposed in 1973 that life may have been sent here by a spaceship from a distant planet, a theory that Crick calls “Directed Panspermia.”<sup>43</sup> To the present author, it seems ironic that brilliant scientists could advocate so fantastic a theory without one shred of evidence in its favor, all the while rejecting the straightforward explanation given by the one book in the history of the world that has never been proven wrong, that has changed the lives of millions of people, that has been believed completely by many of the most intelligent scholars of every generation, and that has been a greater force for good than any other book in the history of the world. Why will otherwise

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Mathematicians Question Darwinism,” *Scientific Research* (November 1987), pp. 59–66, and I.L. Cohen, *Darwin Was Wrong—A Study in Probabilities* (Greenville, N.Y.: New Research Publications, 1984).

<sup>43</sup> *Time* September 10, 1973, p. 53, summarizing the article “Directed Panspermia,” by F.H.C. Crick and L.E. Orgel in *Icarus* 19 (1973): 341–46.

intelligent people commit themselves to beliefs that seem so irrational? It seems as though they will believe in anything, so long as it is not belief in the personal God of Scripture, who calls us to forsake our pride, humble ourselves before him, ask his forgiveness for failure to obey his moral standards, and submit ourselves to his moral commands for the rest of our lives. To refuse to do this is irrational, but, as we shall see in the chapter on sin, all sin is ultimately irrational at its root.

Other challenges to the theory of evolution have been published in the last twenty or thirty years, and no doubt many more will be forthcoming. One only hopes it will not be too long before the scientific community publicly acknowledges the implausibility of evolutionary theory, and textbooks written for high school and college students openly acknowledge that evolution simply is not a satisfactory explanation for the origin of life on the earth.

## **(2) The Destructive Influences of Evolutionary Theory in Modern Thought:**

It is important to understand the incredibly destructive influences that evolutionary theory has had on modern thinking. If in fact life was not created by God, and if human beings in particular are not created by God or responsible to him, but are simply the result of random occurrences in the universe, then of what significance is human life? We are merely the product of matter plus time plus chance, and so to think that we have any eternal importance, or really any importance at all in the face of an immense universe, is simply to delude ourselves. Honest reflection on this notion should lead people to a profound sense of despair.

Moreover, if all of life can be explained by evolutionary theory apart from God, and if there is no God who created us (or at least if we cannot know anything about him with certainty), then there is no supreme Judge to hold us morally accountable. Therefore there are no moral absolutes in human life, and people's moral ideas are only subjective preferences, good for them perhaps but not to be imposed on others. In fact, in such a case the only thing forbidden is to say that one knows that certain things are right and certain things are wrong.

There is another ominous consequence of evolutionary theory: If the inevitable processes of natural selection continue to bring about improvement in life forms on earth through the survival of the fittest, then why should we hinder this process by caring for those who are weak or less able to defend themselves? Should we not rather allow them to die without reproducing so that we might move toward a new, higher form of humanity, even a "master race"? In fact, Marx, Nietzsche, and Hitler all justified war on these grounds.<sup>44</sup>

Moreover, if human beings are continually evolving for the better, then the wisdom of earlier generations (and particularly of earlier religious beliefs) is not likely to be as valuable as modern thought. In addition, the effect of Darwinian evolution on the people's opinions of the trustworthiness of Scripture has been a very negative one.

Contemporary sociological and psychological theories that see human beings as simply higher forms of animals are another outcome of evolutionary thought. And the extremes of the modern "animal rights" movement that oppose all killing of animals (for food, or for leather coats, or for medical research, for example) also flow naturally out of evolutionary thought.

**d. The Theory of a "Gap" Between Genesis 1:1 and 1:2:** Some evangelicals have proposed that there is a gap of millions of years between Genesis 1:1 ("In the beginning God created the

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<sup>44</sup> See *NIDCC* p. 283.

heavens and the earth”) and Genesis 1:2 (“The earth was without form and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep”). According to this theory, God made an earlier creation, but there was eventually a rebellion against God (probably in connection with Satan’s own rebellion), and God judged the earth so that “it became without form and void” (an alternative, but doubtful, translation proposed for Gen. 1:2).<sup>45</sup> What we read of in Genesis 1:3–2:3 is really the *second* creation of God, in six literal twenty-four-hour days, which occurred only recently (perhaps 10,000 to 20,000 years ago). The ancient fossils found on the earth, many of which are said to be millions of years old, stem from the *first* creation (4,500,000,000 years ago), which is mentioned only in Genesis 1:1.

The primary biblical argument for this theory is that the words “without form and void” and “darkness” in Genesis 1:2 picture an earth that has suffered the effects of judgment by God: darkness elsewhere in the Old Testament is frequently a sign of God’s judgment, and the Hebrew words **תֵהוּ**, H9332 (“without form”) and **בְהוּ**, H983 (“void, empty”) in verses such as Isaiah 34:11 and Jeremiah 4:23 refer to places such as deserts that have suffered the desolating consequences of God’s judgment.

But these arguments do not seem strong enough to persuade us that Genesis 1:2 pictures the earth as desolate after God’s judgment. If God first forms the earth (v. 1) and then later creates light (v. 3), there would have to be darkness over the earth in verse 2—this indicates that creation is in progress, not that any evil is present. In addition, each day there is an “evening,” and there is “darkness” present during the six days of creation (vv. 5, 8, 13, 18–19, et al.), with no suggestion of evil or of God’s disapproval (cf. Ps. 104:20). As far as the phrase “without form and void,” the sense is just that it is not yet fit for habitation: God’s preparatory work has not yet been done. Of course, when God curses a desert, it does become unfit for habitation, but we should not read the cause of that unfitness in one case (God’s curse on a desert) into another case, the creation, where the cause of unfitness for habitation is simply that God’s work is still in

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<sup>45</sup> This “gap theory” is given as one possible interpretation of Gen. 1:1–2 in *The New Scofield Reference Bible* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967), in notes to Gen. 1:2 and Isa. 45:18. It also remains commonplace in much popular Bible teaching. An extensive defense of this theory is found in Arthur C. Custance, *Without Form and Void: A Study of the Meaning of Genesis 1:2* (Brockville, Ontario: Doorway Papers, 1970). An extensive critique is in Weston W. Fields, *Unformed and Unfilled* (Nutley, N.J.: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1976). A substantial critique of the lexical and grammatical arguments used in the gap theory is also found in Oswald T. Allis, *God Spoke by Moses* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1951), pp. 153–59.

Some readers may wonder why I have classified this view along with secular views and theistic evolution as a theory that seems “clearly inconsistent with the teachings of Scripture.” I should note here that I am doing this only because the arguments for this position seem to me to be based on highly unlikely interpretations of the biblical text, and I do not wish to imply that those who hold to the gap theory are unbelievers, or that they are like many theistic evolutionists who think the Bible cannot teach us about science. On the contrary, advocates of the gap theory have uniformly been believers in the total truthfulness of Scripture on whatever subject it speaks to.

cf cf.—compare

progress; the preparation for man is not yet complete.<sup>46</sup> (It is not proper to read the circumstances that surround a word in one place into the use of that word in another place when the meaning of the word and its use in the second context do not require those same circumstances.)

In addition to the fact that Genesis 1:2 does not give support to this view, there are some other arguments that weigh strongly against the gap theory:

1. There is no verse in Scripture that explicitly talks about an earlier creation. So this theory is lacking even one verse of Scripture to give it explicit support.

2. In Genesis 1:31, when God finished his work of creation, we read, “And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good.” But according to the gap theory, God would be looking at an earth full of the results of rebellion, conflict, and terrible divine judgment. He would also be looking at all the demonic beings, the hosts of Satan who had rebelled against him, and yet be calling everything “very good.” It is difficult to believe that there was so much evil and so many evidences of rebellion and judgment on the earth, and that God could still say that creation was very good.

Moreover, Genesis 2:1 says, in an apparent summary of all that has happened in Genesis 1, “Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them.” Here it is not just God’s work on the earth, but all that he made in the heavens, that is said to have been completed in the narrative in Genesis 1. This would not allow for large parts of heaven and earth to have been finished long before the six creation days.

3. In a later description of God’s work of creation found in the Ten Commandments, we read, “for *in six days the LORD made heaven and earth the sea, and all that is in them* and rested the seventh day; therefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day and hallowed it” (Ex. 20:11). Here the creation of both the heaven and the earth, and the making of “all that is in them,” is attributed to God’s work in the six days of creation. Whether we take these to be twenty-four-hour days or longer periods of time, on either view the making of the entire heavens and earth and *everything in them* is put within these six days. But the proponents of the gap theory would have to say that there are many things in the earth (such as fossil remains of dead animals, and the earth itself) and in the heavens (such as the stars) that God did not make in the six days specified in Exodus 20:11, a view that seems exactly contrary to what is affirmed in the verse.

Moreover, while some passages of Scripture do speak of God’s judgment on rebellious angels or his judgment on the earth at various times (see Isa. 24:1; Jer. 4:23–26; 2 Peter 2:4),

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<sup>46</sup> The second word, בְּהוֹרֵי, H983, “void,” only occurs two other times in Scripture (Isa. 34:11; Jer. 4:23), both picturing desolate lands that have experienced God’s judgment. But the first word, תְּהוֹרֵי, H9332, which can mean “formlessness, confusion, unreality, emptiness” (BDB p. 1062), occurs nineteen other times, sometimes to refer to a desolate place resulting from judgment (Isa. 34:11 and Jer. 4:23, both with בְּהוֹרֵי, H983), and sometimes just to refer to an empty place, with no sense of evil or judgment implied (Job 26:7, of “space” over which God stretches the north, parallel to the “nothingness” in which he hangs the earth; also Deut. 32:10; Job 12:24; Ps. 107:40). The sense “uninhabitable” is especially appropriate in Isa. 45:18, speaking of God’s creation of the earth: “He did not create it to be empty [תְּהוֹרֵי, H9332], but formed it to be inhabited” (NIV). (The fact that God did not create the earth to be “empty” but “formed it to be inhabited” [Isa. 45:18] speaks of God’s completed work of creation and does not deny that it was “without form and void” at the earliest stage of creation.)

none of the passages places this judgment at a time before the creation narrative in Genesis 1:2–31.

4. This theory must assume that all of the fossils of animals from millions of years ago that resemble very closely animals from today indicate that God’s first creation of the animal and plant kingdom resulted in a failure. These animals and plants did not fulfill God’s original purpose, so he destroyed them, but in the second creation he made others that were exactly like them. Moreover, since Adam and Eve were the first man and woman, this theory must assume that there was a prior creation of God that existed for millions of years but lacked the highest aspect of God’s creative work, namely, man himself. But both the failure of God to accomplish his purposes with the original plant and animal kingdoms, and the failure of God to crown creation with his highest creature, man, seem inconsistent with the biblical picture of God as one who always accomplishes his purposes in whatever he does. So the gap theory does not seem an acceptable alternative for evangelical Christians today.

**3. The Age of the Earth: Some Preliminary Considerations.** Up to this point, the discussions in this chapter have advocated conclusions that we hope will find broad assent among evangelical Christians. But now at last we come to a perplexing question about which Bible-believing Christians have differed for many years, sometimes very sharply. The question is simply this: How old is the earth?

It is appropriate to treat this question after all the earlier matters, because it is really much less important than the doctrines considered above. These earlier matters may be summarized as follows: (1) God created the universe out of nothing; (2) creation is distinct from God, yet always dependent on God; (3) God created the universe to show his glory; (4) the universe God created was very good; (5) there will be no final conflict between Scripture and science; (6) secular theories that deny God as Creator, including Darwinian evolution, are clearly incompatible with belief in the Bible.

The question of the age of the earth is also less important than matters to be treated in subsequent chapters, that is (7) the creation of the angelic world and (8) the creation of man in the image of God (chapters 19, 21, and 22). It is important to keep these things in mind, because there is a danger that Christians will spend too much time arguing over the age of the earth and neglect to focus on much more important and much clearer aspects of the overall teaching of the Bible on creation.

The two options to choose from for a date of the earth are the “old earth” position, which agrees with the consensus of modern science that the earth is 4,500,000,000 years old, and the “young earth” position, which says that the earth is 10,000 to 20,000 years old, and that secular scientific dating schemes are incorrect. The difference between these two views is enormous: 4,499,980,000 years!

Before considering the specific arguments for both positions, we will examine some preliminary questions about the genealogies in the Bible, current estimates for the age of the human race, differing views on the date of dinosaurs, and the length of the six creation days in Genesis 1.

**a. There Are Gaps in the Genealogies of the Bible:** When one reads the list of names in Scripture together with their ages, it might seem as though we could add together the ages of all the people in the history of redemption from Adam to Christ and come up with an approximate date for the creation of the earth. Certainly this would give a very recent date for creation (such

as Archbishop Ussher’s date of 4004 B.C.). But closer inspection of the parallel lists of names in Scripture will show that Scripture itself indicates the fact that the genealogies list only those names the biblical writers thought it important to record for their purposes. In fact, some genealogies include names that are left out by other genealogies in Scripture itself.

For instance, Matthew 1:8–9 tells us that Asa was “the father of Jehoshaphat, and Jehoshaphat the father of Joram, and Joram the father of Uzziah, and Uzziah the father of Jotham, and Jotham the father of Ahaz.” But from 1 Chronicles 3:10–12 (which uses the alternate name Ahaziah for Uzziah), we learn that three generations have been omitted by Matthew: Joash, Amaziah, and Azariah. So these texts can be compared in the following table:

**Example of gaps in genealogies**

1 Chronicles 3:10–12	Matthew 1:8–9
Asa	Asa
Jehoshaphat	Jehoshaphat
Joram	Joram
Ahaziah (Uzziah)	Uzziah
Joash	
Amaziah	
Azariah	
Jotham	Jotham
Ahaz	Ahaz
Hezekiah	Hezekiah
(etc.)	(etc.)

Therefore, when Matthew says that Uzziah was “the father of Jotham,” it can mean that he was the father of someone who led to Jotham. Matthew has selected those names that he wants to emphasize for his own purposes.<sup>47</sup> A similar phenomenon is evident in Matthew 1:20 where the angel of the Lord speaks to Joseph and calls him, “Joseph, son of David.” Now Joseph is not directly the son of David (for David lived around 1000 B.C.), but Joseph is the descendant of David and is therefore called his “son.”

Another example is found in 1 Chronicles 26:24 in a list of officers appointed by King David near the end of his life. We read that “Shebuel the son of Gershom, son of Moses, was chief officer in charge of the treasuries” (1 Chron. 26:24). Now we know from Exodus 2:22 that

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<sup>47</sup> See a fuller discussion of the gaps in genealogies in Francis Schaeffer, *No Final Conflict* pp. 37–43.

Gershom was the son born to Moses before the Exodus, sometime around 1480 B.C. (or, on a late date for the exodus, around 1330 B.C.). But these officials mentioned in 1 Chronicles 26 were appointed at the time that David made Solomon king over Israel, around 970 B.C. (see 1 Chron. 23:1). That means that in 1 Chronicles 26:24 Shebuel is said to be “the son of Gershom,” who was born 510 (or at least 360) years earlier. Ten or more generations have been omitted in this designation “son of.”<sup>48</sup>

It seems only fair to conclude that the genealogies of Scripture have some gaps in them, and that God only caused to be recorded those names that were important for his purposes. How many gaps there are and how many generations are missing from the Genesis narratives, we do not know. The life of Abraham may be placed at approximately 2000 B.C., because the kings and places listed in the stories of Abraham’s life (Gen. 12ff.) can be correlated with archaeological data that can be dated quite reliably,<sup>49</sup> but prior to Abraham the setting of dates is very uncertain. In view of the exceptionally long life spans reported for people prior to the flood, it would not seem unreasonable to think that a few thousand years have been passed over in the narrative. This gives us some flexibility in our thinking about the date that man first appeared on the earth. (It would seem to be quite another thing, however, and quite foreign to the sense of continuity in the narrative, to think that *millions* of years have been omitted, but that names and details of the lives of key persons have been remembered and passed down over such a long period of time.)

**b. The Age of the Human Race:** While current scientific estimates say that man first appeared on the earth about 2.5 million years ago, it is important to recognize what kind of “man” this is claimed to be. The following table is a rough guide to current scientific opinion:<sup>50</sup>

<i>homo habilis</i> (“skillful man”) stone tools	2–3.5 million years B.C.
<i>homo erectus</i> variety of stone tools, used fire by 500,000 B.C., hunted large animals	1.5 million years B.C.
<i>homo sapiens</i> (“wise man” or “thinking man”) buried their dead (example: Neanderthal man)	40,000–150,000 B.C. (or perhaps 300,000 B.C.)

<sup>48</sup> The NIV translates the verse, “Shubael, a descendant of Gershom,” but this is simply an interpretation, for the Hebrew text simply has the word שִׁבְעֻל, H1201, “son.” It should not be objected that Gershom may have lived over 500 years, for such long life spans are not found after the flood (note Gen. 6:3); in fact, Abraham was miraculously given a son when he was almost 100 (cf. Rom. 4:19; Heb. 11:12); and Moses, long before David or Solomon, counted man’s life as 70 or 80 years: “The years of our life are threescore and ten, or even by reason of strength fourscore” (Ps. 90:10).

<sup>49</sup> See “Chronology of the Old Testament” in *IBD* esp. pp. 268–70.

<sup>50</sup> This table was adapted from Frair and Davis, *A Case for Creation* pp. 122–26, and Karl W. Butzer, “Prehistoric People,” in *World Book Encyclopedia* (Chicago: World Book, 1974), 15:666–74.

<i>homo sapiens sapiens</i> ("wise, wise man")	90,000 B.C.
(example: Cro-Magnon man) cave paintings	18,000–35,000 B.C.
(example: Neolithic man) cattle raising, agriculture, metalwork	19,000 B.C.

Whether Christians hold to a young earth or old earth view, they will agree that man is certainly on the earth by the time of the cave paintings by Cro-Magnon man, paintings which date from about 10,000 B.C. There is some variation in the date of Cro-Magnon man, however, since the dating of a Cro-Magnon burial site in Siberia is approximately 20,000 to 35,000 B.C. according to the geological evidence found there, but the Carbon-14 dating method gives a date of only 9,000 B.C., or 11,000 years ago.<sup>51</sup> Earlier than the paintings by Cro-Magnon man, there is disagreement. Was Neanderthal man really a man, or just a human-like creature?<sup>52</sup> How human were earlier man-like creatures? (Higher forms of animals, such as chimpanzees, can use tools, and burial of one's dead is not necessarily a uniquely human trait.) Moreover, dating methods used for earlier periods are very approximate with results that often conflict.<sup>53</sup>

So how long ago did man first appear on the earth? Certainly by 10,000 B.C., if the Cro-Magnon cave paintings have been dated correctly. But before that it is difficult to say.

**c. Did Animals Die Before the Fall?** For young earth advocates, there is no need to ask whether animals died before the fall, because animals and man were both created on the sixth day, and there may have been only a short time before Adam and Eve sinned. This could have introduced death into the animal kingdom as well, as part of the curse of the fall (Gen. 3:17–19; Rom. 8:20–23).

But for old earth advocates, this is an important question. There are millions of apparently ancient fossils in the earth. Might they have come from animals who lived and died for long ages before Adam and Eve were created? Might God have created an animal kingdom that was subject to death from the moment of creation? This is quite possible. There was no doubt death in the plant world, if Adam and Eve were to eat plants; and if God had made an original creation in which animals would reproduce and also live forever, the earth would soon be overcrowded with no hope of relief. The warning to Adam in Genesis 2:17 was only that *he* would die if he ate of the forbidden fruit, not that animals would also begin to die. When Paul says, "Sin came into the world through one man and death through sin" (Rom. 5:12a), the following phrase makes

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<sup>51</sup> Kofahl and Segraves, *The Creation Explanation* p. 207.

<sup>52</sup> Two helpful discussions of the various proposed human ancestors are found in Frair and Davis, *A Case for Creation* pp. 122–26, and Davis A. Young, *Creation and the Flood* pp. 146–55. Frair and Davis think that Neanderthal man was "entirely human" although "racially distinct" (p. 125).

<sup>53</sup> Philip Johnson notes that a recent theory that has received support from several molecular biologists is that all humans descended from a "mitochondrial Eve" who lived in Africa less than 200,000 years ago (*Darwin on Trial* pp. 83, 177–78).

clear that he is talking about death for human beings, not for plants and animals, for he immediately adds, “and so death spread to all men because all men sinned” (Rom. 5:12b).

From the information we have in Scripture, we cannot now know whether God created animals subject to aging and death from the beginning, but it remains a real possibility.

**d. What About Dinosaurs?:** Current scientific opinion holds that dinosaurs became extinct about 65 million years ago, millions of years before human beings appeared on the earth. But those who hold to six twenty-four-hour days of creation and a young earth would say that dinosaurs were among the creatures created by God on the same day he created man (the sixth day). They would therefore say that dinosaurs and human beings lived on the earth at the same time and that dinosaurs subsequently became extinct (perhaps in the flood). Young earth advocates of course would differ with the methods used to arrive at such ancient dates for dinosaurs.

Among those who hold to an old earth view, some would want to say that dinosaurs were among the creatures that Adam named in Genesis 2:19–20, and that they subsequently perished (perhaps in the flood). They would admit that dinosaurs may have existed earlier, but would say that they did not become extinct until after the time of Adam and Eve. Others would say that the sixth day of creation was millions of years long, and that dinosaurs had already become extinct by the time Adam was created and named the animals. In this case, Adam did not name dinosaurs (the Bible does not say that he did), but he only named all the creatures that were living at the time God brought him all the animals to name (Gen. 2:19–20; see NIV). Of course, this view would require that there was death in the animal world before there was sin (see previous section).

**e. Are the Six Days of Creation Twenty-four-Hour Days?:** Much of the dispute between “young earth” and “old earth” advocates hinges on the interpretation of the length of “days” in Genesis 1. Old earth supporters propose that the six “days” of Genesis 1 refer not to periods of twenty-four hours, but rather to long periods of time, millions of years, during which God carried out the creative activities described in Genesis 1. This proposal has led to a heated debate with other evangelicals, which is far from being settled decisively one way or another.

In favor of viewing the six days as long periods of time is the fact that the Hebrew word יוֹם, H3427, “day,” is sometimes used to refer not to a twenty-four-hour literal day, but to a longer period of time. We see this when the word is used in Genesis 2:4, for example: “In the *day* that the LORD God made the earth and the heavens,” a phrase that refers to the entire creative work of the six days of creation. Other examples of the word *day* to mean a period of time are Job 20:28 (“the *day* of God’s wrath”); Psalm 20:1 (“The LORD answer you in the *day* of trouble!”); Proverbs 11:4 (“Riches do not profit in the *day* of wrath”); 21:31 (“The horse is made ready for the *day* of battle”); 24:10 (“If you faint in the *day* of adversity, your strength is small”); 25:13 (“the *time* [יָמִים] of harvest”); Ecclesiastes 7:14 (“In the *day* of prosperity be joyful, and in the *day* of adversity consider; God has made the one as well as the other”); many passages referring to “the *day* of the LORD” (such as Isa. 2:12; 13:6, 9; Joel 1:15; 2:1; Zeph. 1:14); and many other

Old Testament passages predicting times of judgment or blessing. A concordance will show that this is a frequent sense for the word *day* in the Old Testament.

An additional argument for a long period of time in these “days” is the fact that the sixth day includes so many events that it must have been longer than twenty-four hours. The sixth day of creation (Gen. 1:24–31) includes the creation of animals and the creation of man and woman both (“male and female he created them,” Gen. 1:27). It was also on the sixth day that God blessed Adam and Eve and said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth” (Gen. 1:28). But that means that the sixth day included God’s creation of Adam, God’s putting Adam in the Garden of Eden to till it and keep it, and giving Adam directions regarding the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Gen. 2:15–17), his bringing all the animals to man for them to be named (Gen. 2:18–20), finding no helper fit for Adam (Gen. 2:20), and then causing a deep sleep to fall upon Adam and creating Eve from his rib (Gen. 2:21–25). The finite nature of man and the incredibly large number of animals created by God would by itself seem to require that a much longer period of time than part of one day would be needed to include so many events—at least that would be an “ordinary” understanding of the passage for an original reader, a consideration that is not unimportant in a debate that often emphasizes what an ordinary reading of the text by the original readers would lead them to conclude.<sup>54</sup> If the sixth day is shown by contextual considerations to be considerably longer than an ordinary twenty-four-hour day, then does not the context itself favor the sense of *day* as simply a “period of time” of unspecified length?

Related to this is one more consideration. The seventh day, it should be noted, is not concluded with the phrase “and there was evening and there was morning, a seventh day.” The text just says that God “rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had done” and that “God blessed the seventh day and hallowed it” (Gen. 2:2–3). The possibility, if not the implication, suggested by this is that the seventh day is still continuing. It never ended but is also a “day” that is really a long period of time (cf. John 5:17; Heb. 4:4, 9–10).

Some have objected that whenever the word *day* refers to a period of time other than a twenty-four-hour day in the Old Testament the context makes it clear that this is the case, but since the context does not make this clear in Genesis 1 we must assume that normal days are meant. But to this we may answer that whenever the word *day* means a twenty-four-hour day, the context makes this clear as well. Otherwise, we could not know that a twenty-four-hour day is meant in that context. So this is not a persuasive objection. It simply affirms what everyone agrees to, namely, that the context enables us to determine which sense a word will take when it has various possible meanings.

Another objection is that the Bible could have used other words if a period longer than a twenty-four-hour day was intended. However, if (as is clearly the case) the original readers knew that the word *day* could mean a long period of time, then there was no need to use some other

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<sup>54</sup> Advocates of a twenty-four-hour day can give scenarios whereby Adam only named representative types of animals or named them rapidly without any observation of their activities or abilities, but both suggestions are much less likely interpretations in view of the importance attached to naming in the Old Testament.

cf cf.—compare

word, for the word **יום**, H3427, conveyed the intended meaning quite well. Furthermore, it was a very appropriate word to use when describing six successive periods of work plus a period of rest that would set the pattern for the seven days of the week in which people would live.

That brings us back to the original question, namely, what does the word *day* mean in the context of Genesis 1? The fact that the word must refer to a longer period of time just a few verses later in the same narrative (Gen. 2:4) should caution us against making dogmatic statements that the original readers would have certainly known that the author was talking about twenty-four-hour days. In fact, both senses were commonly known meanings in the minds of the original readers of this narrative.<sup>55</sup>

It is important to realize that those who advocate long periods of time for the six “days” of creation are not saying that the context *requires* that these be understood as periods of time. They are simply saying that the context does not clearly specify for us one meaning of *day* or another, and if convincing scientific data about the age of the earth, drawn from many different disciplines and giving similar answers, convinces us that the earth is billions of years old, then this possible interpretation of *day* as a long period of time may be the best interpretation to adopt. In this way, the situation is something like that faced by those who first held that the earth rotates on its axis and revolves about the sun. They would not say that the passages about the sun “rising” or “going down” *require* us, in their contexts, to believe in a heliocentric (sun-centered) solar system, but that this is a *possible* understanding of the texts, seeing them as only speaking from the standpoint of the observer. Observational evidence taken from science informs us that this is in fact the correct way to interpret those texts.

On the other side of this question are the arguments in favor of understanding “day” as a twenty-four-hour day in Genesis 1:

1. It is significant that each of the days of Genesis 1 ends with an expression such as, “And there was evening, and there was morning—the first day” (Gen. 1:5 NIV). The phrase “And there was evening, and there was morning” is repeated in verses 8, 13, 19, 23, and 31. This seems to imply the sequence of events marking a literal twenty-four-hour day and suggests that the readers should understand it in that way.

This is a strong argument from context, and many have found it persuasive. Yet those who hold to a long period of time for these “days” could respond (a) that even evening and morning do not constitute an entire day, but only the end of one day and the beginning of another, so the expression itself may be simply part of the author’s way of telling us that the end of the first creative day (that is, long period of time) occurred, and the beginning of the next creative “day” had come;<sup>56</sup> and also (b) that the first three creative “days” could not have been marked by evening and morning as caused by the sun shining on the earth, for the sun was not created until the fourth day (Gen. 1:14–19); thus, the very context shows that “evening and morning” in this chapter does not refer to the ordinary evening and morning of days as we know them now. So the

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<sup>55</sup> I am assuming here that Moses wrote both Genesis and Exodus, and that the original readers were the people of Israel in the wilderness around 1440 B.C.

NIV NIV—New International Version

<sup>56</sup> In fact, the expression “and there was evening and there was morning” is never elsewhere used in the Hebrew Old Testament, so it cannot be said to be a common expression used to designate a normal day.

argument from “evening and morning,” though it may give some weight to the twenty-four-hour view, does not seem to tip the balance decisively in its favor.

2. The third day of creation cannot be very long, because the sun does not come into being until the fourth day, and plants cannot live long without light. In response to this, it might be said that the light that God created on the first day energized the plants for millions of years. But that would suppose God to have created a light that is almost exactly like sunlight in brightness and power, but still not sunlight—an unusual suggestion.

3. It is hard to avoid the conclusion that in the Ten Commandments the word *day* is used to mean a twenty-four-hour day:

Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six *days* you shall labor, and do all your work; but the seventh *day* is a sabbath to the LORD your God; . . . for in six *days* the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day; therefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day and hallowed it.” (Ex. 20:8–11)

Certainly in that text the sabbath “day” is a twenty-four-hour day. And must we not say that verse 11, which in the same sentence says that the Lord made heaven and earth in “six days,” uses “day” in the same sense? This is again a weighty argument, and on balance it gives additional persuasiveness to the twenty-four-hour day position. But once again it is not quite conclusive in itself, for one could respond that the readers were aware (from a careful reading of Gen. 1–2) that the days there were unspecified periods of time, and that the sabbath commandment merely told God’s people that, just as he followed a six-plus-one pattern in creation (six periods of work followed by a period of rest), so they were to follow a six-plus-one pattern in their lives (six days of work followed by a day of rest; also six years of work followed by a sabbath year of rest, as in Ex. 23:10–11). In fact, in the very next sentence of the Ten Commandments, “day” means “a period of time”: “Honor your father and your mother, that your *days* may be long in the land which the LORD your God gives you” (Ex. 20:12). Certainly here the promise is not for “long” literal days (such as twenty-five- or twenty-six-hour days!), but rather that the period of one’s life may be lengthened upon the earth.<sup>57</sup>

4. Those who argue for “day” as a twenty-four-hour day also ask whether anywhere else in the Hebrew Bible the word “days” in the plural, especially when a number is attached (such as “six days”), ever refers to anything but twenty-four-hour days. This argument is not compelling, however, because (a) a plural example of “days” to mean periods of time is found in Exodus 20:12, discussed in the previous paragraph and (b) if the word clearly takes the sense “period of time” in the singular (which it does, as all admit), then to speak of six such “periods” of time would certainly be understandable to the readers, even if the Old Testament did not elsewhere have examples of such a meaning. The fact that such an expression does not appear elsewhere may mean nothing more than that there was no occasion to use it elsewhere.

5. When Jesus says, “But from the beginning of creation, “God made them male and female” ’ (Mark 10:6), he implies that Adam and Eve were not created billions of years after the

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<sup>57</sup> The Hebrew text does not say “that your days may be *many* (Heb. מַרְבֵּי, H8041)” which is a common Hebrew expression (Gen. 21:34; 37:34; Ex. 2:23; Num. 9:19; et al.), but “that your days may be *long*” (Heb. אֲרֵבֶנְךָ, H799, “be long,” used also as physical length in 1 Kings 8:8; Ps. 129:3; Isa. 54:2 [“lengthen your cords”]; Ezek. 31:5).

beginning of creation, but at the beginning of creation. This argument also has some force, but old earth advocates may respond that Jesus is just referring to the whole of Genesis 1–2 as the “beginning of creation,” in contrast to the argument from the laws given by Moses that the Pharisees were depending on (v. 4).

I have given an answer to each of the five arguments for a twenty-four-hour day, but these answers may not persuade its advocates. They would respond to the “period of time” position as follows: (1) Of course, it is true that *day* may mean “period of time” in many places in the Old Testament, but that does not demonstrate that *day* must have that meaning in Genesis 1. (2) The sixth day of creation need not have been longer than twenty-four hours, especially if Adam only named major representative kinds of birds and of “every beast of the field” (Gen. 2:20). (3) Though there was no sun to mark the first three days of creation, nonetheless, the earth was still rotating on its axis at a fixed speed, and there was “light” and “darkness” that God created on the first day (Gen. 1:3–4), and he called the light “day” and the darkness “night” (Gen. 3:5). So God in some way caused an alternation between day and night from the very first day of creation, according to Genesis 1:3–5.

What shall we conclude about the length of days in Genesis 1? It does not seem at all easy to decide with the information we now have. It is not simply a question of “believing the Bible” or “not believing the Bible,” nor is it a question of “giving in to modern science” or “rejecting the clear conclusions of modern science.” Even for those who believe in the complete truthfulness of Scripture (such as the present author), and who retain some doubt about the exceptionally long periods of time scientists propose for the age of the earth (such as the present author), the question does not seem to be easy to decide. At present, considerations of the power of God’s creative word and the immediacy with which it seems to bring response, the fact that “evening and morning” and the numbering of days still suggest twenty-four-hour days, and the fact that God would seem to have no purpose for delaying the creation of man for thousands or even millions of years, seem to me to be strong considerations in favor of the twenty-four-hour day position. But even here there are good arguments on the other side: To the one who lives forever, for whom “one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day” (2 Peter 3:8), who delights in gradually working out all his purposes over time, perhaps 15 billion years is just the right amount of time to take in preparing the universe for man’s arrival and 4.5 billion years in preparing the earth. The evidence of incredible antiquity in the universe would then serve as a vivid reminder of the even more amazing nature of God’s eternity, just as the incredible size of the universe causes us to wonder at God’s even greater omnipresence and omnipotence.

Therefore, with respect to the length of days in Genesis 1, the possibility must be left open that God has chosen not to give us enough information to come to a clear decision on this question, and the real test of faithfulness to him may be the degree to which we can act charitably toward those who in good conscience and full belief in God’s Word hold to a different position on this matter.

**4. Both “Old Earth” and “Young Earth” Theories Are Valid Options for Christians Who Believe the Bible Today.** After discussing several preliminary considerations regarding the age of the earth, we come finally to the specific arguments for old earth and young earth views.

**a. “Old Earth” Theories of Creation:** In this first category we list two viewpoints held by those who believe in an old earth with an age of about 4.5 billion years and a universe about 15 billion years old.

### (1) Day-Age View:

Many who believe that the earth is many millions of years old maintain that the days of Genesis 1 are extremely long “ages” of time.<sup>58</sup> The arguments given above for long days in Genesis 1 will apply here, and, as we argued above, the words of the Hebrew text do allow for the days to be long periods of time. The evident advantage of this view is that, if the current scientific estimate for an earth 4.5 billion years old is correct, it explains how the Bible is consistent with this fact. Among evangelicals who hold to an old earth view, this is a common position. This view is sometimes called a “concordist” view because it seeks agreement or “concord” between the Bible and scientific conclusions about dating.

Many have been attracted to this position because of scientific evidence regarding the age of the earth. A very helpful survey of the views of theologians and scientists regarding the age of the earth, from ancient Greece to the twentieth century, is found in a book by a professional geologist who is also an evangelical Christian, Davis A. Young, *Christianity and the Age of the Earth*.<sup>59</sup> Young demonstrates that in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, many Christian geologists, under the weight of apparently overwhelming evidence, have concluded that the earth is about 4.5 billion years old. Although some “young earth” proponents (see discussion below) have claimed that radiometric dating techniques are inaccurate because of changes that occurred on the earth at the time of the flood, Young notes that radiometric dating of rocks from the moon and of meteorites recently fallen to the earth, which could not have been affected by Noah’s flood, coincide with many other radiometric evidences from various materials on the earth, and that the results of these tests are “remarkably consistent in pointing to about 4.5–4.7 billion years.”<sup>60</sup>

Some of Young’s most forceful arguments for an old earth, in addition to those from radiometric dating, include the time required for liquid magma to cool (about 1 million years for a large formation in southern California), the time and pressure required for the formation of many metamorphic rocks that contain small fossils (some apparently could only be formed by the pressure of being buried twelve to eighteen miles under ground and later brought to the surface—but when could this have happened on a young earth view?), continental drift (fossil-bearing rock fields near the coasts of Africa and South America were apparently previously joined together, then separated by continental drift, something that could not have happened in

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<sup>58</sup> One variation of this view would say that the six days were twenty-four-hour days, but there were millions of years between each day and the following one. This is certainly possible, but the difficulty with this view is that it seems to be importing “gaps” between all the days simply to account for scientific chronology, with no clear evidence in the text to support it. This view is defended by Robert C. Newman and Herman J. Eckelmann, Jr., *Genesis One and the Origin of the Earth* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1977).

<sup>59</sup> Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1982, pp. 13–67.

<sup>60</sup> *Christianity and the Age of the Earth* p. 63; see also the detailed discussion on pp. 93–116, and *Creation and the Flood* pp. 185–93.

20,000 years at the present rate of two centimeters per year),<sup>61</sup> and coral reefs (some of which apparently would have required hundreds of thousands of years of gradual deposits to attain their present state).<sup>62</sup> Several other arguments, especially from astronomy, have been summarized by Robert C. Newman and Herman J. Eckelmann, Jr., in *Genesis One and the Origin of the Earth*.<sup>63</sup> These arguments favor an old earth view, and the day-age theory is an attractive position for old earth advocates.

The day-age view is certainly possible, but it has several difficulties: (1) The sequence of events in Genesis 1 does not exactly correspond to current scientific understanding of the development of life, which puts sea creatures (Day 5) before trees (Day 3), and insects and other land animals (Day 6), as well as fish (Day 5), before birds (Day 5).<sup>64</sup> (2) The greatest difficulty for this view is that it puts the sun, moon, and stars (Day 4) millions of years *after* the creation of plants and trees (Day 3). That makes no sense at all according to current scientific opinion, which sees the stars as formed long before the earth or any living creatures on the earth. It also makes no sense in terms of the way the earth now operates, for plants do not grow without sunlight, and there are many plants (Day 3) that do not pollinate without birds or flying insects (Day 5), and there are many birds (Day 5) that live off creeping insects (Day 6). Moreover, how would the waters on the earth keep from freezing for millions of years without the sun?

In response, those who hold the concordist view say that the sun, moon, and stars were created on Day 1 (the creation of light) or before Day 1, when “in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth” (Gen. 1:1), and that the sun, moon, and stars were only *made visible* or

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<sup>61</sup> See *Creation and the Flood* pp. 171–210, for these examples. A continental drift of 2 cm. per year x 20,000 years = 40,000 cm. or 400 m. (about 437 yd. or +1/4 mile). This hardly accounts for the present distance between South America and Africa.

<sup>62</sup> *Christianity and the Age of the Earth* pp. 84–86. Coral reefs are not formed by the immense pressure of a flood, but by tiny sea creatures (called coral polyps) who attach themselves to each other and build colorful limestone formations by removing calcium carbonate from seawater and depositing it around the lower half of their body. When they die, their limestone “skeletons” remain behind, and, over tens of thousands of years, huge coral reefs are formed. This can only happen in water warmer than 65ø F (18ø C), and in water clear and shallow enough for photosynthesis to occur in algae, which the coral polyps need to produce their skeletons. (See Robert D. Barnes, “Coral,” in *World Book Encyclopedia* [Chicago: World Book, 1983], 4:828.)

<sup>63</sup> Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1977, pp. 15–34, 89–103. They show that the length of time required for light to reach the earth is not the only astronomical evidence for a very old universe: measurements of star movements show the universe has apparently been expanding for over 15 billion years; background radiation in the universe gives a similar age; and the kind of light coming from certain stars shows that many stars have an age consistent with this estimate. Young earth proponents (see below) may say that God created the light rays in place so Adam and Eve could see stars, but it is much harder to explain why God would have created these other evidences so consistent with a universe about 15 billion years old.

<sup>64</sup> Of course, current scientific hypotheses of these sequences may be incorrect.

*revealed* on Day 4 (Gen. 1:14–19). But this argument is not very convincing, because all the other five days of creation involve not *revealing* something that was previously created but actually *creating* things for the first time. Moreover, the creative statements are similar to those of other days, “And God said, “Let there be lights in the firmament of the heavens to separate the day from the night ... to give light upon the earth.’ And it was so” (Gen. 1:14–15). This is the form of language used in verses 3, 6, 11, 20, and 24 for creating things, not revealing them. Furthermore, the creation (not the revealing) of the sun, moon, and stars is made explicit in the next sentence: “And God made the two great lights, the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night; he made the stars also” (Gen. 1:16). Here the word “made” (Heb. עָשָׂה, H6913) is the same word used when God *made* the firmament, the beasts of the earth, and man (Gen. 1:7, 25, 26)—in none of these cases is it used to speak of revealing something previously made. The Hebrew עָשָׂה, H6913, is also the word used in the summary in verse 31: “And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good.” This frequent use throughout Genesis 1 makes it very unlikely that Genesis 1:16 merely refers to the revealing of the sun, moon, and stars.

But a modification of the day-age view in response to these objections seems possible. The verbs in Genesis 1:16 can be taken as perfects, indicating something that God had done before: “And God *had made* the two great lights, the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night; he *had made*<sup>65</sup> the stars also.” Grammatically this is possible (this is how the NIV translates the same verb form in 2:8 and 2:19, for example). This view would imply that God had made the sun, moon, and stars earlier (in v. 1, the creation of heavens and earth, or in v. 3, the creation of light) but only placed them near the earth on Day 4, or allowed them to be seen from the earth on Day 4 (vv. 14–15, 17–18). This allows the word *made* (עָשָׂה, H6913) to mean “created” and thus avoids the difficulty mentioned above with the view that it means “revealed” in verse 16. This option remains as a genuine possibility for the day-age view, and in fact this view is the one that seems most persuasive to the present author, if an old earth position is to be adopted. With regard to light needed for the plants and warmth needed for the waters, there was light available from Day 1—even if we are not sure whether this light was light from the sun and stars or the light of God’s glory (which will replace the sun in the New Jerusalem, Rev. 21:23).<sup>66</sup>

Another answer from the day-age view might be that the fourth day is not exactly in sequence, though an overall outline of progressive work of God is given. Yet once we begin changing the sequence of events that is so prominent in this progression of six creative days, it is

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<sup>65</sup> The second verb is implied by the direct object marker but is not expressed in the Hebrew text; it would take the same form as the first verb in the sentence.

NIV NIV—New International Version

<sup>66</sup> The question of pollination without birds and insects remains a difficulty for this view, though it should be noted that even today many plants self-pollinate or are cross-pollinated by the wind, and we cannot be sure that pollination by flying insects was required before the fall and before creation was complete. Similarly, the need for some birds to live off creeping insects is a difficulty, but they possibly ate only plants and seeds before the fall.

doubtful that we need to allow the text to tell us anything other than the bare fact that God created things—but in that case, the whole inquiry about the age of the earth is unnecessary. (Further discussion of disruption in the sequence of days is given in the next section.)

## (2) Literary Framework View:

Another way of interpreting the days of Genesis 1 has gained a significant following among evangelicals. Since it argues that Genesis 1 gives us no information about the age of the earth, it would be compatible with current scientific estimates of a very old earth. This view argues that the six days of Genesis 1 are not intended to indicate a chronological sequence of events, but are rather a literary “framework,” which the author uses to teach us about God’s creative activity. The framework is skillfully constructed so that the first three days and the second three days correspond to each other.<sup>67</sup>

<b>Days of forming</b>	<b>Days of filling</b>
Day 1: Light and darkness separated	Day 4: Sun, moon, and stars (lights in the heaven)
Day 2: Sky and waters separated	Day 5: Fish and birds
Day 3: Dry land and seas separated, plants and trees	Day 6: Animals and man

In this way a parallel construction is seen. On Day 1 God separates light and darkness, while on Day 4 he puts the sun, moon, and stars in the light and in the darkness. On Day 2 he separates the waters and the sky, while on Day 5 he puts the fish in the waters and the birds in the sky. On Day 3 he separates the dry land and the seas and makes plants to grow, while on Day 6 he puts the animals and man on the dry land and gives the plants to them for food.

According to the “framework” view, Genesis 1 should not be read as though the author wanted to inform us about the sequence of days or the order in which things were created, nor did he intend to tell us about the length of time the creation took. The arrangement of six “days” is a literary device the author uses to teach that God created everything. The six “days,” which are neither twenty-four-hour days nor long periods of time, give us six different “pictures” of creation, telling us that God made all aspects of the creation, that the pinnacle of his creative

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<sup>67</sup> The following table is adapted from *The NIV Study Bible* ed. by Kenneth Barker et al. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1985), p. 6 (note to Gen. 1:11). A forceful defense of the “framework” view is found in Henri Blocher, *In the Beginning: The Opening Chapters of Genesis* trans. by David G. Preston (Leicester: InterVarsity Press, 1984), pp. 49–59. Blocher mentions several other evangelical scholars who hold this position, which he calls the “literary interpretation”: N.H. Ridderbos, Bernard Ramm, Meredith G. Kline, D.F. Payne, and J.A. Thompson. This “framework” view is called the “pictorial day” view in Millard Erickson, *Christian Theology* p. 381.

activity was man, and that over all creation is God himself, who rested on the seventh day and who calls man therefore to worship him on the sabbath day as well.<sup>68</sup>

In the words of a recent advocate of this position, “Chronology has no place here.”<sup>69</sup> The attractions in favor of this hypothesis are (1) the neat correspondence between the pairs of days as shown in the table above, (2) the fact that it avoids any conflict with modern science over the age of the earth and the age of living creatures (since no chronology at all is implied), (3) the way it avoids the conflict of sequence between Genesis 1 and 2 in which man (Gen. 2:7) seems to be formed before plants (Gen. 2:8) and animals (Gen. 2:19), a sequence different from Genesis 1, and (4) the fact that Genesis 2:5 shows that the “days” of creation were not literal twenty-four-hour days, for it says that there were no plants on the earth because it had not yet rained, something that would not make sense in a six day creation, since plants can certainly survive three or four days without rain.

Several points may be made against the framework theory.

1. First, the proposed correspondence between the days of creation is not nearly as exact as its advocates have supposed. The sun, moon, and stars created on the fourth day as “lights in the firmament of the heavens” (Gen. 1:14) are placed not in any space created on Day 1 but in the “firmament” (Heb. רָקִיעַ, H8385) that was created on the second day. In fact, the correspondence in language is quite explicit: this “firmament” is not mentioned at all on Day 1 but five times on Day 2 (Gen. 1:6–8) and three times on Day 4 (Gen. 1:14–19). Of course Day 4 also has correspondences with Day 1 (in terms of day and night, light and darkness), but if we say that the second three days show the creation of things to fill the forms or spaces created on the first three days, then Day 4 overlaps at least as much with Day 2 as it does with Day 1.

Moreover, the parallel between Days 2 and 5 is not exact, because in some ways the preparation of a space for the fish and birds of Day 5 does not come in Day 2 but in Day 3. It is not until Day 3 that God gathers the waters together and calls them “seas” (Gen. 1:10), and on Day 5 the fish are commanded to “fill the waters in the seas” (Gen. 1:22). Again in verses 26 and 28 the fish are called “fish of the sea,” giving repeated emphasis to the fact that the sphere the fish inhabit was specifically formed on Day 3. Thus, the fish formed on Day 5 seem to belong much more to the place prepared for them on Day 3 than to the widely dispersed waters below the firmament on Day 2. Establishing a parallel between Day 2 and Day 5 faces further difficulties in that nothing is created on Day 5 to inhabit the “waters above the firmament,” and the flying things created on this day (the Hebrew word would include flying insects as well as birds) not only fly in the sky created on Day 2, but also live and multiply on the “earth” or “dry land” created on Day 3. (Note God’s command on Day 5: “Let birds multiply on the earth” [Gen. 1:22].) Finally, the parallel between Days 3 and 6 is not precise, for nothing is created on Day 6 to fill the seas that were gathered together on Day 3. With all of these points of imprecise correspondence and overlapping between places and things created to fill them, the supposed literary “framework,” while having an initial appearance of neatness, turns out to be less and less convincing upon closer reading of the text.

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<sup>68</sup> This framework view is also defended by Ronald Youngblood, *How It All Began* (Ventura, Calif.: Regal, 1980), pp. 25–33.

<sup>69</sup> Henri Blocher, *In the Beginning* p. 52.

2. Since all proposals for understanding Genesis 1 attempt to provide explanations for scientific data about the age of the earth, this is not a unique argument in favor of the framework theory. However, we must recognize that one aspect of the attractiveness of this theory is the fact that it relieves evangelicals of the burden of even trying to reconcile scientific findings with Genesis 1. Yet, in the words of one advocate of this theory, “So great is the advantage, and for some the relief, that it could constitute a temptation.” He wisely adds, “We must not espouse the theory on grounds of its convenience but only if the text leads us in that direction.”<sup>70</sup>

3. Those who have not adopted the framework theory have seen no conflict in sequence between Genesis 1 and 2, for it has been commonly understood that Genesis 2 implies no description of sequence in the original creation of the animals or plants, but simply recapitulates some of the details of Genesis 1 as important for the specific account of the creation of Adam and Eve in Genesis 2. The NIV avoids the appearance of conflict by translating, “Now the LORD God *had planted* a garden in the East, in Eden” (Gen. 2:8) and “Now the LORD God *had formed out* of the ground all the beasts of the field and all the birds of the air” (Gen. 2:19).

4. Genesis 2:5 does not really say that plants were not on the earth because the earth was too dry to support them. If we adopt that reasoning we would also have to say there were no plants because “there was no man to till the ground” (Gen. 2:5), for that is the second half of the comment about no rain coming on the earth. Moreover, the remainder of the sentence says that the earth was the opposite of being too dry to support plants: “streams came up from the earth and watered the whole surface of the ground” (Gen. 2:6 NIV). The statement in Genesis 2:5 is simply to be understood as an explanation of the general time frame in which God created man. Genesis 2:4–6 sets the stage, telling us that “no plant of the field was yet in the earth and no herb of the field had yet sprung up—for the LORD God had not caused it to rain upon the earth, and there was no man to till the ground; but a mist went up from the earth and watered the whole face of the ground.” The statements about lack of rain and no man to till the ground do not give the *physical reason* why there were no plants, but only explain that God’s work of creation was not complete. This introduction puts us back into the first six days of creation as a general setting—into “the day that the LORD God made the earth and the heavens” (Gen. 2:4). Then in that setting it abruptly introduces the main point of chapter 2—the creation of man. The Hebrew text does not include the word “then” at the beginning of verse 7, but simply begins, “And the LORD God formed man” (Gen. 2:7 KJV).<sup>71</sup>

5. Finally, the strongest argument against the framework view, and the reason why comparatively few evangelicals have adopted it, is that the whole of Genesis 1 strongly suggests not just a literary framework but a chronological sequence of events. When the narrative proceeds from the less complex aspects of creation (light and darkness, waters, sky, and dry

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<sup>70</sup> Ibid., p. 50.

NIV NIV—New International Version

NIV NIV—New International Version

KJV KJV—King James Version (Authorized Version)

<sup>71</sup> For further discussion on Gen. 2:5, see Meredith G. Kline, “Because It Had Not Rained,” *WTJ* 20 (1957–58): 146–57; and, in response, Derek Kidner, “Genesis 2:5, 6: Wet or Dry?” *TB* 17 (1966): 109–14.

land) to the more complex aspects (fish and birds, animals and man) we see a progressive build-up and an ordered sequence of events that are entirely understandable chronologically. When a sequence of numbers (1-2-3-4-5-6) is attached to a set of days that correspond exactly to the ordinary week human beings experience (Day 1, Day 2, Day 3, Day 4, Day 5, Day 6, Day 7, with rest on Day 7), the implication of chronological sequence in the narrative is almost inescapable. The sequence of days seems more clearly intended than a literary framework which is nowhere made explicit in the text, and in which many details simply do not fit. As Derek Kidner observes:

The march of the days is too majestic a progress to carry no implication of ordered sequence; it also seems over-subtle to adopt a view of the passage which discounts one of the primary impressions it makes on the ordinary reader. It is a story, not only a statement.<sup>72</sup>

6. A sequence of days is also implied in God's command to human beings to imitate his pattern of work plus rest: "Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor, and do all your work; but the seventh day is a sabbath to the LORD your God ... for in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day" (Ex. 20:8–11). But if God did not create the earth by working for six days and resting on the seventh, then the command to imitate him would be misleading or make no sense.

In conclusion, while the "framework" view does not deny the truthfulness of Scripture, it adopts an interpretation of Scripture which, upon closer inspection, seems very unlikely.

**b. "Young Earth" Theories of Creation:** Another group of evangelical interpreters rejects the dating systems that currently give an age of millions of years to the earth and argue instead that the earth is quite young, perhaps 10,000 to 20,000 years old. Young earth advocates have produced a number of scientific arguments for a recent creation of the earth.<sup>73</sup> Those who hold to a young earth generally advocate one or both of the following positions:

**(1) Creation With an Appearance of Age (Mature Creationism):**

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<sup>72</sup> D. Kidner, *Genesis: An Introduction and Commentary TOTC* (Chicago: InterVarsity Press, 1967), pp. 54–55.

<sup>73</sup> Several scientific arguments pointing to a young earth (about 10,000–20,000 years old) are given in Henry M. Morris, ed., *Scientific Creationism* (San Diego, Calif.: Creation-Life, 1974), esp. pp. 131–69; also Kofahl and Segraves, *The Creation Explanation* pp. 181–213.

A response to most of these arguments, from an "old earth" perspective, is given by Davis A. Young in *Christianity and the Age of the Earth* pp. 71–131, and, specifically in response to "flood geology," in *Creation and the Flood* pp. 171–213. Another book, *Science Held Hostage: What's Wrong With Creation Science and Evolutionism* by Howard J. Van Till, Davis A. Young, and Clarence Menninga (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1988), raises serious objections against the evaluation and use of scientific research materials by some prominent young earth advocates (see pp. 45–125). A preliminary young earth response to Young's arguments is found in a thirty-four-page pamphlet by Henry M. Morris and John D. Morris, *Science, Scripture, and the Young Earth* (El Cajon, Calif.: Institute for Creation Research, 1989).

Many who hold to a young earth point out that the original creation must have had an “appearance of age” even from the first day. (Another term for this view is “mature creationism,” since it affirms that God created a mature creation.) The appearance of Adam and Eve as full-grown adults is an obvious example. They appeared as though they had lived for perhaps twenty or twenty-five years, growing up from infancy as human beings normally do, but in fact they were less than a day old. Similarly, they probably saw the stars the first night that they lived, but the light from most stars would take thousands or even millions of years to reach the earth. This suggests that God created the stars with light beams already in place. And full-grown trees would probably have had rings (Adam and Eve would not have had to wait years before God told them which trees of the garden they could eat from and which they could not, nor would they have had to wait weeks or months before edible plants grew large enough to provide them food). Following this line of reasoning, might we go further and suppose that many geological formations, when originally created, had a similar appearance to formations that would now take thousands or even millions of years to complete by present “slow” processes?

This suggestion has currently found many supporters, and, initially at least, it seems to be an attractive proposal. Those who hold this position often combine it with certain objections to current scientific dating processes. They question how we can be certain of the reliability of radiometric dating beyond a few thousand years, for example, and how scientists can know that the rates of decay of certain elements have been constant since creation. They also suggest that events such as the fall and the subsequent cursing of nature (which altered the productivity and ecological balance of the earth, and caused man himself to begin to age and decay, Gen. 3:17–19), or the flood in Noah’s time (Gen. 6–9), may have brought about significant differences in the amount of radioactive material in living things. This would mean that estimates of the age of the earth using present methods of measurement would not be accurate.

A common objection to this “appearance of age” view is that it “makes God an apparent deceiver,”<sup>74</sup> something that is contrary to his nature. But is God a “deceiver” if he creates a mature man and woman in a day and then tells us explicitly that he did it? Or if he creates mature fish and animals and full-grown trees and tells us that he did it? Or if he allows Adam and Eve to see the stars, which he created in order that people might see them and give glory to him, on the first night that they lived? Rather than manifesting deception, it seems that these actions point to God’s infinite wisdom and power. This is particularly so if God explicitly tells us that he created everything in “six days.” According to this position, those who are deceived are those who refuse to hear God’s own explanation of how the creation came about.

The real problem with the appearance of age view is that there are some things in the universe that it cannot easily account for. Everyone will agree that Adam and Eve were created as adults, not newborn infants, and therefore had an appearance of age. Most who hold to twenty-four-hour days in Genesis 1 would also say there was an appearance of age with plants and trees, and with all the animals when they were first created (the chicken came before the egg!), and probably with light from the stars. But the creation of fossils presents a real problem, for responsible Christians would not want to suggest that God scattered fossils throughout the earth to give an added appearance of age! This would not be creating something “in process” or in a state of maturity; it would be creating the remains of a dead animal, not so that the animal could serve Adam and Eve, but simply to make people think the earth was older than it really

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<sup>74</sup> Millard Erickson, *Christian Theology* p. 382.

was. Furthermore, one would have to say that God created all these dead animals and called them “very good.”<sup>75</sup>

While the creation of stars with light beams in place or trees that are mature would be for the purpose of enabling human beings to glorify God for the excellence of his creation, the depositing of fossils in the earth could only be for the purpose of misleading or deceiving human beings regarding the earlier history of the world. More problematic is that Adam, the plants, the animals, and the stars all would have appeared to have different ages (because they were created with mature functions in place), whereas modern geological research gives approximately the same age estimates from radiometric dating, astronomical estimates, rock formations, samples of moon rocks and meteorites, etc. Why would God create so many different indications of an earth that is 4.5 billion years old if this were not true? Would it not be better to conclude that the earth is 4.5 billion years old, and that God left many indications there to show us this fact rather than in any way imply that he deceived us? So it seems the only credible explanations for the fossil record that Christians can adopt are: (a) current dating methods are incorrect by colossal proportions because of flawed assumptions or because of changes brought about by the fall or the flood; or (b) current dating methods are approximately correct and the earth is many millions or even billions of years old.

## **(2) Flood Geology:**

Another common view among evangelicals is what may be called “flood geology.” This is the view that the tremendous natural forces unleashed by the flood at the time of Noah (Gen. 6–9) significantly altered the face of the earth, causing the creation of coal and diamonds, for example, within the space of a year rather than hundreds of millions of years, because of the extremely high pressure exerted by the water on the earth. This view also claims that the flood deposited fossils in layers of incredibly thick sediment all over the earth.<sup>76</sup> The flood geology view is also called “neo-catastrophism” because its advocates attribute most of the present geological status of the earth to the immense catastrophe of the flood.

The geological arguments put forth by advocates of this view are technical and difficult for the nonspecialist to evaluate. Personally, though I think the flood of Genesis 6–9 was world-wide, and that it did have a significant impact on the face of the earth, and that all living people and animals outside the ark perished in the flood, I am not persuaded that all of the earth’s

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<sup>75</sup> We should note that old earth advocates must also have God speaking in Gen. 1:31 and calling the old fossils “very good.” This is not a decisive objection if the death of animals before the fall did not result from sin, but it is a difficulty. Only flood geology advocates (see below) will say that no fossils existed at Gen. 1:31, but that they were deposited suddenly by the flood in Gen. 6–9. This perhaps is a consideration in favor of the flood geology position.

<sup>76</sup> See Henry M. Morris and John C. Whitcomb, *The Genesis Flood* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1961); John C. Whitcomb, *The World That Perished* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1988); Stephen A. Austin, *Catastrophes in Earth History* (El Cajon, Calif.: Institute for Creation Research, 1984). Other studies by flood geology advocates have been published in the *CRSQ* though by no means all articles in that journal advocate the flood geology perspective, nor do all members of the Creation Research Society hold to flood geology.

geological formations were caused by Noah's flood rather than by millions of years of sedimentation, volcanic eruptions, movement of glaciers, continental drift, and so forth. The controversy over flood geology is strikingly different from the other areas of dispute regarding creation, for its advocates have persuaded almost no professional geologists, even those who are Bible-believing evangelical Christians. By contrast, the books objecting to evolution that we mentioned above chronicle 130 years of cogent objections to Darwinian evolution that have been raised by a significant number of biologists, biochemists, zoologists, anthropologists, and paleontologists, both Christian and non-Christian, because evolution has so many problems in explaining facts evident from observation of the created world. If present geological formations could only be explained as the result of a universal flood, then would this not be evident even to non-Christians who look at the evidence? Would not the hundreds of Christians who are professional geologists be prepared to acknowledge the evidence if it were there? It may be that the flood geologists are right, but if they are, we would expect to see more progress in persuading some professional geologists that their case is a plausible one.<sup>77</sup>

**5. Conclusions on the Age of the Earth.** How old is the earth then? Where does this discussion leave us? Young's arguments for an old earth based on many kinds of scientific data from different disciplines seem (to the present writer at least) to be very strong. This is particularly true of arguments based on fossil-bearing rocks, coral reefs, continental drift, and the similarity of results from different kinds of radiometric dating. Newman and Eckelmann's arguments from astronomy indicating a very old universe give significant added weight. It is understandable, on the one hand, that God may have created a universe in which stars appeared to have been shining for 15 billion years, Adam appeared to have been living for 25 years, some trees appeared to have been living for 50 years, and some animals appeared to have been living for 1 to 10 years. But, on the other hand, it is difficult to understand why God would have created dozens or perhaps hundreds of different kinds of rocks and minerals on the earth, all of which actually were only one day old, but all of which had an appearance of being exactly 4.5 billion years old—exactly the apparent age that he also gave the moon and the meteorites when they, too, were only one day old. And it is difficult to understand why the evidence of star life cycles and the expansion of the universe would make the universe appear to be 15 billion years old if it were not. It is possible, but it seems unlikely, almost as if God's only purpose in giving these uniform apparent ages was to mislead us rather than simply to have a mature, functioning universe in place. So the old earth advocates seem to me to have a greater weight of scientific evidence on their side, and it seems that the weight of evidence is increasing yearly.

On the other hand, the interpretations of Genesis 1 presented by old earth advocates, while possible, do not seem as natural to the sense of the text. Davis Young's own solution of "seven successive figurative days of indeterminate duration"<sup>78</sup> really does not solve the problem, for he is willing to spread God's creative activities around on the various days as needed in order to make the sequence scientifically possible. For example, he thinks that some birds were created before Day 5:

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<sup>77</sup> The arguments against flood geology have been marshalled by an evangelical who is also a professional geologist; see Davis A. Young, *Creation and the Flood: An Alternative to Flood Geology and Theistic Evolution and Christianity and the Age of the Earth*.

<sup>78</sup> *Creation and the Flood* p. 89.

We may also suggest that even though birds were created on the fifth day, nevertheless, the most primitive birds or original bird ancestors were miraculously formed on a day prior to the fifth day. Hence the data of Genesis 1 actually allow for some overlap of the events of the days. If such overlap exists, then all apparent discrepancies between Genesis 1 and science would fall away (p. 131).

But this procedure allows us to say that the events of creation occurred at almost any time, no matter whether Scripture says they occurred then or not. Once this procedure is adopted, then ultimately we can know little if anything about the sequence of creation events from Genesis 1, because any of the events narrated there may have had precursors at previous periods of time. This can hardly be the impression the original readers were intended to get from the text. (Much more likely, however, is the modified day-age view presented on pp. 298–300 above.)

**6. The Need for Further Understanding.** Although our conclusions are tentative, at this point in our understanding, Scripture seems to be more easily understood to *suggest* (but not to require) a young earth view, while the observable facts of creation seem increasingly to favor an old earth view. Both views are possible, but neither one is certain. And we must say very clearly that the age of the earth is a matter that is not directly taught in Scripture, but is something we can think about only by drawing more or less probable inferences from Scripture. Given this situation, it would seem best (1) to admit that God may not allow us to find a clear solution to this question before Christ returns, and (2) to encourage evangelical scientists and theologians who fall in both the young earth and old earth camps to begin to work together with much less arrogance, much more humility, and a much greater sense of cooperation in a common purpose.

There are difficulties with both old earth and young earth viewpoints, difficulties that the proponents of each view often seem unable to see in their own positions. Progress will certainly be made if old earth and young earth scientists who are Christians will be more willing to talk to each other without hostility, *ad hominem* attacks, or highly emotional accusations, on the one hand, and without a spirit of condescension or academic pride on the other, for these attitudes are not becoming to the body of Christ, nor are they characteristic of the way of wisdom, which is “first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, without uncertainty or insincerity,” and full of the recognition that “the harvest of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace” (James 3:17–18).

As for evangelism and apologetics done in publications designed to be read outside the evangelical world, young earth and old earth proponents could cooperate much more in amassing the extremely strong arguments for creation by intelligent design, and in laying aside their differences over the age of the earth. Too often young earth proponents have failed to distinguish scientific arguments for creation by design from scientific arguments for a young earth, and have therefore prevented old earth advocates from joining them in a battle for the minds of an unbelieving scientific community. Moreover, young earth proponents have sometimes failed to recognize that scientific arguments for a young earth (which seem to them to be very persuasive) are not nearly as strong as the overwhelming scientific arguments for creation by intelligent design. As a result, young earth proponents have too often given the impression that the only true “creationists” are those who believe not only in creation by God but also in a young earth. The result has been unfortunate divisiveness and lack of community among scientists who are Christians—to the delight of Satan and the grieving of God’s Holy Spirit.

Finally, we can view this controversy with some expectancy that there will be further progress in scientific understanding of the age of the earth. It is likely that scientific research in

the next ten or twenty years will tip the weight of evidence decisively toward either a young earth or an old earth view, and the weight of Christian scholarly opinion (from both biblical scholars and scientists) will begin to shift decisively in one direction or another. This should not cause alarm to advocates of either position, because the truthfulness of Scripture is not threatened (our interpretations of Genesis 1 have enough uncertainty that either position is possible). Both sides need to grow in knowledge of the truth, even if this means abandoning a long-held position.

## F. Application

The doctrine of creation has many applications for Christians today. It makes us realize that the material universe is good in itself, for God created it good and wants us to use it in ways pleasing to him. Therefore we should seek to be like the early Christians, who “partook of food with glad and generous hearts” (Acts 2:46), always with thanksgiving to God and trust in his provisions. A healthy appreciation of creation will keep us from false asceticism that denies the goodness of creation and the blessings that come to us through it. It will also encourage some Christians to do scientific and technological research into the goodness of God’s abundant creation, or to support such research.<sup>79</sup> The doctrine of creation will also enable us to recognize more clearly that scientific and technological study in itself glorifies God, for it enables us to discover how incredibly wise, powerful, and skillful God was in his work of creation. “Great are the works of the LORD, studied by all who have pleasure in them” (Ps. 111:2).

The doctrine of creation also reminds us that God is sovereign over the universe he created. He made it all, and he is Lord of all of it. We owe all that we are and have to him, and we may have complete confidence that he will ultimately defeat all his enemies and be manifested as Sovereign King to be worshiped forever. In addition, the incredible size of the universe and the amazing complexity of every created thing will, if our hearts are right, draw us continually to worship and praise him for his greatness.

Finally, as we indicated above, we can wholeheartedly enjoy creative activities (artistic, musical, athletic, domestic, literary, etc.) with an attitude of thanksgiving that our Creator God enables us to imitate him in our creativity.

## QUESTIONS FOR PERSONAL APPLICATION

1. Are there ways in which you could be more thankful to God for the excellence of his creation? Look around you and give some examples of the goodness of the creation that God has allowed you to enjoy. Are there ways in which you could be a better steward of parts of God’s creation of which he has entrusted to your care?
2. Might the goodness of all that God created encourage you to try to enjoy different kinds of foods than those you normally prefer? Can children be taught to thank God for variety in the things God has given us to eat? Does the doctrine of creation provide an answer to some strict animal rights advocates who say we should not eat steak or chicken or other

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<sup>79</sup> Frair and Davis, *A Case for Creation* pp. 135–40, have many specific practical challenges to scientists who believe in creation to do specific kinds of greatly needed research.

meat, or wear clothing made from animal skins, since we are simply another form of animal ourselves? (See Gen. 3:21.)

3. In order to understand something of the despair felt by contemporary non-Christians, just try to imagine for a moment that you believe that there is no God and that you are just a product of matter plus time plus chance, the spontaneous result of random variation in organisms over millions of years. How would you feel differently about yourself? About other people? About the future? About right and wrong?
4. Why do we feel joy when we are able to “subdue” even a part of the earth and make it useful for serving us—whether it be in growing vegetables, developing a better kind of plastic or metal, or using wool to knit a piece of clothing? Should we feel joy at the accomplishment of these and other tasks? What other attitudes of heart should we feel as we do them?
5. When you think about the immensity of the stars, and that God put them in place to show us his power and glory, how does it make you feel about your place in the universe? Is this different from the way a non-Christian would feel?
6. Before reading this chapter, what did you think about the theory of evolution? How has your view changed, if at all?
7. What are some things that Christians can learn about theological discussion in general from observing the current controversy over the age of the earth? What significance do you see in this controversy for your own Christian faith?

## SPECIAL TERMS

concordist theory  
creation ex nihilo  
Cro-Magnon man  
day-age theory  
deism  
dualism  
flood geology  
gap theory  
homo sapiens  
ideal time theory  
immanent  
literary framework theory  
macro-evolution  
materialism  
mature creationism  
micro-evolution theory  
neo-catastrophism  
“old-earth” theory  
pantheism  
pictorial-day theory  
progressive creationism  
theistic evolution

transcendent  
twenty-four-hour day theory  
“young earth” theory

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## SCRIPTURE MEMORY PASSAGE

**Nehemiah 9:6:** *And Ezra said: "You are the LORD, you alone; you have made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth and all that is on it, the seas and all that is in them; and you preserve all of them; and the host of heaven worships you."*

## HYMN

### "HALLELUJAH, PRAISE JEHOVAH!"

This hymn contains the entire content of Psalm 148 set to music. It summons all creation, including "things visible and things invisible," to worship God our Creator.

Hallelujah, praise Jehovah, from the heavens praise his name;  
 Praise Jehovah in the highest, all his angels, praise proclaim.  
 All his hosts, together praise him, sun and moon and stars on high;  
 Praise him, O ye heav'ns of heavens, and ye floods above the sky.

#### *Refrain:*

Let them praises give Jehovah, for his name alone is high,  
 And his glory is exalted, and his glory is exalted, and his glory is exalted  
 Far above the earth and sky.

Let them praises give Jehovah, they were made at his command;  
 Them for ever he established, his decree shall ever stand.  
 From the earth, O praise Jehovah, all ye seas, ye monsters all,  
 Fire and hail and snow and vapors, stormy winds that hear his call.

All ye fruitful trees and cedars, all ye hills and mountains high,  
 Creeping things and beasts and cattle, birds that in the heavens fly,  
 Kings of earth, and all ye people, princes great, earth's judges all;  
 Praise his name, young men and maidens, aged men, and children small.

Author: William J. Kirkpatrick, 1838–1921<sup>5</sup>

# CREATION

## CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

### ALTERNATIVE VIEWS ON CREATION

**T**he theological setting for the Christian doctrine of creation is theistic. Theism can best be understood in contrast with the other two main views (pantheism and atheism—see Volume 1, chapter 2). Each holds a fundamentally different view of origins.

There are three primary alternatives on the nature of creation (see Geisler, *KTC*, chapter 4). Materialists (many of whom are atheists) believe in creation out of matter (*ex materia*), while pantheists claim creation comes out of God (*ex Deo*), and theists hold to creation by God out of nothing (*ex nihilo*).

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<sup>5</sup> Wayne A. Grudem, *Systematic Theology : An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Leicester, England; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Inter-Varsity Press; Zondervan Pub. House, 1994), 262-314.

## MATERIALISM: CREATION OUT OF MATTER

The materialistic view of creation contends that matter (or physical energy) is eternal: Matter always has been, and always will be. As the physicist claims, “Energy can neither be created nor destroyed.” This is known as the first law of thermodynamics.<sup>1</sup>

There are two basic subdivisions in the “creation out of matter” view: those that involve a God (e.g., platonism), and those that do not (e.g., atheism).

### Platonism: God Created Out of Preexisting Matter

Many ancient Greeks believed in creation by God out of some previously existing, eternal “lump of clay.” That is, both God and the “stuff” of the material universe (cosmos) were always there. “Creation” is the eternal process by which God has been continually forming matter, giving shape to the contents of the universe.

Plato (c. 427–347 B.C.) held this view of creation out of matter (*T*, 27ff.). He called matter “the formless” (or “chaos”), while God was the Former (or *Demiurgos*). Using an eternal world of forms (ideas), God gave shape or structure to the formless mass of stuff called matter. In brief, the Former (God), by means of the forms (ideas that flowed from the Form), formed the formless (matter) into the formed (cosmos). Or, using the Greek words, the *Demiurgos*, by means of the *eidos* (ideas), which flowed from the *agathos* (Good), formed the *chaos* (formless) into a *kosmos* (material universe).

There are several elements of this platonic view of creation briefly explained here.

#### *Matter Is Eternal*

The basic stuff of the physical universe has always been here. There never was a time when all the elements of the cosmos did not exist. Everything has been forever.

#### *“Creation” Means Formation, Not Origination*

According to this view, “creation” does not mean bringing something into existence that previously did not exist; rather, it means formation of what has always existed. God allegedly does not originate matter; He simply organizes the matter that has always been there.

#### *The “Creator” Is a Former, Not a Producer*

In this platonic view, the word *Creator* does not mean “Originator of all that exists,” but simply the “Builder.” The building blocks were already there—God just put them together. Hence, God is only an architect of the material universe, not the Source of it.

#### *God Is Not Sovereign Over All Things*

A consequence of the platonic worldview is that God is not really in ultimate control of all things, for there is something eternal outside of Him: There is a given, something that even God must deal with. Matter is just there, and God cannot do anything about it. He can shape matter, but it places certain limitations on Him. Just as there are limits on what can be made out of paper

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<sup>1</sup> This is really a misstatement of the first law, which says more properly: “The amount of actual energy in the universe [however it got here] remains constant.”

(it is good for making kites, but not for space shuttles), so the very nature of matter is a handicap to the Creator's ability. In short, both the existence and nature of matter supposedly place limits on God.

### **Atheism: Matter Is Eternal**

A second worldview within materialism is generally called atheism, although many agnostics hold it as well. An atheist says there is no God; an agnostic claims not to know whether there is a God. However, neither believes it is necessary to posit God in order to explain the universe: Matter is simply there and always has been in one form or another. In fact, for the atheist, the universe is ultimately *all* that exists—even mind came from matter. Those atheists who believe that humans have souls usually insist that the soul is dependent on the body as a shadow is on a tree (see Volume 3, chapter 2).

If questioned as to where the universe came from, the strict materialist may ask in reply: Where did God come from? They claim it makes no more sense to inquire about who made the universe than it does to ask who made God.

That creation came out of matter (*ex materia*) has been held by many thinkers down through the centuries, from the ancient atomists (who reduced all things to atoms) to modern materialists like Karl Marx [1818–1883] (see *MER*, 298).

One contemporary spokesperson for this view was the famous astronomer Carl Sagan (1934–1996), who believed that “THE COSMOS IS ALL THAT IS OR EVER WAS OR EVER WILL BE” (*C*, 4). Humans are simply Stardust pondering stars. Rather than God creating people, people created God. As Karl Marx put it, mind did not create matter; matter created mind (*op. cit.*, 231).

Granting the eternal existence of matter and motion, everything else can be explained by purely natural evolution. Matter plus time, chance, and natural laws (such as natural selection) can explain everything. Even the complexities of human life can be rationalized through the purely natural laws of the physical universe. As we have seen, given enough time, monkeys at a typewriter can supposedly produce the works of Shakespeare. No intelligent Creator is necessary.

### **Summary of *Ex Materia* Creation**

There are several important aspects to this nontheistic view, briefly summarized under the following four points.

#### *Matter Is Eternal*

Again, matter has always been—or, at least, as one atheist put it, “If matter came to be, it came into existence from nothing and by nothing” (Kenny, *FW*, 147). The material universe is self sustaining and self generating. It is probably eternal, but if it came to be, then it came to be on its own without outside help. As Isaac Asimov speculated, there are equally good chances for either nothing to come from nothing or for something to come out of nothing. As luck would have it, something emerged (*BE*, 148). So either matter is eternal, or else it came from nothing, spontaneously, without a cause.

Traditional materialists (called atomists) believed that there were innumerable, indestructible, little hard pellets of reality, called atoms. With the splitting of the atom and the emergence of

Einstein's  $e=mc^2$  (energy=mass  $\times$  the speed of light squared), materialists now speak of the indestructibility of energy. They appeal to the first law of thermodynamics, claiming, as we have seen, that "energy can neither be created nor destroyed." Energy does not pass out of existence; it simply takes on new forms. Even at death, all the elements of our being are reabsorbed by the environment and reused by other things. The process allegedly goes on forever.

### *No Creator Is Necessary*

Another premise of strict materialism is atheism or nontheism; that is, either there is no God or, at least, there is no need for a God. *Humanist Manifesto II* put it, "As non theists, we begin with humans not God, nature not deity" (Kurtz, *HM II*, 16).

According to the nontheistic "creation out of matter" view, no cause is needed to bring matter into existence or to form matter already in existence. There is neither a Creator nor a Maker (Former) of the world. The world explains itself.

### *Humans Are Not Immortal*

Another usual implication of this perspective is that there is no immortal, never dying "soul" or spiritual aspect to human beings. *Humanist Manifesto I* noted, "The traditional dualism of mind and body must be rejected." For, its writers believe, "Modern science discredits such historic concepts as the 'ghost in the machine' and the 'separable soul' " (ibid., 8, 16–17). The strict materialist does not believe in spirit or mind at all: There is no mind, only a brain. Thought is simply a chemical reaction in the brain. Thomas Hobbes (1588–1679) defined matter as follows:

The world (I mean not the earth only, that denominates the lovers of it "worldly men," but the *universe*, that is, the whole mass of all things that are) is corporeal, that is to say, body; and hath the dimensions of magnitude, namely, length, breadth, and depth: also every part of body is likewise body, and hath the like dimensions; and consequently every part of the universe is body, and that which is not body is no part of the universe: and because the universe is all, that which is no part of it is nothing, and consequently nowhere. (*L*, 269)

Less stringent materialists admit the existence of a soul but deny that it can exist independently of matter. For them, the soul is to the body what the image in the mirror is to the one looking at it. When the body dies, so does the soul; when matter disintegrates, the mind is also destroyed.

### *Humans Are Not Unique*

Among those holding to creation out of matter, there are differences regarding the nature of human beings. Most accord a special status to humans as the highest point in the evolutionary process. However, virtually all agree that humans are not qualitatively different from animals. Humans differ only in degree, not in kind, from lower forms of life. Human beings are the highest and latest animal form on the evolutionary ladder, but they are not uniquely different. They simply have some more highly developed abilities than primates. Certainly, it is said, humans are not unique *over* the rest of the animal kingdom, even if they are the highest *in* it.

### *Pantheism: Creation Out of God*

On the other end of the spectrum from materialism is pantheism. Materialists claim all is matter; pantheists believe all is mind or spirit. On the subject of creation, materialism believes in creation out of matter (*ex materia*), but pantheism believes in creation out of God (*ex Deo*). There are two basic categories into which pantheists fall: absolute and non absolute.

### **Absolute Pantheism**

An absolute pantheist claims that only mind (or spirit) exists, not matter. What we call matter is only an illusion, like a dream or mirage: It appears to exist, but it really does not exist. There are two classical representatives of this view, Parmenides (born c. 515 B.C.) from the West (a Greek) and Shankara (c. eighth century) from the East (a Hindu).

Again (see Volume 1, chapter 2), Parmenides argued that all is one, because to assume that more than one thing exists is absurd (*Pin Kirk, PP, 266–83*). If there were two or more things, they would have to differ, but the only ways to differ are by something (being) or by nothing (nonbeing). However, it is impossible to differ by nothing, since to differ by nothing (or nonbeing) is just another way of saying there is no difference at all. And two things cannot differ by being because being (or existence) is the only thing they have in common—it is impossible to differ by the very respect in which they are the same. Hence, Parmenides concluded that it is impossible to have two or more things. There can be only one being: All is one, and one is all. Thus, whatever else appears to be does not really exist.

Put in the context of creation, this simply means that God exists and the world does not; there is a Creator, but not really any creation. Or, at least, the only sense in which there can be said to be a creation is that it comes out of God the way a dream comes from a mind. The universe is only the nothing of which God thinks. God is the totality of all reality, and the non real about which He thinks and which appears to us, like zero, does not exist. It is literally nothing.

The famous Hindu philosopher Shankara (in Prabhavananda, *SHI, 55*) described the relation of the world to God, illusion to reality, by the analogy of what appears to be a snake but on closer examination turns out actually to be a rope. When we look at the world, what is there is not reality (Brahman); rather, it is merely an illusion (*maya*).

Likewise, when a person looks at himself, what appears to be (body) is only an illusory manifestation of what really is (soul). And when one looks into his soul, he discovers that the depth of his soul (atman) is really the depth of the universe (Brahman): Atman (man) *is* Brahman (God). To think we are not God is part of the illusion or dream from which we must awaken. Sooner or later we must discover that all comes from God, and all is God. So goes the absolute pantheist's argument.

### **Non Absolute Pantheism <sup>2</sup>**

Other pantheists hold a more flexible and elastic view of reality. While they believe all is one with God, they do not deny there is some multiplicity flowing (*ex Deo*) from the unity of God. They believe all is in the one as all radii are in the center of a circle, or as all drops merge into one infinite pond. Representatives of this view include the neoplatonic Plotinus (A.D. 205–270),

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<sup>2</sup> The other kinds of pantheism are (1) Emanational (Plotinus); (2) Developmental (Hegel); (3) Modal (Spinoza); (4) Multilevel (Radhakrishna); and (5) Permeational (Zen Buddhism).

the modern philosopher Benedict Spinoza (1632–1677), and the contemporary Hindu thinker Radhakrishna.

According to this thinking, there are many things in the world, but they all spring from the essence of the One (God). The many are in the One, but the One is not in the many; that is, all creatures are part of the Creator. They come from Him the way a flower unfolds from a seed or sparks come from a fire. Again, creatures are simply many drops that splash up from the infinite pond, only to eventually drop back in and blend with the All. All things come from God, are part of God, and merge back into God. Technically speaking, for the pantheist, there is no Creation, but only an emanation of all things from God. The universe was not made out of nothing (*ex nihilo*), nor out of something preexisting (*ex materia*)—it was made out of God (*ex Deo*).

### **Summary of the Pantheistic View of Origin**

Several significant elements are contained in this pantheistic view of origins. They can be briefly outlined by four points.

#### *There Is No Absolute Distinction Between Creator and Creation*

Ultimately, Creator and creation are one. They may differ in perspective, as two sides of a saucer. Or, they may differ relationally, as Source does to sequent, as Cause to effect. Creator and creation may be no more different than the reflection in a lake is to the swan swimming on it. One is simply a mirror image of the other that is the real thing. Even for those who believe the world is real, Creator and creation are simply two sides of the same coin: There is no real difference between them.

#### *There Is an Eternal Relation Between Creator and Creation*

Pantheists believe that God caused the world, but they insist that He has been causing it forever. Just as rays would shine forever from an eternal sun or radii always emerge from the center of an eternal circle, even so God has been creating forever: The universe is as old as God. Just as in an eternal world one stone could be resting on another forever, so the world could be dependent on God forever. According to pantheism, the Cause has been creating from eternity.

#### *The World Is of the Same “Stuff” As God*

Pantheists believe God and the world are of the same substance: Both are comprised of God stuff. The creation is part of the Creator; it is one in nature with God. God is water. God is trees. As New Ager Marilyn Ferguson put it, when one watches milk being poured into cereal, he sees God being poured into God! (AC). Ultimately, there is only one substance, one “stuff in the universe, and it is divine. We are all made of it—we are all God.

#### *Human Beings Are God*

If all of creation is the emanation of God, then so is humankind. A pop theologian of New Age pantheism, Shirley MacLaine, believes that “you can use *I am God*, or *I am Christ*, or *I am that I am*, as Christ did” (DL, 112). In her television special miniseries “Out on a Limb” (January 1987), she waded to the ocean and proclaimed, “I am God. I am God!” Lord Maitreya, believed by many to be the “Christ” of the New Age, declared through Benjamin Creme, his press agent,

“My purpose is to show man that he need fear no more, that all of Light and Truth rests within his heart, that when this simple fact is known man will become God” (Crete, *MMC*, 204).

## THEISM: CREATION OUT OF NOTHING

In contrast to both materialism and pantheism, there is the Judeo Christian view of creation: out of nothing. According to this position, God is above and beyond the world, not merely in it, and certainly not of it. The Creator is related to creation more like a painter is to a painting. The painter is not the painting; rather he created the painting and is manifest in it. Likewise, God is not the world; instead, He created the world and manifests Himself in it (Ps. 19:1).

This position is represented by orthodox Judaism, Islam, and Christianity. Its proponents include great Christian thinkers such as Augustine, Anselm, and Aquinas, as well as Reformers such as Luther, Zwingli, and Calvin. Likewise, one of the best known twentieth century representatives of this view was C. S. Lewis.

### Augustine’s Contribution to Theism

Augustine (354–430), the medieval monk, struggled his way through the preceding positions. He was once caught in the clutches of skepticism, which held to creation out of matter without a God. Later he accepted a form of manichean dualism, which believed there was an eternal evil kingdom opposed to God. Prior to his conversion to Christianity, Augustine was influenced by Plotinus, who, as mentioned before, believed in creation out of God (*ex Deo*). But, eventually, Augustine accepted the biblical position of creation out of nothing. He concluded that creation comes *from* God but is not *of* God. “ ‘From Him’ does not mean the same as ‘of Him’ . . . . For from Him are heaven and earth, because He made them; but not of Him because they are not of His substance” (*ONG*, 27). Only Christ, God’s Son, is *of* ‘Him. All of creation is from God. Peter Kreeft noted that for Christians, “The world is not God *and not* an illusion. In Eastern religions, the world is either God or an illusion, either part of God’s mind or body, or *maya*, a trick” (*BHH*, 92).

### *God Alone Is Eternal*

For Augustine, “the eternal God” created the temporal world (*CG*, 11.4). God alone is eternal, for He did not create from eternity. Augustine rejected the view of those who were denying “a ‘temporal’ but admitting a ‘creational’ beginning, as though, in some hardly comprehensible way, the world was made, but made from all eternity” (*ibid.*).

If one asked what God did before He made the world, Augustine replied, “God was unoccupied, for the simple reason that there was no such thing as time before the universe was made” (*ibid.*, 11.5), for “if they excogitate infinite periods of time before the world, in which they cannot see how God could have had nothing to do, they ought to conceive of infinite reaches of space beyond the visible universe” (*ibid.*). But this is absurd, because there is no space beyond the finite cosmos.

### *The World Had a Beginning*

Augustine declared, “Sacred and infallible Scripture tells us that in the beginning God created heaven and earth in order. . . . Undoubtedly, then, the world was made not in time but together with time.” So there was no time before time, only eternity. God does not change, but

the universe does. Time is a measurement of that change, for “the distinguishing mark between time and eternity is that the former does not exist without some movement and change, while in the latter there is no change at all.” Obviously, then, “there could have been no time had not a creature been made whose movement would effect some change.” But in God’s “eternity there is absolutely no change.” Hence, we cannot “say that He created the world after a space of time” (ibid., 11.6).

### *The World Was Created Out of Nothing (ex nihilo)*

“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth” (Gen. 1:1). Augustine believed that “unless this meant that nothing had been made before, it would have been stated that whatever else God had made before was created at the beginning” (ibid.). And not only was nothing made before this, but what was made was created from nothing.

Creation cannot be out of God’s substance, because He is eternal in His essence, and creation is temporal. He has no beginning, whereas the world had a beginning. Further, “it [creation] is not out of Him, because it is not immutable, as He is.” Since the universe “was not made of anything else; it was undoubtedly made out of nothing—but by Himself (*OSIO*, 1.4).

Even Adam—body and soul—was created from nothing, for “though God formed man of the dust of the earth, yet the earth itself, and every earthly material, is absolutely created out of nothing.” Even “man’s soul, too, God created out of nothing, and joined to the body, when He made man” (*CG*, 14.11).

In brief, the world must have been made out of nothing because it had a beginning; it came to be. It did not always exist; God did. The world is finite, temporal, and changing, while God is none of these. Hence, the world cannot be made out of God’s substance or essence. It must, then, have come into existence out of nothing by God’s power. Augustine succinctly summarized the three basic questions about creation:

“Who made it? How? and Why?—the answers are: ‘God’; ‘by the Word’; and ‘because it is good’ ” (ibid., 11.23). So “what God created was made solely because of His goodness, not by reason of any necessity nor of any need to use the thing for Himself (ibid., 11.24). Because each person is created by God’s good will, he should acknowledge God’s goodness. “If he does not worship God, he is wretched, because [he is] deprived of God.” On the other hand, “if he worships God, he cannot wish to be worshipped in God’s stead” (ibid., 10.3).

### **Thomas Aquinas’s Contribution to a Theistic View of Creation**

After Augustine, the greatest Christian thinker of the Middle Ages was the Dominican monk Thomas Aquinas (1224–1274). His systematic views of God and creation have become a standard for orthodox Christian thought since his time.

#### *Only God Can Create*

Aquinas contended that “not only is it not impossible that anything should be created by God, but it is necessary to say that all things were created by God” (*ST*, Ia. 45.2.), for “to create can be the proper action of God alone,” and “to produce being absolutely, not merely as this or that being, belongs to the nature of creation. Hence it is manifest that creation is the proper act of God alone.” God cannot use any secondary or instrumental cause when creating “because the secondary instrumental cause does not share in the action of the superior cause.” For example, a saw does not by itself produce the form of a bench. This is the proper effect only of the principal

cause, the carpenter. “So it is impossible for any creature to create, either by its own power, or instrumentally” (ibid., la. 45.5).

### *Creation Is Not Eternal*

Like Augustine before him, Aquinas believed that “nothing except God can be eternal.” However, Aquinas did not hold that there were any sound arguments proving that the universe had a beginning, even though he did accept it as the teaching of Scripture (ibid., la. 46.1). He affirmed clearly, “That the world did not always exist we hold by faith alone; it cannot be proved demonstratively” (ibid., la. 46.2).

However, if the world did have a beginning, this is a strong indication of its Creator. “For the world leads more evidently to the knowledge of the divine creating power if it was not always, than if it had always being.... Everything which was not always manifestly has a cause” (ibid, la. 46.1).

God brought the world into existence by a free act of His will: “The first agent is a voluntary agent.” Even though He had the eternal will to produce some effect, yet He did not produce an eternal effect (ibid., la. 46.1 ad 6), for “from an eternal action of God an eternal effect does not follow; there follows only such an effect as God has willed, an effect, namely, who has being after non-being” (ibid., la. 46.2 ad 10).

Aquinas did not believe there was time before the world began. Non-being came “before” being only in a logical sense, not a chronological one. The Creator is “before all time” only by a priority of nature, not of time. “Things are said to be created in the beginning of time, not as if the beginning of time were a measure of creation, but because together with time the heavens and earth were created” (ibid., la. 46.3 ad 1). Therefore, time begins with creation; it was not a creation *in* time but a creation *of* time.

### *Creation Is Out of Nothing*

Aquinas argued that creation must be out of nothing. By definition, “*Nothing* is the same as *non-being*.” However, “when anything is said to be made from nothing, the preposition *from* does not signify a material cause, but only an order” (ibid., la. 45.2). Likewise, we speak of midday coming from morning, meaning *after* morning but not literally *out of it*.

To create from nothing is really a negative concept: “The sense is ... it is not made from anything; just as if we were to say, He speaks of nothing, because he does not speak of anything” (ibid., la. 45.2 ad 3). The ancient dictum that “nothing comes from nothing” is not to be understood absolutely: It means that something cannot be *caused* by nothing, but not that something cannot come *after* nothing. That is, something can be created *from* nothing but not *by* nothing.

## **Several Important Elements of the Theistic View of Creation**

Many significant truths are contained within a theistic view of creation. Four of them will be briefly discussed here.

### *There Is an Absolute Difference Between Creator and Creation*

Christian theism holds that there is a fundamental and real difference between the Creator and His creation. The following contrasts will focus these differences.

Creator	Creation
Uncreated	Created
Infinite	Finite
Eternal	Temporal
Necessary	Contingent
Changeless	Changing

God and the world are radically different. One is the Maker, and the other is made. God is the Cause, and the world is the effect. God is unlimited, and the world is limited. The Creator is self-existing, but creation is entirely dependent on Him for its existence.

Some already familiar illustrations may help to further clarify the real distinction between Creator and creation. In pantheism, God is to the world what a sea is to the drops of water in it, or what a fire is to the sparks that come from it. However, in theism, God is to the world what a painter is to a painting or a playwright is to his play. That is to say, while the artist is in some sense manifest *in* his art, he is also *beyond* it. The painter is not the painting: He is beyond, over, and above it. Likewise, God is the Creator of the world who causes it to exist and who is revealed in it. God is not the world.

### *Creation Had a Beginning*

Another crucial element of the theistic view of creation from nothing is that the universe (everything except God) had a beginning. Jesus spoke of His glory with the Father “before the world was” (John 17:5 NKJV). Time is not eternal; the space-time universe was brought into existence. The world did not always exist. The world did not begin *in* time—the world was the beginning of time. Time did not exist *before* creation and then at some moment in time God created the world. Again, it was not a creation *in* time, but a creation *of* time.

This does not mean that there was a time when the universe was not, for there was no time before time began. The only thing “prior” to time was eternity; that is, God exists forever, while the universe began to exist. Hence, God is prior to the temporal world ontologically (in reality), but not chronologically (in time).

To say that creation had a beginning is to point out that it came into being out of nothing. First it did not exist, and then it did. It was not, and then it was. Of course, the Cause of its coming to be was God.

### *The “Nothing” Out of Which God Created Was Absolute Nothing*

When the theist declares that God created “out of nothing,” he does not mean that “nothing” was some kind of invisible, immaterial something that God used to make the material universe. *Nothing means absolutely nothing*, that is, God alone existed and utterly nothing else. God created the universe, and then, and then alone, was there something else that existed.

If “nothing” were really a hidden or secret something, then creation would really be out of something else (*ex materia*). But theists demonstrate that creation came out of nothing (*ex*

*nihilo*). In short, creation out of nothing truly means that God did not use something else when He created the universe. He brought it into being by His own power.

### *Creation Out of Nothing Is Not Creation By Nothing*

Theism believes that the universe came to be from nothing, but only by Someone (God); it does not hold that nothing produced something. Indeed, a theist could sing with Julie Andrews in *The Sound of Music*, “Nothing comes from nothing; nothing ever could.” In fact, at the heart of the theist belief in the causal power of God is a rejection of the premise that nothing can create something. Only something (or someone) can cause something. Nothing causes nothing.

So for theism, creation *from* nothing does not mean creation *by* nothing. It means, rather, that God created the universe without the aid of any preexisting matter or substance. He did it simply by His own infinite omnipotence. Someone who used absolutely nothing else caused the entire creation to come into being “by his powerful word” (Heb. 1:3; cf. Gen. 1:3, 6, 9, 11, 14, 20, 24, 26).

## **THE SOURCE, CONTENT, METHOD, TIME, AND PURPOSE OF CREATION**

In addition to being distinguished by *ex nihilo* creation, the Christian doctrine of creation is characterized by several other features. These include the source, content, method, time, and purpose of creation.

### **The Source of Creation**

The source of creation is a theistic God: He alone can create something from nothing (Augustine, *CG*, 11.23). God is the “First Cause” (Augustine, *LCG*, 23); He is the “Beginning” beyond which there is no beginning. He is eternal and uncaused. He is indivisible and unchangeable (Augustine, *CG*, 11.10). He is infinitely wise and powerful. Further, God created voluntarily. As Aquinas observed, “It is not necessary that God should will anything except Himself (*ST*, Ia. 46.1).

Since the Christian God is a triunity of Father, Son, and Spirit (see chapter 12), all three persons are involved in Creation. According to Augustine, “To the Father is appropriated *power* which is especially shown in creation.... To the Son is appropriated *wisdom* through which an intellectual agent acts.... To the Holy Ghost is appropriated *goodness*, to which belong both governance ... and the giving of life” (ibid. 1:46:6). Creation is ascribed to all three members of the Godhead because in God His existence is “identical with his essence and common to all three persons, and is, therefore, an activity of the whole Trinity, not peculiar to one person” (ibid.).

Not only *did* God create, but only God *can create*. “To create is, properly speaking, to cause or produce the being of things” (Aquinas, *ST*, Ia. 45.6). Only God can cause something to come into being; humans cannot create. “An individual man cannot be the cause of human nature absolutely, because he would then be the cause of himself” (ibid., Ia. 45.5). In fact, “No created being can produce a being absolutely” (ibid.).

Since angels are created beings, it follows that they cannot create. This is so, since God alone is the primary cause and “no secondary cause can produce anything.... Hence it remains that nothing can create except God alone” (ibid., Ia. 65.3).

Secondary causes do not create; they only reduplicate (ibid., la. 45.6). A “secondary instrumental cause does not share in the action of the superior cause... So it is impossible for any creature to create” (ibid, la. 45.5).

## The Content of Creation

God created everything that exists: He created “the heaven and the earth” and “every living thing” (Gen. 1:1, 20–27 KJV). God created existence out of nonexistence; He made something out of nothing. For Augustine, the fact that God created all things “implies that before the creation of heaven and earth God had made nothing” (CG, 11.9). But if there was nothing before God created, then ultimately He created everything out of nothing: “There could not have existed any matter of anything whatever unless it came from God, the Author and Creator of all that has been formed or is to be formed” (Augustine, LCG, 35).

While all things are *from* God, they are not *of* God (Augustine, ONG, 27). Creation “is not out of Him, because it is not immutable, as He is.” However, as we have seen, since “it was not made of anything else, it was undoubtedly made out of nothing—but by Himself” (Augustine, OSIO, 1.4). Again, this does not mean that “nothing” is some sort of invisible stuff out of which God made the world. By “out of nothing” is meant “that it was not made from anything” (Aquinas, ST, la. 46.2).

As Aquinas noted, the preposition “from” does not imply it came *from* something, but simply *after* nothing (ibid., 1:45:1). Consequently, creation from nothing is really creation *after* nothing, for “*nothing* is the same as *no being*” (ibid, la. 45.1). But creation *from* nothing is not creation *by* nothing. Only what exists can cause, and only God can cause existence. God is Pure Existence (“I AM THAT I AM,” Ex. 3:14 KJV), and He alone produces everything else that exists.

## The Method of Creation

God is the Source of creation, and His Word is the means. As mentioned previously, there is no instrumental cause of creation, for between nothing (nonbeing) and something (being) there is no medium; whatever comes from nothing must do so immediately and abruptly. So “God produces being in act out of nothing ... according to the greatness of His power” (Aquinas, ST, la. 61.1). Since God has infinite power, He can do anything that is possible. It is not impossible for an infinite Creator to produce a finite creature. Thus, God, who *is* Existence, brought all else into existence. Everything came from nothing, but by Someone. It takes power to produce something, and what has all power can produce anything. An infinite Being has unlimited power (see chapter 5), and unlimited power is not limited in its ability to create limited powers (see chapter 7). God can create simply by “his powerful word” (Heb. 1:3).

God created not only by His power but also by His will. God is not bound by any obligation when He creates. Hence, “It is to be held with complete conviction that God brings creatures into existence of his own free will, and not as bound by natural necessity” (Aquinas, OPG, 3.15).

## The Time of Creation

God created “in the beginning.” God is eternal, but the world is not. The universe came to be, but God always was (actually, is). Again, according to Aquinas, “That the world did not always exist we hold by faith alone; it cannot be proved demonstratively” (ST, la. 46.2). Others, like Bonaventure (c. 1217–1274), held that it can be proven by reason that the universe had a

beginning. All orthodox Christians, however, acknowledge that the universe had a point of beginning—that it is temporal, not eternal.

Both time and space were created with the universe. There was no time before the world began, only eternity. God is prior to the universe in order, but not in time. “Things are said to be created in the beginning of time, not as if the beginning of time were a measure of creation, but because together with time the heavens and earth were created.” Likewise, space was created with the world, for “we hold that there was no place or space before the world was” (ibid., la. 46.3). Further, as cited before, Augustine said that “it is silly to imagine infinite space since there is no such thing as space beyond the cosmos” (CG, 11.5). Neither was there any physical motion before there was a physical universe: “Motion always existed from the moment that movable things began to exist” (Aquinas, *ST*, la. 46.1). God did not have to move to create motion, nor did He need time to create time. Augustine asked, “Did the author of time need the help of time?” (LCG, 195).

What was God doing before He created? Augustine had two answers, one humorous and one serious. First, he jested that God was preparing hell for those who ask such questions! Second, he noted that there was no time before God created, for to speak of “doing” and “before” imply time. Therefore, the question is as meaningless as asking, What time is it for a timeless Being? There is no time before time began, only eternity. Thus, it is senseless to ask how the Eternal One occupied His time before He created time. For this same reason, it makes no sense to ask why God did not create the universe earlier; “earlier” implies that there were moments before moments began. This is as absurd as asking why God did not create the world there rather than here, since there was no here or there (space) before space was created. As Augustine points out, “If they excogitate infinite periods of time before the world ... they ought to conceive of infinite reaches of space beyond the visible universe” (CG, 11.5). However, since God created both time and space with the universe, there is neither time nor space beyond the universe. God created neither in time nor in space; rather, He created the universe with both.

If God did not create in time, then did He not create from eternity? And if He created from eternity, then is not the world eternal? All the orthodox Fathers rejected this conclusion, but for different reasons. Aquinas believed eternal creation was theoretically possible, though not actually so (*ST*, la. 46.2.). This, he reasoned, is because viewed “from above,” God is eternal, and an effect is simultaneous to its cause of existence. Bonaventure and others argued “from below” that an eternal universe is impossible because an infinite series of moments is unattainable. Both views agree that the universe is not eternal. The problem, then, is this: How can God be an eternal Cause when the universe He caused is not eternal?

In response, it should be noted that the universe no more has to be eternal because God is eternal than it has to be infinite, since He is infinite. Nor does it have to be necessary because God is a necessary Being. The only thing a necessary Being must will necessarily is the necessity of His own Being. There is no necessity placed upon God to will the existence of contingent beings. Likewise, there is no reason an eternal Being must will anything else to be eternal. While all material things flow from God’s eternal will, He wills that all these things exist temporarily.

Everything preexists in God in accordance with His will. But God willed eternally that created things would have a beginning. So, even though He willed them from eternity, nevertheless, they had a temporal beginning. For example, a doctor can decree at the outset that a patient take a medication later on at different intervals than at the beginning of the treatment. Likewise, God can will events from all eternity that will occur at later successive times.

## The Purpose of Creation

If God created freely, then we can ask, Why did He create rather than not create? Again, Augustine’s answer was “because it is good” (CG, 11.23). Aquinas concurred, saying, “God brings things into existence in order that his goodness may be communicated and manifested” (ST, Ia. 47.1). Not that God *must* share His goodness, but simply because He *wants* to do so. Commenting on the fact that God declared His creation was “very good” (Gen. 1:31), Augustine concluded, “Surely, this can only mean that there was no other reason for creating the world except that good creatures might be made by a good God” (CG, 11.3).

God is infinitely good; as such He desires to share His goodness. Creatures should recognize the goodness God has showered upon them and thank Him for it. In recognizing God’s worth, they should attribute worth to Him. Thus worth-ship (worship) is the natural result of creation: Every rational creature should worship the Creator. The purpose for creating is so that the creature will worship God: “If he does not worship God, he is wretched” (Augustine, CG, 10.3). Augustine confessed elsewhere, “Thou hast formed us for Thyself, and our hearts are restless till they find rest in Thee” (C, 1.1).

In brief, since a rational God created rational creatures, it is only rational that they should worship Him, for in acknowledging His good as the highest good, they find their highest good.

## CONCLUSION

The Christian doctrine of creation is best understood in contrast with the other two main options. The following comparison will summarize and focus the differences.

Category	Theism	Materialism	Pantheism
<b>Source of Creation</b>	Creator beyond nature	No Creator	Creator within nature
<b>Method of Creation</b>	Out of nothing ( <i>ex nihilo</i> )	Out of something ( <i>ex materia</i> )	Out of God ( <i>ex Deo</i> )
<b>Duration of Creation</b>	Temporal	Eternal	Eternal
<b>Relation of Creator and Creature</b>	Creator and creation (really different)	No real Creator	No real creation
<b>God’s Control</b>	Unlimited	Limited or nonexistent	Limited

Properly speaking, materialism believes in natural *generation*, pantheism believes in eternal *emanation*, and only theism believes in supernatural *creation*. These are fundamentally different perspectives. All the other world-views (see Volume 1, chapter 2) hold positions on origin that fit into one or more of these three main categories.

Christianity holds that creation was *out of nothing*. God brought the universe into existence (Gen. 1:1; John 1:2–3), and He sustains it in existence (Col. 1:16–17; Heb. 1:3). Thus, He is in sovereign control of it. God is infinite, necessary, and eternal; the creation is finite, contingent,

and temporal. Hence, there is a real and radical difference between the uncreated Creator and the created creation.

For theists, creation *out of God* is a contradiction in terms, for a creature would be a temporal eternal, a finite infinite, and a created uncreated being. Thus, creation out of nothing makes it nonsense for a human being to say, “I am God.” It is impossible to have a contingent being that is necessary, or a finite that is infinite.

Further, it is in the context of creation that the Christian concept of service to God and worship of Him are best understood. By our very nature as creatures we owe all that we are and have to the good hands of our Creator. Failure to acknowledge this is the ultimate ungratefulness. Indeed, the divine epithet over the pagan world reads: “Although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him” (Rom. 1:21). By contrast, the blessed ones around God’s throne sing praise to Him who by His will “created all things” (Rev. 4:11).

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## CHAPTER NINETEEN

# THE ORIGIN OF MATERIAL CREATION

**C**reation is a major doctrine of Scripture: It is the first to be stated (Gen. 1:1) and one of the last to be stressed (Rev. 4:11; 10:6; 21:5; 22:13). There are hundreds of references to Creation and the Creator in the Bible, covering the vast majority of books from Genesis to Revelation (see appendix 2). The physical creation includes not only inanimate objects but also all living things.

## THE BIBLICAL BASIS FOR CREATION

The word *create* (*bara*)<sup>1</sup> is used in connection with three great events in Genesis 1: the creation of matter (v. 1), living things (1:21), and human beings (1:27). These will be the focal point of our discussion.

## THE CREATION OF MATTER (THE UNIVERSE)

“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth” (Gen. 1:1). With these majestic words, the Scriptures begin their description of the origin of all things, and creation is the foundation for everything else that follows. This grand statement of the initial divine act is uniquely monotheistic. That this is a reference to creation from nothing (*ex nihilo*) is confirmed by recent discoveries in ancient Ebla (Syria). The Ebla tablets declare,

Lord of heaven and earth:  
the earth was not, you created it,  
the light of day was not, you created it,  
the morning was not, you created it,  
the morning light you had not [yet] made exist.  
(Pettinato, *AE*, 259 in Merrill, *BS*)

### The Origin of Matter

“God is spirit” (John 4:24); as such, He is the “invisible” God (1 Tim. 1:17). Indeed, “no one has ever seen God” (John 1:18). God is both invisible and immaterial (1 Tim. 6:16), and as Spirit He has no “flesh and bones” (Luke 24:39): He is incorporeal and purely spiritual. However, the universe that God created is both visible and material (Heb. 11:3)—it can be seen and handled, being both physical and tangible. It has both space (whereness) and time (whenness); it possesses both “here” and “now.” Further, it has matter, which is extended throughout space and time. It has “parts” or particles with spaces between them.

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<sup>1</sup> *Bara* does not always mean “to make something out of nothing” (see Gen. 2:3; Ps. 104:30; Isa. 41:20). However, used in the context of the original events of Creation, described in Genesis 1, it bears this meaning (cf. Col. 1:16; 2 Cor. 4:6).

The “stuff” or matter of the universe is described by modern science in terms of atoms of physical energy with component particles and charges. As experienced by humans, matter is sensible, tangible, and visible: It is the hard, objective data that comprises our environment. It is there; we must make our way around it or else knock our heads on it. Bodies are real, and the earth is tangible, as are the stars and planets. So affirms God’s revelation.

All of this was created by God “in the beginning.” And “through him all things were made” (John 1:3). God created “all things . . . visible and invisible” (Col. 1:16). He created the “heavens and earth.” His creation includes the “land,” the “seas” (Gen. 1:10), and all plants and animals (vv. 6–26). It includes also the human body that was made “from the dust of the ground” (Gen. 2:7). There is a real material universe, and it was created by God.

### *Matter Was Created From Nothing*

Indeed, God brought all of matter into existence out of absolutely nothing (see chapter 18). The Bible says God simply spoke (cf. Gen. 1:1, 3, 6, etc.), and things came into existence by His power and word (Heb. 1:2; cf. 2 Cor. 4:6). “By the word of the LORD were the heavens made. . . . For he spoke, and it came to be” (Ps. 33:6, 9). “He is before all things” and “all things were created through him” (Col. 1:16–17 NKJV). It was through Him that “all things were made,” and “without him nothing was made that has been made” (John 1:3). The writer of Hebrews declared that “by faith we understand that the universe was formed at God’s command, so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible” (Heb. 11:3). The universe was created out of nothing. John the apostle proclaimed of God, “You created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being” (Rev. 4:11). In brief, the entire cosmos came into existence by God’s will at His command. When He spoke, it appeared out of absolutely nothing.

### *Matter Was Created by God, Not Out of God*

The material universe was created by God out of nothing (*ex nihilo*), but not out of God (*ex Deo*): The cosmos is not made out of God-stuff. This is why it is a grievous sin to worship and serve the “creature rather than the Creator” (Rom. 1:25 NKJV). It is for this reason that idolatry is condemned so strongly in the Scriptures; God commanded: “You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below” (Ex. 20:4). If, on the other hand, the universe were God’s “body” or part of His substance,<sup>2</sup> there would be no reason we should not worship it. Yet the Bible makes it very clear that God is not to be identified with the physical universe. The universe comes from God, but it is not made of God. God is as different from the world as a potter is from clay (Rom. 9:20–21), or as the craftsman is from his handiwork (Ps. 19:1).

The material universe is not made out of God, but it is a reflection of God. It “declares” His glory, 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 men are without excuse” (Rom. 1:20). That is, God is present in creation both as its sustaining Cause (Heb. 1:3; Col. 1:16–17) and as it reflects His attributes (Rom. 1:20). Just as the energies of Shakespeare are revealed in his works, so the Creator is manifest in His handicraft. Just as the creative mind of Picasso is portrayed in his art, in like manner the Creator of the universe can be seen in His great masterpiece.

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<sup>2</sup> This is what pantheists claim. See Volume 1, chapter 2.

God, then, is the invisible Creator of the visible world, the immaterial Maker of all matter, and the incorporeal Producer of all corporeal (bodily) things (see chapter 6). But how can this be? How can God create matter when He is not material? In response to this question, several observations are relevant.

*First*, it is certainly no more a mystery for the theist to believe that Mind produced matter than it is for the atheist to believe that matter produced mind. In fact, it is easier to believe that infinite Mind made matter than that finite matter could produce a mind that can contemplate the infinite.

*Second*, it is no more difficult to understand how an immaterial Spirit (God) can be manifest in material things than it is to comprehend how our minds can reveal themselves in material things, such as literature, art, and technology. Just like the written page is a material manifestation of the immaterial thoughts of the author, even so the universe is a material creation of the immaterial Creator.

*Third*, and finally, in spite of its similarity to the Creator (Rom. 1:19–20), creation by its very nature must also be different from the Creator. God is infinite, and creation is finite. He is necessary, and creation is contingent. God is uncreated, but the world is created. It is not strange, then, that God is immaterial and the universe is material. After all, a painting is visible, but the artist’s mind that created it is not. Indeed, since God cannot create another absolute Spirit, and since everything He creates must have limitations and potency, such as matter has, it is understandable that He made matter.

## **The Nature of Matter**

All creation—whether bodies or spirits (angels), whether visible or invisible—by nature partakes of certain characteristics. Since the material universe is part of creation, it also participates in these properties.

### *Material Creation Is Contingent*

The created world, including matter, is contingent. That is to say, even though the world exists, it could nevertheless not exist; it is, but it might not be. Indeed, God is holding it in existence “by his powerful word” (Heb. 1:3), for by Him “all things hold together” (Col. 1:17). Without God’s continual, sustaining causality, all of creation would cease to be—instantly (see chapter 21).

The contingency of all creation is another way to express the biblical truth that God is not only the *originating* cause of the universe, but He is also its *conserving* cause. He caused it to come to be, and He also causes it to continue to be. The following chart expresses this more completely (see also chapter 3):

### **GOD’S CAUSALITY**

<b>ORIGINATING CAUSALITY</b>	<b>CONSERVING CAUSALITY</b>
Cause of beginning	Cause of sustaining
Cause of coming to be	Cause of continuing to be
Cause of becoming	Cause of being

Cause of coming together

Cause of holding together

Cause of origin

Cause of operation

Creation is contingent at all times—it is always dependent on its Creator. Once a creature, always a creature; the created can never become the Uncreated. Radical dependence on God for moment-by-moment existence is an essential characteristic of all created things, including the material universe as a whole.

### *Material Creation Is Finite (Limited)*

Another essential property of creation is finitude. All created things are finite or limited, and only God is infinite or unlimited. It is impossible to have two infinite Beings, for infinite includes all, and there cannot be two Alls. As Paul declared, “In him [the infinite God] we live and move and have our being” (Acts 17:28). God is infinite, and all exists in Him. When He created finite beings there was not more Being; there were simply more who had it. For example, when a teacher instructs a class, there is not more knowledge; there are simply more who possess it.

There can only be one infinite Being (see chapter 5), and since there is only one infinite Being (God), then all other things—the whole of creation—must be finite. God alone is unlimited; everything else is limited. God is the unlimited Limiter of all limited things; He is the uncaused Cause of all that is caused.

The very fact that all created things are caused to exist reveals that they must be limited, for if they came to be, then they did not always exist; hence, their existence is not unlimited; it had a beginning. Furthermore, whatever is created undergoes change; only the uncreated God is unchanging. “I the LORD do not change” (Mal. 3:6). Of the heavens the Scriptures declare, “They will perish, but you [God] remain; they will all wear out like a garment. You will roll them up like a robe; like a garment they will be changed. But you remain the same, and your years will never end” (Heb. 1:11–12).

Whatever changes is limited, for if it changes, then it does not remain exactly what it was. Thus, it is limited by what it becomes; it cannot be precisely what it once was, for in that case it has not changed. So all changing things are limited.

Further, the fact that created things change reveals that they have a potentiality for that change: The fact of change proves the possibility of change, and the actuality of change shows the potentiality for change. Thus, all created things have potentiality. However, all created things also have actuality, since they actually exist. Therefore, all created things have both actuality and potentiality. As for potentiality, a creature has the potential to be what it is not. Thus, creatures are limited by their potentials: They cannot do more than their capacities allow them to do. Just as a gallon jug has only the capacity to hold a gallon of liquid, even so every finite being is limited by its created capacity. God, on the other hand, is Pure Actuality. God is the “I AM” (Ex. 3:14)—there is no “can be” in God’s essence, for He is what He is. There is nothing He can be that He has not always been and always will be.

### *Material Creation Is Spatial and Temporal*

In addition to being contingent and limited, material creation is also restricted to space and time. Time is a measurement based on change; it measures according to “before” and “after” the change. Because He is an unchanging Being, God is not subject to such measurements. Since He is always the same, He cannot be the object of calculations based on what He once was. Because He has not changed, He still is what He always was. However, in a changing being, such as material things are, measurements can be made according to before and after the change. Time is such a measurement.

Time is a limited measurement; that is to say, it measures certain limited segments (Augustine, *C*, chapter 11). Since material beings are in time (i.e., are temporal), they are limited to a “now” as opposed to a “then.” This is why we are not now living the past: We lived the past *then*, but the present we are living *now*. We cannot live both a now and a then simultaneously in the same sense. We can live the past in memory, but not in actuality. Time is a measurement based on a real limitation that we have as material (bodily) beings. We live only now; every future moment becomes a “now” when we experience it.

Likewise, space is a limitation. Time is a limitation to a *now*, and space is a limitation to a *here*. Thus, as spatio-temporal beings, we are limited to the here and now. So are all material things—the limitations of space impose upon us the boundary conditions of “hereness” rather than “thereness.” We cannot be both here and there at the same time and in the same sense. We can be *there* mentally (by remembering or dreaming), but we can only be *here* bodily. Such is the spatial limitation on all material things.

God, however, can be here, there, and everywhere at the same time, for He has no body that limits Him to being only here as opposed to there. God has no “hereness” that limits Him to one place at a time—He is not in space. God is omnipresent; that is, present everywhere in all of creation at the same time (see chapter 7). Again, this is possible because He is an infinite spirit. Having no body to limit Him, nor finite capacity to fence Him in, God’s presence is barred from nowhere. As the psalmist proclaimed, “Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence? If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths, you are there” (Ps. 139:7–8).

### *Material Creation Is Good*

After nearly every day of Creation we read, “And God saw that it was good” (Gen. 1:3, 10, 12, 18, 21). After the final day it says, “God saw all that he had made, and it was very good” (Gen. 1:31). Indeed, Paul declared, “Everything God created is good” (1 Tim. 4:4). Elsewhere he added, “I know and am convinced by the Lord Jesus that *there* is nothing unclean of itself; but to him who considers anything to be unclean, to him it is unclean” (Rom. 14:14 NKJV).

Like its Creator, all of creation was and still is good. This Judeo-Christian teaching that material, physical, bodily things are good is unique, standing in contrast to all other religions and philosophies. Gnostics (past and present) believe that matter is evil, while Plotinus (A.D. 205–270) held that it was nearly evil, the least good of all things. For him, matter had no good, but only the mere capacity for good (*E*, 1:8:7).

Plato (c. 427–347 B.C.) thought matter was a formless chaos, and identified the “good” with “form.” More radical Eastern belief (e.g., Shankara Hinduism) holds that matter is an illusion (*maya*), and Christian Science also believes matter, like evil, is an error of mortal mind (Eddy, *SHKS*, 480–584).

By contrast, both the Old and New Testaments teach that the material world is good. God's own conclusion, upon viewing His handiwork, was that "it was very good" (Gen. 1:31). The apostle Paul affirms the same (1 Tim. 4:4; Rom. 14:14).

## THE CREATION OF LIVING THINGS

God not only created matter (Gen. 1:1), but He also created "every living thing that moves" (Gen. 1:21 NKJV). Many of these kinds of life are named in Genesis 1:21–25:

So God created the great creatures of the sea and every living and moving thing with which the water teems, according to their kinds, and every winged bird according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. God blessed them and said, "Be fruitful and increase in number and fill the water in the seas, and let the birds increase on the earth." And there was evening, and there was morning—the fifth day. And God said, "Let the land produce living creatures according to their kinds: livestock, creatures that move along the ground, and wild animals, each according to its kind." And it was so. God made the wild animals according to their kinds, the livestock according to their kinds, and all the creatures that move along the ground according to their kinds. And God saw that it was good.

### The Origin of Life

All of life exists because God wills it to exist, for "he himself gives all men life and breath and everything else" (Acts 17:25). God "created . . . men and animals, and creatures that move along the ground, and birds of the air" (Gen. 6:7). Moses tells us that out of the ground "the LORD God had formed . . . all the beasts of the field and all the birds of the air" (Gen. 2:19). And John added, "Without him nothing was made that has been made" (John 1:3). Literally, all living things originated from God's hand.

### The Nature of Life

The biblical description of life includes its mobility, its unity, its diversity, its fecundity, its stability, and its dominion. It has one source, many manifestations, and continually reproduces after its kind.

#### *The Unity of All Life*

There are many indications in Scripture of the unity of all living things.

*First*, all life has one Creator. His stamp is upon all things.

*Second*, all life is interdependent. Higher forms were commanded to eat lower forms (Gen. 1:29; 9:3).

*Third*, humans were commanded to care for the environment (1:28), to cultivate the flora and to care for the fauna (Gen. 2:15). As humans cared for living things, they would provide food and clothes for themselves (Gen. 3:21).

*Fourth*, and finally, the Bible often refers to "all living things" as a group or whole (Gen. 1:21; 6:19; Acts 17:24). There is, then, a unity and interdependence of all life. It comes from one God; it manifests one creative hand, and each individual form fits into one organic whole.

#### *The Diversity of All Life*

God loves variety—He created all kinds of things. In biblical language, God created “vegetation: seed-bearing plants and trees on the land that bear fruit with seed in it” (Gen. 1:11). Then He said, “Let the water teem with living creatures” (v. 20). God also “created the great creatures of the sea and every living and moving thing with which the water teems ... and every winged bird according to its kind” (v. 21). On top of this, He made all the “living creatures” of the land: “livestock, creatures that move along the ground, and wild animals” (v. 24). And finally, “God created man in his own image ... male and female he created them” (v. 27).

This great diversity of life filled the earth and literally “teemed” in the sea. The landscape crawled with animals, the waters swarmed with fish, and birds flew across the heavens. Life was created in great abundance and diversity.

### *The Fecundity of All Life*

God commanded life to multiply, and this it does naturally, for “the land produced vegetation: seed-bearing plants and trees on the land that bear fruit with seed in it, according to their various kinds” (Gen. 1:11). This pleased God, for “God saw that it was good” (Gen. 1:12). Since human beings have free choice, God gave them strong desires to multiply and commanded them, saying, “Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth” (Gen. 1:28).

### *The Stability of All Life*

God provided for the continuance of the life He created: Each was to produce “according to their various kinds” (Gen. 1:11). Thus “plants yielding seed and fruit trees” were made “bearing fruit in which is their seed.” The same was true of animals of the sea and land, each reproducing “according to their kinds” (vv. 21, 25). Finally, humankind was told to reproduce according to their kind (v. 28; cf. 5:3). Thus, God provided for the continuance of each kind He had made.

Life is basically the same from generation to generation, each reproducing its own: fish producing fish, birds hatching birds, cows calving calves, and humans giving birth to humans. This has been the pattern from the very beginning and continues to the present. Life in all of its many kinds is continuous and stable.

### *Humankind's Dominion Over All Life*

Not only did God create all life, He crowned it with *human* life and made us king over all the earth. God told Adam and Eve to “subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground” (Gen. 1:28). The psalmist added of humankind, “You made him a little lower than the heavenly beings and crowned him with glory and honor” (Ps. 8:5). It is important to note that what was granted was dominion, not destruction. God owns the world (Ps. 124:8), and humans are to care for it for Him (Gen. 2).<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Norman L. Geisler, *Systematic Theology, Volume Two: God, Creation* (Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House Publishers, 2003), 421-49.

# *Creation and Evolution*

## INTRODUCTION

In Part 1 we discussed the Bible. The scope of the Bible includes the history of all creation. The first book of the Bible, Genesis, describes the beginning of all things—when God “spoke forth” the universe and its component parts.

In Part 2, *Creation and Evolution*, we will look at the Bible’s account of the beginning of time—creation itself. The concern here is with *origins*. How did the universe begin? Has it always been there? Is it an illusion? If it had a beginning, what sort of beginning was it? We will use the Genesis account of creation as the basis for this study, but we also will delve into related areas of philosophy and science. We will see that the Genesis account of creation, far from being an ancient and fanciful myth, is an accurate, historical summary of the original creation of this universe.

Because much of secular science presupposes that there is no God, no design, no creative pattern, we will also discuss those ideas. We will show the harmony between true scientific evidence (not just scientific interpretation or speculation) and the Genesis account. Also, since much secular science is preoccupied with the theory of evolution (the view that all contemporary life forms evolved from earlier, simpler life forms), a significant portion of Part 2 will deal with evolution. After reading this section, you should be able to answer for yourself this question: What should I believe about evolution?

We have been very careful to ensure that the material presented is accurate and is based on a broad framework of research and study. Therefore, although we will discuss ideas about the origin and nature of the universe, we will not present complicated philosophical arguments. We will discuss theories of origins, but we will not engage in comprehensive surveys of scientific data. We will provide a framework for analyzing and assessing evolutionary theories in the light of biblical revelation, but we will not presume to set forth thorough argumentation in each of the areas under debate. This section is designed to equip Christians with the tools necessary to defend their Christian commitment against contemporary secular thought.

Note that I am addressing these issues from certain perspectives. I believe in a universal Flood and lean toward (though am not necessarily convinced by) the recent creationist view (that

is, the earth is much younger than the 4.6 billion years that many scientists need in order to hold an evolutionary point of view). There are good Christian scholars, both scientific and biblical, who differ in perspective and argue for a local flood or an old earth or for a progressive creationism. It must be understood clearly that *there is room for a difference of opinion here, and I do not consider either view the “Christian” view*. Both are viable options. But it is beyond the scope of this book to deal with all the arguments for and against the age of the earth and the extent of the Flood. Bible-believing Christians can disagree upon these issues. But one thing we all agree on is this: The universe came into existence by a series of creative acts by an infinite, personal God.

Travel with me, then, as we go back past recorded history to the beginning of it all—to the time when God, the eternal King, first created everything through the power of his word.

## CHAPTER 1

### *Science and Society Move Away from God*

Many people believe that religion and science are mutually exclusive, even contradictory to each other. That belief, however, is not required either by scientific fact or by the Bible. If we as Christians believe that the God of Creation is also the God of salvation, then such conflict is impossible. The same God will not create one testimony in the material record of the universe and then create a completely contradictory testimony in the written record of the Bible.

We do not want to return to the scientifically naive worldview of those like Ptolemy (ca. A.D. 85–160), who believed the universe was *geo-centric*—that is, with the earth at the center of it. The Bible nowhere teaches that the earth is the center of the universe. The Bible, although accurate in the science it does express, is not primarily concerned with science but with salvation. The location of the earth in relationship to the rest of the universe is irrelevant when compared to the spiritual concerns of the Bible. As we shall see in this section, there is no ultimate conflict between the reasonable and objective observation and interpretation of data (science) and a reasonable and objective interpretation of the Bible (theology).

From a biblical perspective, the story of the relationship of God and mankind is at the center of all existence. Quite properly, then, the Bible deals extensively with moral and philosophical ideas and only incidentally mentions scientific topics.

As we shall see in the following chapters, the few biblical passages that appear to contradict science in no way contradict reasonably interpreted and accurately observed scientific data. We shall see that the primary “conflict” between science and the Bible is in reality a conflict between atheistic presuppositions of many scientists and the theistic assertions of the Bible.

## **A SCIENTIFIC WORLDVIEW WITHOUT GOD**

The contemporary scientific worldview is a worldview that has abandoned any belief in God. Three thinkers in the nineteenth century represent the bias against religion that helped to oust God from the scientific worldview.

**Charles Darwin** (1809–1882) revolutionized biology. Rather than accepting the special creation of all earthly life by God, Darwin chose to observe a vast quantity of biological data. From that he developed a theory of its origin based on naturalism (rather than allowing for any supernatural intervention).

He proposed that organisms change and develop in fundamental complexity through random variation, adaptation, and natural selection from one species to another or within species. The key to this system was that the changes were by adaptation and natural selection. There was no need for God in this system of change. (When Darwin first started writing, he attributed the beginning of the evolutionary process to the Creator. Later, however, he was not at all certain that there was a God.) Darwin's interpretation of his data, however, was not as far-reaching and all-encompassing as today's evolutionary model. When later scientists expanded Darwin's theory to include the origin and development of all life over a vast period of time, the agency and ultimate source for this evolution was chance, not God. We will discuss Darwin and his theory to a greater extent in chapters 4 and 5.

**Karl Marx** (1818–1883) revolutionized political science and sociology. Until his time, most political science, economics, and social structures depended on some sort of assumed or explicit divine absolute for their structure and values. Marx, however, was atheistic. He viewed belief in God as a hindrance to economic, political, and social development. He did not orient his system around any divine absolute. Instead, he proposed a political system (communism) oriented around the impersonal and arbitrary absolute of dialectical materialism. There was not only no need for God in Marx's system, any idea of God was detrimental to human progress.

**Sigmund Freud** (1856–1939) revolutionized the social sciences through his unique form of psychology, called psychoanalysis. Freud was a forerunner of social scientists who orient their therapy and values subjectively, abandoning the concept that right and wrong are objectively and absolutely determined by God. Right and wrong, indeed all morals and values, become subjective and relative. Psychotherapy did not have as its goal the reconciliation of the individual to the laws of God, which previously was seen as the path to personal happiness. Rather, Freud's psychotherapy had as its goal the reconciliation of the individual's facts of personality to each other. With the advent of relativistic therapy and values (ethics), Freud and his followers believed they had no need for God.

These three thinkers are now gone. Their influence, however, has pervaded every facet of modern science. Contemporary science is a science without absolutes, and, as we shall see in subsequent chapters, without adequate answers to the *whys* and *hows* of the universe and of mankind.

## **PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN FAITH AND EVIDENCE**

The *whys* and *hows* of the universe are answered by the revelation of God in the Bible and in his Son, Jesus Christ. Hebrews 1:1–2 declares, “God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, in these last days has spoken to us in His Son.” Contrary to the humanists, there is no absolute contradiction between the Bible and the evidence of science. There is, in fact, a partnership between faith and evidence. This partnership is illustrated in the book of Hebrews: “Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the

evidence of things not seen....Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear” (Hebrews 11:1, 3, KJV). The following chapters in this section describe the partnership between faith and evidence mentioned by the writer of Hebrews. We will find that faith, as described in the Bible, complements and is confirmed by the evidence we find in physical reality around us.

The entire Christian faith, the gospel of truth, couples faith and evidence. The apostle Paul defined the gospel as the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 15:1–3). He declared that faith and evidence were so closely related that “if Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless; you are still in your sins” (1 Corinthians 15:17). The tomb was empty. The angel testified that its occupant had risen (Matthew 28:5–6). That was the consistent theme of the New Testament writers as they preached the gospel (the word means *good news*) and defended their faith.

Peter preached the first recorded evangelistic message after the resurrection of Christ. In it he pointed to the evidence. He pointed to the world of reality to confirm the reality of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Peter appealed to the knowledge of his listeners: “Men of Israel, listen to these words: Jesus the Nazarene, a man *attested to you* by God with miracles and wonders and signs which God performed through Him *in your midst, just as you yourselves know*—...This Jesus God raised up again, to which *we are all witnesses*” (Acts 2:22, 32; emphasis mine). Later he emphasized the corroborating value of evidence in his first epistle: “For we did not follow cleverly devised tales when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but *we were eyewitnesses* of His majesty” (2 Peter 1:16; emphasis mine).

The apostle Paul was one of the most intellectual of the early Christians. Some of his arguments in defense of the faith have been preserved for us in the New Testament. From them we can see Paul’s emphasis on the use of reason, evidence, and common sense in testing and understanding reality. One of Paul’s greatest speeches was before some Greek philosophers on Mars Hill in Athens (Acts 17). When Paul arrived in a new place he always began preaching the gospel in the Jewish synagogue. Then he also preached in the area marketplace or anywhere else he was sure to find a crowd to talk to. When he came to the synagogue of the Jews in Thessalonica, the Scripture records that “he went to them, and for three Sabbaths *reasoned* with them from the Scriptures, *explaining and giving evidence* that the Christ had to suffer and rise again from the dead, and saying, ‘This Jesus whom I am proclaiming to you is the Christ’ ” (Acts 17:2–3; emphasis mine).

The same chapter records Paul’s actions in Athens. It says that since he was “provoked within him as he was beholding the city full of idols,” he was “*reasoning* in the synagogue with the Jews and the God-fearing Gentiles, and in the marketplace every day with those who happened to be present” (Acts 17:16–17; emphasis mine). Some Greek philosophers observed Paul preaching in this manner and invited him to address their gathering. Paul’s speech is one of the greatest short summations asserting the existence of God and the gospel of Jesus Christ (Acts 17:22–31).

What Paul had to say about “science” is interesting too. Many humanists would like to believe that the New Testament concept of God is primitive, that the biblical God’s creative agency is vastly inferior to a complex naturalistic scientific model. But the Creator God asserted by Paul in Acts 17 is very sophisticated; his creative act fits modern scientific evidence much better than do the myths of the crude Greek deities. Paul called his God “the God who made the world and all things in it,...Lord of heaven and earth [not dwelling] in temples made with hands;

neither is He served by human hands, as though He needed anything, since He Himself gives to all life and breath and all things” (Acts 17:24–25). As we shall see in this section, the God of the Bible, the God proclaimed by and revealed fully in Jesus Christ, has a far better explanation for the origin of the universe than does modern atheistic science.

## CHAPTER 2

### *The Origin of the Universe*

In this chapter we will see how scientific investigation of the universe presents us with a cosmology absolutely consistent with the biblical cosmology. No ancient religious system other than the biblical one corresponds so closely to the scientific evidence uncovered in the last two centuries.

#### **ANCIENT RELIGIOUS COSMOLOGIES**

Many ancient religions attributed supernatural qualities to natural forces and bodies. Some, for example, attributed the creation of the earth to the sun, often referred to as the Supreme God. In general, ancient religions saw the sun as the supernatural source and sustainer of life. That view is not completely off the mark scientifically, since science has shown us the dependence of earthly life on the sun. The ancient religions, however, erred in a significant way: they usually attributed supernatural power to the sun itself, seeing the sun as a god. Scientists reject that hypothesis as “primitive” or “superstitious,” postulating instead “natural law” or the “inherent order in the universe,” or the “interdependency of the universe” as proper descriptions of the relationship between the sun and earth.

The Bible does not contradict the scientific evidence. It, too, rejects the idea of a supernatural sun god. It sees law, order, and interdependency in the universe. But the Bible goes beyond science and asserts the source of the law, order, and interdependency evident in the universe: an intelligent, benevolent, all-powerful, personal God. The Bible recognizes the futility of locating the source of the universe within or as a part of the universe. At the same time, it goes beyond the scientific model, which is unable to define the cause of the order it observes.

#### **ORIGINS: WHERE DID THE UNIVERSE COME FROM?**

As we examine the origin of the universe, we will be discussing science and the Bible. Many times both will agree. That is not always the case, however. While all truth proceeds from God, who is truth, and while scientific truth can never contradict biblical truth, scientific suppositions and theories can contradict truth in numerous ways. The author of the Bible is the

God of truth; scientists are not infallible. Likewise, when fallible humans interpret the Bible incorrectly, their views may contradict accurate science. Where science and the Bible appear to conflict concerning origins, we will discuss those conflicts and show why science is, at that point, in error, and why the Bible is true, or how the two coincide. There can be times when there appears to be a conflict, and the evidence does not clear it up at present. This is when time is the common denominator between the two. We do, though, want to reiterate that scientific truth is *not* in conflict with biblical truth.

In theory, it is the job of science to *observe* the natural world and seek to understand the natural world through that *observation*. It can often say, “This happens,” or “This is the *value* of such-and-such event or process.” *Why* and *value* are usually terms more properly associated with philosophy or religion than with science. In practice, scientists often overstep science’s domain and attempt to deliver pronouncements on subjects with which science by definition is unable to deal. Biologist Jack Wood Sears notes:

Science deals only with that which is timeless, repeatable at will, dependable, and universal. By this I mean that a scientist doing an experiment works only with those phenomena that are the same today as they were yesterday and as they will be tomorrow. He cannot deal with the unique, the thing that happens only once, for science relies for verification not upon one experiment but on repeated experiments. A scientist in the laboratory does his experiment today and expects to be able to do it again tomorrow with the same results.<sup>1</sup>

## POSSIBLE ORIGINS OF THE UNIVERSE

Although one at first might think that there are dozens of possible origins of the universe, there are actually only three. Once we have dispensed with the idea that the universe doesn’t exist at all but is some sort of illusion, we are faced with three basic alternatives for its origin. No matter which of the hundreds of theories of origins one picks, any theory will fit into one of three possible origins. It does not take great scientific knowledge to figure out those three alternatives: it takes only logic and common sense. The three alternatives are:

1. The universe is not eternal but just popped into existence with no preexistent cause;
2. The universe is itself eternal, although it may have changed form at various times; or
3. The universe is not eternal but came into existence at a point in time and was caused by something or someone other than itself.

As a matter of fact, possibilities one and three are variations of the same idea, and so we could narrow the possibilities to two: the universe is either eternal or not eternal. We shall first deal with the idea that the universe is an illusion, and then we will be concerned primarily with ideas two and three, since science and the Bible both agree that a thing cannot cause itself or have a finite (not eternal) existence without any cause at all.

*Is the universe an illusion?* Most people would laugh at the idea that the universe is an illusion, but some philosophers and religious thinkers have argued for the idea that the universe, or all of existence as we know it, is illusory. Some assert that the world we see around us and in which we live is not a real world after all but is either a shadow or dream or hallucination or

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<sup>1</sup> Jack Wood Sears, *Conflict and Harmony in Science and the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1969), pp. 22–23.

thought of the eternal and all-pervading god. Such thinkers often say that talk about the origin of the universe is silly since the universe doesn't really exist anyway.

We can answer such a thinker simply. Does he believe *anything* exists? If he does, then what does he believe really exists (God, himself, etc.)? As soon as he tells us what he believes that has real existence, then we ask him, "Where did that real thing come from? What is its origin?" We have now faced him with the same alternatives we shall explore here: this real thing was created spontaneously with no cause; it is eternal; or it was created by something or someone outside itself.

*Did the universe cause itself?* Returning to our three viable options for the origin of the universe, we see that option one can be dealt with easily because it postulates the unscientific and unbiblical hypothesis that something (the universe) can come from nothing (self-caused). Christian philosopher Richard Purtill comments on the obvious problems with alternative one:

The real choice, of course, is between the second and third alternatives, for hardly anyone takes the first alternative seriously. Because it will be useful later, we will briefly see why the first alternative is so implausible. One thing we could say about the possibility of the universe simply coming into existence from nothing is to declare that nothing comes from nothing...but suppose that someone denies the inconceivability of something from nothing. What can we say to him? We can, of course, challenge him to cite an instance of something coming from nothing, and if he does so he may reveal a misunderstanding of what he is denying. He may, for example, cite the theory of continuous creation held by some scientific cosmologists. But this theory does not claim that matter comes into existence from nothing, but says that in certain areas of space matter is formed from energy, rather as drops of dew condense from water vapor. Even if this theory were true it would no more contradict the principle that nothing comes from nothing than the creation of dewdrops from water vapor.

Suppose, however, that the denial did not rest on a misunderstanding and the objector seriously maintained that things can just pop into existence for no reason at all. We could point out that if this happened at the beginning of the universe, there would be no reason why it should not happen now. We could point out that no one would take seriously the idea that anything—a baseball, a planet, even a snowflake—had simply popped into existence from nothing. The impossibility of this sort of thing is a basic assumption of any coherent thinking about the universe. For if any explanation of the existence of any particular thing may be it just popped into existence for no reason, and if the ultimate explanation of everything is just that, then all explanation is undermined. So to hold the pop theory of the origin of the universe is to give up any hope of rationality, or understandability in the universe. If someone claims to hold this view then he cannot be reached by rational argument, for he has abandoned rationality. But if someone abandons rationality he can have no reason for holding any view, and no reason for action except momentary passion or appetite. He has, in effect, stepped out of the human race down to the animal level. This is a solution of sorts to some problems, but then so is suicide.<sup>2</sup>

So, then, our actual choices concerning the origin of the universe are that it is either *eternal*, or that it had a *beginning*.

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<sup>2</sup> Richard Purtill, *Reason to Believe* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974), pp. 81–82.

*Is the universe eternal?* Most people who declare that the universe is eternal do not actually believe that the universe had no beginning. Usually they say it is “eternal” because they cannot imagine a time when the universe was not in existence. This universe is the only dimension with which they are familiar, and it seems impossible to think of a time when what is, wasn’t. But when one thinks more deeply, it is just as mind-stretching to conceive of an eternal universe as it is to try and imagine what might have existed before our universe. Both postulate states completely beyond our finite experience.

However, as we shall see, scientific research is mounting in support of a clear beginning to our present universe. But before we deal with that evidence, on what basis do some still postulate an eternal universe? Such people are usually of one of two persuasions: they have a religious presupposition that assumes an eternal universe, or, they mistakenly think that scientific evidence supports an eternal universe theory.

Those who accept an eternal universe because of a misunderstanding of scientific evidence show ignorance of the two most fundamental laws of physics: the law of conservation of energy (“The sum total of mass and energy in this universe is neither created nor destroyed”) and the law of entropy (“Every process in the universe tends toward nonrecoverable energy loss”). Dr. Henry Morris describes these two laws and their relevance to the question of the origin of the universe:

The basic principle of all physical science is that of the conservation and deterioration of energy. The law of energy conservation states that in any transformation of energy in a closed system from one sort into another, the total amount of energy remains unchanged. A similar law is the law of mass conservation, which states that although matter may be changed in size, state, form, etc., the total mass cannot be changed. In other words, these laws teach that no creation or destruction of matter or energy is now being accomplished anywhere in the physical universe.<sup>3</sup> ...This law of mass and energy conservation is also known as the first law of thermodynamics and is almost without controversy the most important and basic law of all physical science....

The second law of thermodynamics, of almost as great significance, enunciates the corollary law of energy deterioration. In any energy transfer or change, although the total amount of energy remains unchanged, the amount of usefulness and availability that the energy possesses is always decreased. This principle is also called the law of entropy increase, entropy being a sort of mathematical abstraction which is actually a measure of the nonavailability of the energy of a system....The same principle applies to all the stars of the universe, so that the physical universe is, beyond question, growing old, wearing out and running down.

But this law certainly testifies equally to the necessary truth that the universe had a definite beginning. If it is growing old, it must once have been young; if it is wearing out, it must once have been new; if it is running down, it must first have been wound up.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Mass and energy are not necessarily independently constant, but the sum total of mass and energy together is constant.

<sup>4</sup> Henry M. Morris, *The Bible and Modern Science* (Chicago: Moody, 1968), pp. 11–13.

## THE “BIG BANG” THEORY

Modern scientific cosmology centers on the Big Bang theory for the origin of the universe. This theory, which says that the universe began with a huge explosion, provides convincing explanations for certain observable phenomena. First, the red shifts in the light coming from different galaxies indicate (via the Doppler effect) that those more distant are traveling away from us at a faster speed than closer ones. When one calculates these speeds backwards, it appears that all the galaxies originated from the same point in space and time. Second, in 1965 astronomers detected faint radio waves coming equally from all directions of the universe. This is now thought to be the “echo” of the Big Bang.

Though the idea of the universe having a beginning was repugnant to many atheistic scientists, they began to admit that, taken together, these facts compelled the abandonment of the Steady State theory of the universe. Noted agnostic astronomer Robert Jastrow said the evidence points to one conclusion: “The universe had a beginning.”<sup>5</sup>

This conclusion did not go down easily. Phillip Morrison of MIT said in a BBC film on cosmology, “I find it hard to accept the Big Bang theory; I would like to reject it.” And many other scientists said much the same thing. But the facts cannot be ignored, and Jastrow goes on to say,

This is an exceedingly strange development, unexpected by all but the theologians. They have always accepted the word of the Bible: In the beginning God created heaven and earth....For the scientist who has lived by his faith in the power of reason, the story ends like a bad dream. He has scaled the mountains of ignorance; he is about to conquer the highest peak; as he pulls himself over the final rock, he is greeted by a band of theologians who have been sitting there for centuries.<sup>6</sup>

But the Big Bang theory is not entirely satisfactory for many Christians. First, it suggests the universe is 10 to 15 billion years old, certainly much older than is favored by advocates of a recent creation. Second, the theory can be extended to suggest that there really was no “beginning”; merely we are in one phase of the universe’s oscillation. For instance, if there is enough mass in the universe, the gravitational pull will slow its expansion to the point—in about 70 billion years—when everything will stop its outward fling and begin to contract. Ultimately it will collapse down to its pre-bang mass and explode again. While such cycles do not preclude a creator, atheists have staked out this sliver of theoretical real estate to claim that a perpetually oscillating universe does not *require* one either. On the other hand, if the universe does not contain enough mass for gravitation to stop its expansion (and current observation has not detected enough),<sup>7</sup> then there has been only one universe...with a beginning.

So we see that scientific evidence points to two facts: matter is neither created nor destroyed, and every process in the universe tends toward a loss of available energy. The phenomena that

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<sup>5</sup> Robert Jastrow, *God and the Astronomers* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, Inc., 1978), p. 111.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 115–116.

<sup>7</sup> Michael W. Friedlander, *Astronomy: From Stonehenge to Quasars* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1985), p. 536.

testify to these two laws is testimony to the fact that the universe is not eternal but had a beginning.

*The universe had a beginning.* We have made several biblically and scientifically important observations in this chapter. We have asserted that the biblical and scientific cosmologies have more in common with each other and with truth than either has with any other religious or nonreligious cosmology. A lot has been written about “biblical cosmology.” Many have tried to say that the Bible is a geocentric cosmology. Others have said, “No, but we can’t say what it is.” I think most today would say that the Bible does not offer a cosmology, though it is clear that it does teach a cosmogomy. A *cosmology* is the way it is technically supposed to be understood and has to do with the structure and the organization of the universe. A *cosmogomy* has to do with its origin (see Rejer Hooykaas, *Religion and the Rise of Modern Science*, Eerdmans).

We have seen that it is illogical to believe that the universe is illusory. We then saw that it does not make sense scientifically or logically to say that the universe caused itself. We have just discussed the scientific reasoning behind a rejection of the eternal universe theory. We are left finally with the alternative that makes scientific and biblical sense: the universe was created (had an origin), and was created by something or someone outside itself. The remainder of this book will deal with this observation.

## CHAPTER 3

### *The Universe: A Grand Design*

We ended the last chapter with the reasonable conclusion that the universe really exists, it is not eternal, and it did not create itself. In this chapter we will observe the design apparent in the universe, which tells us something about the creator of the universe. Because of the grand, intelligent, ordered, and purposeful design and the structure and organization we see imprinted in the universe and its parts, we can extrapolate the existence of a creator who is infinite, intelligent, and purposeful.

Remember, science *observes*, it does not answer *why* questions, and so science can never really *prove* the existence of God. If we assume that there is a God, however, and that he did create the universe, and that he is the infinite, intelligent, powerful, and benevolent God the Bible says he is, then he would leave just such “traces” or “evidences” in his world as we find in our universe. We could almost say that the universe bears the “signature” of God. (See Hugh Ross’s book *The Fingerprints of God* for the latest scientific evidence of the dimensions and origins of the universe.)

## WHAT ABOUT THE DISORDER IN THE UNIVERSE?

If order, structure, and organization imply a creator, does disorder imply that, perhaps, “chance” created some things while God created others?

Not at all. When the vast reaches of the universe display such sophisticated intelligent design as scientists can observe today, the proportionately smaller degree of disorder serves as testimony to an *interruption* or *corruption* of the grand design of the universe. That is exactly what the Bible declares. God is the Creator of the universe, but he gave mankind the highest honor possible in the created order.

When I consider Thy heavens, the work of Thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which Thou hast ordained; what is man, that Thou dost take thought of him? And the son of man, that Thou dost care for him? Yet Thou hast made him a little lower than God, and dost crown him with glory and majesty! Thou dost make him to rule over the works of Thy hands; Thou hast put all things under his feet. (Psalm 8:3–6)

It is no wonder, then, that when mankind deliberately broke their relationship with God, the entire creation felt and continues to feel the effects of that corruption. From the time that Adam and Eve sinned and were banished from God’s presence, the effects of corruption have manifested themselves throughout the creation. The apostle Paul, in his letter to the Romans, said:

For the anxious longing of the creation waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will, but because of Him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now. (Romans 8:19–22)

So, then, the presence of corruption or disorganization in the universe does not negate the testimony of the overall design and organization in the universe to the existence of an intelligent and all-powerful creator.

## WHO IS THE CREATOR?

We can turn to the Bible for a clear description of the Creator of the universe, and of the manner in which he created everything. The Bible is not primarily a science text, but rather the revelation of God to mankind. It is our faith that it doesn’t err scientifically. In addition, the creation of the universe is one of the mighty acts of God and so is alluded to in several places in Scripture. The apostle Paul described the Creator as “the God who made the world and all things in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands; neither is He served by human hands, as though He needed anything, since He Himself gives all life and breath and all things” (Acts 17:24–25). This is how the Creator has described himself: “I, the Lord, am the maker of all things, stretching out the heavens by Myself, and spreading out the earth all alone” (Isaiah 44:24).

In later chapters we will discuss science and the biblical account of human creation. Here we will concern ourselves with the major claims of Genesis 1 regarding the origin of the universe.

## **DATING AND THE BIBLE**

There are Christian scholars who believe that the Bible sets very definite limits on the age of the universe, the earth, and mankind. There are also many non-Christian scholars who dismiss any biblical notion of creation because they believe the Bible specifically limits the age of the universe, the earth, and mankind. Before we deal specifically with Genesis 1, we need to explain our own understanding of the Bible's dating of origins.

In my opinion, the age of the universe, the earth, and mankind is not specifically limited or determined by Scripture. I believe that every valid and reasonable interpretation of relevant Scripture passages can argue either for a very ancient creation or a more recent one. We respect serious Bible scholars on both sides of the argument, as long as those scholars hold to reasonable explanations for their convictions, and as long as their convictions are based on belief in the inerrancy of Scripture. The important thing is that no biblical interpretation should deny the *evidence* (not necessarily the *assumptions*) of science. Christian author James Jauncey presents a reasonable summary:

Although there has been some conflict between science and religion for centuries, the problem did not come out into clear relief until the end of the eighteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth. That was the time when the new geological discoveries were being made. It soon became possible that instead of an earth six thousand years old, as it had been generally believed, it could have gone back millions of years. This seemed to many people a direct challenge to the biblical message.

As we see it now, this point of conflict was rather unnecessary. Most of it was due to the rather unfortunate researches of an Irish archbishop named Ussher in the seventeenth century. Apparently he was also an amateur mathematician. As the result of his calculations, he concluded that creation occurred in 4004 B.C. Since he was an archbishop, most Christian people assumed he was correct. The date soon appeared in the margins of Bibles and still exists in many Bibles today.

The Bible makes no such stipulation. It simply says that in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. According to this it could just as easily have been millions of years ago as just a few thousand years ago. You can see that the problem was science versus Ussher rather than science versus the Bible. The point no longer raises serious difficulty.

## **CREATION REFLECTS GOD'S DESIGN**

For the rest of the chapter, we will examine the first creative claims of Genesis 1 concerning the origin of the universe. That will give us an outline of the biblical creation of cosmology and its harmony with the scientific creation cosmology. We believe there is no final conflict between scientific evidence and the biblical record. But there is often conflict between flawed scientific theories and the biblical record, and/or between scientific evidence and faulty interpretation of the Bible.

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. And the earth was formless and void, and darkness was over the surface of the deep; and the Spirit of God was moving over the surface of the waters. Then God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light. And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. And God called the

light day, and the darkness He called night....Then God said, “Let there be an expanse in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters.” And God made the expanse, and separated the waters which were below the expanse from the waters which were above the expanse; and it was so....Then God said, “Let the waters below the heavens be gathered into one place, and let the dry land appear”; and it was so. (Genesis 1:1–9)

That statement of God’s order of creation on the earth, offering a kind of harmony between the biblical account and scientific evidence, is a testimony to the creative power of God. (The origin of life will be discussed in the next chapter.)

## **GOD CREATED THE PHYSICAL UNIVERSE**

Genesis 1 rejects the view that the universe is eternal. The heavens and the earth (the universe) are not eternal. They “began to be,” or were created. If one looks at one postulate of science (“matter can neither be created nor destroyed”<sup>1</sup> one could assume falsely that the universe is eternal. However, that postulate must be understood with its requisite presupposition and in conjunction with another fundamental postulate of science. The presupposition to the first postulate is that within this system, the universe, matter can neither be created nor destroyed. It says nothing about the origin of the matter that now exists and does not deny that the matter that now exists did come into being at some time. The second postulate of science which correlates to this first one is that of *entropy*, or the scientific observation that every process in the universe results in a product with less usable energy than was available before the process. In other words, everything is slowing down, cooling off, losing its dynamic potential. If the matter we have now cannot be created or destroyed, and if all matter is losing its available energy, then the claim of Genesis 1:1 that the heavens and the earth (the universe) were created is substantiated by scientific observation.

In 1944, Christian scientist Peter W. Stoner noted the correlation between Genesis 1:1 and the newly emerging scientific evidence that became known as the “Big Bang” theory:

*All Stars Had a Beginning.* The radiation of our sun is apparently produced by the loss of about 4,200,000 tons of mass a second. Only about 1/200th part of this is recovered. This means that the sun is running down. The same can be said for all of the other stars. If the stars are all running down, they must have had a beginning. They could not have always existed, for if four million tons of mass are added to the sun each second for an infinite period of past time you would have an infinite mass and our sun would have started by filling all space. The same can be said for each of the one hundred billion stars in each of the trillions of galaxies. This is impossible. Therefore, every star had a beginning.

Genesis 1:1 does not state a time when the universe was created. As far as scriptural evidence is concerned it does not matter whether everything started five or six billion years ago, ten billion years ago, one hundred billion years ago, or any other assigned time....

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<sup>1</sup> The discovery that matter and energy are interconvertible means that matter can disappear if an equivalent amount of energy appears and vice-versa. Albert Einstein expressed the equivalence of matter and energy in a now-famous equation,  $E=mc^2$ , where E is energy, m is the mass of equivalent matter, and c is the speed of light.

This evidence is so strong that many astronomers are freely talking about the *day* of creation. They are even forming theories as to how the universe was created. Some speculation seems to hinge about the concept that the universe was created from a tremendous amount of energy, probably in the form of light. One of these theories would have this energy change to matter in a remarkably short time, requiring no longer than one-half hour.

Thus Genesis 1:1 is no longer contradictory to science, but completely agrees with both the best facts and theories of science today.<sup>2</sup>

Genesis 1 goes on to state that the earth was without form, and void. While scientific theory has gone back and forth with myriad ideas about the formation of the solar system, the theories that appear to fit the evidence best, and appear to be most reasonable, are also those theories in harmony with this statement in Genesis. For instance, the statement in Genesis 1:3 where God said, “Let there be light,” could be seen to dovetail with a universe born in a fiery explosion with matter only condensing out later.

Similarly the Nebular Hypothesis theorizes that solar systems developed as rotating gaseous bodies in space slowly cooled. As they cooled, they rotated more and more quickly, reducing their area and increasing their mass, until they were able to form separate rotating planets.

One popular theory is that star systems or planetary systems are descendants or developments of dark (or black) nebulas. This is in harmony with Genesis 1:2. Having our earth produced from a dark nebula would also account for the evidence that the earth was once much hotter than it is now, and is continually cooling. For example, igneous rock is rock that was once molten (lava) and then cooled to a solid form.

Peter W. Stoner summarized his ideas concerning the scientific veracity of Genesis 1 in this way:

We have shown that by very recent developments of science Genesis 1 agrees perfectly with all of the sciences concerned. There does not appear to be a contradiction of any magnitude still remaining. There is, however, this extremely strong argument, or proof, for the Bible’s truth.<sup>3</sup>

*The grand design of the universe is mirrored in the creation of the earth.* We have seen from our brief survey of the origin section of Genesis 1 and from our comparison of that section with today’s science, that an intelligent, benevolent, all-powerful creator, outside this universe, is the author of both the universe and the Bible.

The scientist who postulates chance alone as responsible for the origin of the universe in all its complexity is negating any idea of real order, design, predictability, or pattern in the universe. The best that such a person can postulate is a random and meaningless universe that gives a false *illusion* of order, design, predictability, and pattern. And yet that same scientist presupposes and relies on the existence of logic and order in almost everything he does or thinks. Science is based on the premise that there is order in the universe and that the order in the universe can be

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<sup>2</sup> Peter W. Stoner, *Science Speaks* (Chicago: Moody, 1969), pp. 25–26. See also Hugh Ross, *Fingerprints of God*.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 114–115.

observed, measured, and used to understand the world in which we live. If there were no order in the universe, there could be no science.

If, however, an intelligent designer, God, created the universe with inherent design and order, then the scientist's task is *not* futile; we can learn a lot from science about our fascinating world.

## CHAPTER 4

### *The Origin of Life*

*The wonders of new life!* The beginning of new human life is breathtakingly beautiful. After the egg is fertilized by the sperm, everything that the new person will become develops from that one initial cell. Just twenty-one days after fertilization, the embryo has the basic form of a human being. Two months after fertilization the face appears; arms and legs, with their finger and toe buds, are clearly discernible. Three months after fertilization, at twelve weeks, tiny fingernails and genitalia are distinct.

At the end of an average nine months' gestation, the new little person is born, a living, breathing, growing, and, most uniquely, a thinking individual. New life, especially human life, is a miracle. The fascinating intricacy of reproduction cannot be the result of chance.

Scientists can't answer the *why* of life. Why did life develop? Why did life differentiate? Why do various life forms resemble each other? Why are there distinctions among life forms? Those who give the answer "evolution" are not *explaining*, they are only *describing* one possible chain of events. They are not answering *why*. In the final analysis, life remains a mystery to the scientist.

### **CELLULAR LIFE**

When we look at a cell, we find an incredibly complex structure. The cell absorbs food, secretes waste, and even can produce by division. In the center of the cell is the nucleus, which contains at least part of the information the cell needs to function properly. The nucleus contains the chromosomes, long strands whose most important component is DNA (deoxyribonucleic acid). DNA is the actual genetic material that determines hereditary characteristics. A DNA molecule looks somewhat like a twisted ladder. When the cell divides, the "ladder" splits lengthwise down the center, and each half forms a separate ladder.

Chromosomes consist of molecules; each molecule consists of a number of atoms. Most living cells contain molecules that consist of combinations of six elements: carbon, hydrogen, oxygen, nitrogen, phosphorus, and sulfur. The amazing complexity, diversity, and order we see in the living world around us has these six basic elements as its building blocks.

The Bible does not contradict this scientific observation, as we see in Genesis 2:7 (“the Lord God formed man of dust from the ground”) and Genesis 3:19 (“...till you return to the ground, because from it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return”).

But living organisms are more than just chemical elements arranged in particular patterns. A corpse, for example, still consists of the same chromosomes, the same molecules, the same atoms, the same elements, as a living person. But the corpse is not living. Life is gone. Scientists can observe differences between living and nonliving things. But they cannot *explain* what life is.

Human life is different from other forms of life, no matter how much modern materialists may insist that a human being is no more than a sophisticated machine. Only humans have self-cognizance, the ability to recognize themselves and their relationship to the rest of reality. That capacity is part of what the Bible means when it says we are made in God’s *image*:

Then God said, “Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.” And God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him, male and female He created them. (Genesis 1:26–27)

According to the Bible, only humans are made “in God’s image.” Only humans possess the will and self-consciousness that distinguish us so sharply from even the most intelligent animals.

In this chapter we will explore the scientific and biblical scenarios for the origin of life. How did life begin on earth? What kind of life was it? What was required for life to begin? How do scientific speculations on the origin of life compare to the biblical account of the origin of life?

## **THE BIBLICAL ACCOUNT OF THE ORIGIN OF LIFE**

According to Genesis, life was created by God on the third “day” of creation. (It is not necessary here to determine the length of the “days” of Genesis. We refer interested readers to the Recommended Reading for books on that subject.) As we saw in chapter 3, God first created the heavens and the earth, dark and formless. He created light, and he brought light to the earth. As the earth cooled, some of the water vapor in which the earth was enveloped condensed, forming the oceans. Further cooling variegated the earth’s surface, producing continents, mountains, valleys, and oceans. On the third day God created the first life on earth.

Then God said, “Let the earth sprout vegetation, plants yielding seed, and fruit trees bearing fruit after their kind, with seed in them, on the earth”; and it was so. And the earth brought forth vegetation, plants yielding seed after their kind, and trees bearing fruit, with seed in them, after their kind. (Genesis 1:11–12)

Even though Genesis records that light first shone from the sun on the fourth day, after the creation of plant life, there was already light by which photosynthesis could take place (Genesis 1:3–5). Also, plants were created with reproductive capability from the beginning.

Before God created plant life, he created the environment that was capable of supporting that life. He created cycles of light and darkness, water, and atmosphere. Although the Bible clearly states that God *created* the first plant life, most scientists dissent sharply. Starting with the same

friendly environment as described above, scientists postulate the spontaneous creation of life, by natural processes alone.

## **EVOLUTIONARY THEORY OF THE ORIGIN OF LIFE**

According to evolutionary theory, a few billion years ago the then young earth had an atmosphere completely different from ours. Since it lacked free oxygen, scientists at first thought it contained methane, ammonia, hydrogen, and water vapor. Most have since revised their theories to suggest that the atmosphere primarily consisted of carbon dioxide, water vapor, and nitrogen. By the action of ultraviolet rays, electrical discharges, and a continuous bombardment of highly charged particles, molecules were formed spontaneously and randomly. The molecules included sugars, amino acids, and pieces of DNA. More and more pieces clustered together and formed increasingly larger molecules and molecular chains. These giant molecules then reacted until a primitive cell stage was reached, again through a random process. Finally, those gelatinous clusters of proto-cells absorbed other molecules which, in combination with the gelatinous substances, at some point began to reproduce. Thus developed the first living cells. Those first living cells fed on the molecules still left in the “primeval soup.”

Soon photosynthetic cells developed that produced and released into the atmosphere a necessary ingredient for virtually all life forms: oxygen. That oxygen, and the metabolism of those first living cells, destroyed the primitive molecules and changed the primeval atmosphere into the atmosphere as we know it. Once life had formed, the earth’s environment was so altered by the introduction of large amounts of oxygen that life could no longer develop spontaneously on earth. On the other hand, some scientists argue for a primeval *oxidizing* atmosphere that would have oxidized organic molecules as soon as they formed.

What are the chances that life could have developed spontaneously in the hypothetical primeval soup by chance? Take a single bacteria cell. One bacterium contains some fifteen hundred different enzymes, each of which in turn consist of several hundred amino acids. Those various amino acids must be arranged in precisely the right sequence. The chance that a given enzyme, consisting of two hundred amino acids (of which there are twenty different kinds) could develop by chance is one in  $20^{200}$ . In other words, the chance is practically nil. And that is only one of the necessary fifteen hundred enzymes for *one* bacterium. Even if the original bacterium were much less complex than modern ones (some theorize that they had as few as seventy proteins about one hundred amino acids long), the chances are nearly zero. Furthermore, the origin of a single living cell, then, would require billions of kilos of each of the many different enzymes and DNA molecules, combining and recombining randomly, until, against all probability, the right random combination occurred.

## **SPONTANEOUS GENERATION**

A few centuries ago, people generally were convinced that life developed spontaneously everywhere. This is known as the theory of spontaneous generation. It was believed, for example, that flies could develop from rotting meat. It took two centuries for the scientific opponents of this idea to convince everyone that life can come only from life. Numerous experiments showed that if the proper sanitary precautions were taken, such as preventing flies from laying eggs in the meat, no new life developed. Finally, in the 1860s Louis Pasteur took

broth, thoroughly boiled it, then sealed it off to prevent contamination by new microbes. The broth stayed clear and sterile. There was no new life. The universally accepted scientific postulate became: Life comes only from living things.

Curiously, the same scientists who dogmatically support that postulate also believe that life *did* develop from nonlife several billion years ago. Such scientists realize the inconsistency of assuming its past possibility while denying its present possibility. Their solution: Conditions must have been radically different then from what they are now. It is important to note that there is no conclusive evidence that conditions then were radically different. Such a difference is totally unverified by any evidence. Yet most introductory science texts present the existence of such a primeval soup and primeval atmosphere as *fact*.

But certainly some have *tried* to prove that life can still come from nonlife.

## LIFE IN A TEST TUBE?

During the 1950s, the work of scientist Stanley Miller attracted attention. He was attempting to create the simple building blocks of life, amino acids. To do that was a necessary preliminary to attempting to create life from nonlife in a laboratory setting. Miller duplicated the atmosphere that evolutionists had postulated as providing the setting for the origin of life. Then he succeeded in producing certain molecules that are important building blocks of life. He accomplished that by subjecting the atmosphere of methane, ammonia, hydrogen, and water vapor to electrical charges.

Miller's experiments not only produced molecules that are important building blocks for life, they also produced the biologically unusable "right-handed" molecules. Miller's experiments complicated rather than simplified matters for evolutionists. Did the primeval atmosphere also produce both kinds of molecules? If so, how did any life-building molecules dissociate themselves from the other molecules long enough to react and produce the first living cell? And if the atmosphere was not the same as that in Miller's experiments, how do we know what it was and why it produced only life-building molecules? The problems with Miller's experiments proved greater than the solution he sought to provide for the origin of life.

As mentioned earlier, most scientists now agree that the primeval atmosphere contained, not the methane, ammonia, hydrogen, and water vapor used by Miller, but carbon dioxide, water vapor, and nitrogen, and some argue for the presence of free oxygen. Furthermore, remember that *Miller never produced one single living cell*. He produced a diversity of organic molecules, far removed from the complexity of a living cell.

Philosopher Robert Augros and theoretical physicist George Stanciu point out the significance of this complexity:

Matter has many capacities but also definite limitations. We can distinguish two categories of forms that matter is able to assume. One kind of form is produced by an agency within matter itself according to recognized laws of physics and chemistry....

Another category of form is that which does not originate from any agency within the matter itself. For example, a block of ice is carved into a statue of Poseidon. The ice receives this form in a purely passive way, having no natural inclination to it....The determination to this particular form of Poseidon must come from an outside cause—the artist in this case. All human artifacts are examples of this kind of form imposed on matter from without.

Into which of these categories falls organic matter? Where shall we place the form of the adult horse or the mature oak tree? The forms of the elements or compounds arise by physical or chemical necessity. For example, hydrogen and oxygen have a natural inclination to form water. Organic forms are not produced in this way but are built according to genetic instructions. Matter has of itself no innate inclination to produce a horse or an oak tree, any more than it has an innate inclination to produce a chair or a microchip. It must be told how to produce a horse or an oak tree cell by cell, protein by protein, through chemically coded instructions. Matter can be shaped into an unlimited number of organic forms and is indifferent to all of them. Therefore, organic forms are not the product of physical or chemical necessity like the forms of compounds and elements....

Thus the organism has something in common with artistic forms....The major difference is that artistic forms have an external cause while organic forms have an internal cause. There is, therefore, in each living thing something analogous to human art....

Matter does not need special instructions to manufacture snow~flakes or sodium chloride. These forms are within its power. Not so with organic forms. Thus living forms transcend all other natural forms, not merely because of their unique activities but also because the laws of physics and chemistry alone cannot produce them.

What does produce them? What cause is responsible for the origin of the genetic code and directs it to produce animal and plant species? It cannot be matter because of itself matter has no inclination to these forms, any more than it has to the form Poseidon or to the form of a microchip or any other artifact. There must be a cause apart from matter that is able to shape and direct matter. Is there anything in our experience like this? Yes, there is: our own minds. The statue's form originates in the mind of the artist, who then subsequently shapes matter, in the appropriate way. The artist's mind is the ultimate cause of that form existing in matter, even if he or she invents a machine to manufacture the statues. For the same reason there must be a mind that directs and shapes the organic forms. Even if it does so by creating chemical mechanisms [DNA] to carry out the task with autonomy, this artist will be the ultimate cause of those forms existing in matter. This matter is God, and nature is God's handiwork.<sup>1</sup>

Even if biochemists could succeed in producing something that resembles life or even was life, this would not prove that life originated spontaneously as the result of random processes. Instead, they would have shown that life can be produced from matter and energy when that matter and energy is *directed* and *controlled* by intellectual effort and great technological skill.

## HOW DOES ENTROPY RELATE TO EVOLUTION?

As we discussed before, one of the fundamental laws of the universe is that of *entropy*, the second law of thermodynamics. Briefly stated, this means that in any general process, the amount of available or usable energy decreases or is less than what was available before the process. In cosmological terms this means that eventually the entire universe will cool, slow

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<sup>1</sup> Robert Augros and George Stanciu, *The New Biology* (Boston: Shambhala Publications, Inc., 1987), pp. 188–191. Reprinted by arrangement with Shambhala Publications, Inc., 300 Massachusetts Ave., Boston, MA 02115.

down, and be unable to use any more energy. Entropy means that processes tend toward disorganization rather than organization, toward more randomness rather than more order. Bolton Davidheiser gives this as an illustration of entropy:

When a spring-type clock is wound, energy is put into the spring as it is coiled tighter and tighter. As the spring uncoils, this energy operates the clock. But less energy is available for running the clock than was put into the spring during the winding because some of the energy dissipates as heat. In any operation, some energy is lost as heat or in some other way so that it is not useful to the process. Thus the total amount of useful energy becomes less. Scientists are certain that unless there is a creative force operating in the universe, a time will come when the sun and all the stars will burn out and the universe will have “run down” completely.

The “running down” of the universe poses a real problem for the atheists, for how could it have gotten “wound up” in the first place so that it can now be in the process of “running down”?<sup>2</sup>

When we look at evolution, we see the problem evolutionists have with reconciling evolutionary theory with the law of entropy. The development of a living cell would require that nonliving matter spontaneously organize itself “upward” to much higher degrees of order, complexity, and purposefulness. But the second law of thermodynamics counters such a trend, evidencing instead that matter never increases in the organization of life.

Evolutionists, aware of the thermodynamic dichotomy, nonetheless believe in the spontaneous development of life. They attempt to reconcile the problem by objecting that the second law is applicable in a “closed system,” i.e., a system that does not exchange or receive energy from outside itself. The earth, they maintain, is not a closed system. It is an open system that constantly receives abundant amounts of energy from the sun.

That, however, is a totally inadequate answer. Energy in and of itself contributes nothing to organization or design. Simply adding energy from the sun gives no developmental input to the random processes evolutionists describe for the origin of life. A pile of bricks and wood never would spontaneously develop into a building, no matter if the energy from the sun radiated on it for a trillion years. Matter and energy are insufficient causes of the complexity, design, and development we see around us. Walter L. Bradley of Texas A&M University demonstrates this:

It is sometimes argued that there are self-ordering tendencies in nature that may account for the observed order in living systems. Crystal formation as well as vortices (as in your bathtub when it is nearly empty) or convective heat currents are offered as examples of the self-ordering tendencies in nature. Such analogies fail to recognize that the ordering in vortices, crystals, etc. is very redundant compared to the observed ordering in living systems which is quite diverse and information intensive. The three sequences of letters below illustrate a random arrangement, a highly ordered but redundant arrangement, and a highly ordered, information intensive arrangement:

(a) random:

ACDBGEF ADGEBFC CBFGEAD

(b) ordered but redundant (like a crystal):

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<sup>2</sup> Bolton Davidheiser, *Evolution and Christian Faith* (Nutley, N.J.: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1969), p. 220.

ABCDEFGH ABCDEFGH ABCDEFGH

(c) ordered and information intensive (like DNA or protein):

THIS SEQUENCE OF LETTERS CONTAINS A MESSAGE!<sup>3</sup>

In order for a system to become more complex, it must have complexity added to it, not just energy. When Christians say that God is the Creator, they are asserting the Designer behind the design, the Intelligence behind the intelligence, the Purposer behind the purpose, and the Mind behind the complexity of the universe. The heart of our argument, and the total defect in the evolutionary argument, is that Christians have an *adequate source* for the development and complexity in the universe, while evolutionists have *no adequate source* for the world they see around them. Energy is inadequate to account for the order, complexity, purpose, and design we see in the created world around us.

## WHERE DID LIFE COME FROM?

Evolution is incapable of accounting for the complexity and design everywhere evident in living organisms. Evolutionists who take matter and energy, and to it add time, have still not answered the problem. Matter, energy, and time cannot accomplish any more than redundant order with relatively small complexity when compared to living organisms. What is needed is a designer or programmer. Christians know that Designer as God.

Following is a comparison of two common philosophical perspectives in interpreting the world and its origins.<sup>4</sup>

### Nontheistic Evolutionist

*Naturalism:* Nature is the sum total of reality. Knowledge of the world can be obtained entirely through the methods of science. There is no need to seek to explain the world in any other way.

*Uniformity:* The Uniform Process Theory states that knowledge of the present is sufficient to explain the past and to predict the future. This is done on the basis of certain natural laws which are said to be changeless. There is no divine intervention in history.

*Chance (Causalism):* Life began as the result of chance events. The end result of a chance event is a consequence rather than the achievement of a purpose. Because the present forms of life originated by chance, they could easily have arisen in some other form or not at all.

### Creationist

*Theism:* Natural science is not sufficient by itself to provide answers to life's questions (1 Corinthians 2:12–14). Part of reality can be explained only in spiritual terms (John 4:24). A complete view of reality recognizes both the natural and supernatural aspects.

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<sup>3</sup> Walter L. Bradley, "The Trustworthiness of Scripture in Areas Relating to Natural Science," in *Hermeneutics, Inerrancy, and the Bible*, ed. Earl D. Radmacher and Robert D. Preus (Grand Rapids.: Zondervan, 1984), p. 293.

<sup>4</sup> L. Duane Thurman, *How to Think about Evolution* (Downers Grove, Ill.: Inter-Varsity, 1978), p. 54.

*Sovereignty:* The world was created by God (Hebrews 11:3; Genesis 1:1; 2 Peter 3:5–6). God does not change and has created a world which obeys certain uniform natural laws (Hebrews 13:8; Proverbs 3:19–20). But the history of the universe is not explicable in terms of natural laws alone because God is not bound by those laws (Matthew 19:26).

*Purpose (Teleology):* The world was created by God for his purpose. All history is a working out of God’s plan (Colossians 1:16–17; Ephesians 1:9–12). Mankind was made in the image of God’s own divine personality (Genesis 1:26; Romans 8:28–29).

## CHAPTER 5

### *Evolution or Creation?*

Although modern evolutionary theory is much more sophisticated than what Charles Darwin devised, his name is still the one that for most people evokes ideas of the “ape-to-man” theory. In this chapter we will discuss how the theory developed and how it contrasts with biblical creationism.

Some readers may be surprised to learn that not everything labeled with the word *evolution* is necessarily opposed to Christianity. First of all, some Christian scientists feel that there is ample evidence of *microevolution*, insofar as it describes relatively minute changes within species, while rejecting what might be called *macroevolution*, the development of a new, higher specie from an older, less complex specie. Also, some Christians in science regard themselves as “theistic evolutionists”—although I do not regard “theistic evolution” as a biblically faithful position. Some well-qualified, intelligent scientists reject evolution in favor of the biblical creation account. Although we will not exhaust the study of the evolution/creation controversy in these few pages, we will try to provide a general background to the subject, along with some useful ways of looking at the controversy.

### **LIFE OF CHARLES DARWIN**

Charles Darwin, the father of evolutionary theory, was born in 1809 in England. He began his university studies in medicine, following in his physician father’s footsteps. Then he changed his major to theology, looking forward to enjoying life as a quiet country clergyman. At Cambridge, Darwin studied geology with Adam Sedgwick and botany with John Stevens Henslow. When his theological studies did not inspire him to seek a pastorate after graduation, he returned to his father’s house with few concrete plans for the future. Then Darwin was offered a post as botanist on the ship *Beagle*, which was embarking on a five-year voyage to prepare navigational charts. During that voyage, which began in 1831, Darwin’s religious beliefs were replaced by a general materialism, which undoubtedly influenced his developing thesis of evolution. Bolton Davidheiser quotes Darwin’s description of his loss of religious belief:

I had gradually come by this time to see that the Old Testament from its manifestly false history of the world...was no more to be trusted than the sacred books of the Hindus, or the beliefs of the barbarian....I gradually came to disbelieve in Christianity as a divine revelation.<sup>1</sup>

The part of his journey that had the most impact on Darwin's evolutionary scheme was the time the ship spent in the Galapagos Islands off the west coast of South America. There Darwin observed finches that were similar to mainland finches, but different enough that they were unable to interbreed with mainland birds or even with birds on neighboring islands. Later Darwin used these finches as examples of adaptive evolution, a microcosm of the grand evolutionary design by which he believed all life had developed to its current complexity.

Darwin believed that the finches had been blown by storm winds from the mainland to the islands and there developed significant differences through isolation and interbreeding.

The idea is that the birds got to the islands accidentally from the mainland, by the action of a storm or some freak of nature, and developed differently because they were isolated on separate islands. It is strange indeed, though apparently overlooked for convenience, that they would accidentally cross hundreds of miles of ocean and then remain isolated on small islands within sight of each other. If a storm carried them so far to sea, it is to be expected that sooner or later other storms would mix them up on the islands. William Beebe, the noted naturalist, did not believe the birds came to the islands by accident from South America, but that they came by way of a former land bridge from Central America.<sup>2</sup>

Darwin did not publish his complete theory of evolution until he was fifty. The theory was described in *The Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection or the Preservation of Favored Races in the Struggle for Life* (1859).

Darwin died in 1882, years after the first furor over his revolutionary new ideas had died down. He spent the last third of his life refining and promoting his theory of evolution.

## **DARWIN'S EVOLUTIONARY THEORY**

Darwin's general theory of evolution, as first described in his *Origin of Species*, can be summarized in six points (here somewhat simplified).

First, Darwin recognized, as all observant people would, that species differ. Second, he observed that the mortality rate among the infants of species was extremely high, and appeared to be compensated for by large numbers of births. Third, Darwin proposed his now-famous "struggle for existence" theory: Offspring struggle to be of the survivor class instead of dying. Fourth, given that this struggle exists, it stands to reason that those individuals who survive must be more fit than those who die. (This Darwinian concept is usually referred to as "survival of the fittest.") Fifth, Darwin assumed that fit individuals who reproduced passed on the genetic characteristics that had made them better able to survive to their offspring. Sixth, Darwin

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<sup>1</sup> Quoted in Bolton Davidheiser, *Evolution and Christian Faith* (Nutley, N.J.: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1969), p. 67.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 61.

concluded that new species arise by the continued survival and reproduction of the individuals best fitted or adapted to their own particular environment.<sup>3</sup>

Most reasonable people would not disagree with all of Darwin's points; one cannot really argue with the first two. There are many species, and most populations produce more offspring than actually survive to maturity. There is strong disagreement, however, even among non-Christian scientists, as to whether there is a true "struggle" for existence of the sort Darwin deemed vital to his conclusions. It is also generally *not* true that only the fittest survive. John W. Klotz refers to this criticism of Darwin's theory:

There are also many instances in which the fittest individual does not survive. Often the survival of one individual and the death of another is a matter of chance. This criticism of Darwin's theory was pointed out very early. It may be that one individual is not exposed to the same environmental stresses as another member of the same species. In this way he may survive, even though he may not be as fit as his less fortunate neighbor. This is especially true where animals are the victims of predators. Here it is often a matter of chance which individual supplies the predator with his dinner.<sup>4</sup>

The most significant problem with Darwin's theory is his conclusion that fitness characteristics are passed on to an individual's descendants. Many different characteristics might make an individual more fit than another of the same species group. However, some of those characteristics usually do *not* represent *genetic*, or inheritable, characteristics. As a simple example, we could think of an Olympic runner. While some portion of his fitness for running could be genetic and therefore inheritable (being born with large lung capacity, etc.), the most significant factor in his achieving Olympic status is what he *does* with his "raw materials." Large lung capacity is totally irrelevant if he never uses it but instead whiles away his time watching television. Many of his runner's advantages arise from training, self-discipline, and hard work. Such factors are not inheritable.

Although Darwin produced a comparatively well-researched, well-thought-out proposal, it is reasonable to take issue with some of his most important propositions and conclusions. His theory has consequently undergone many modifications.

## HUGO DE VRIES—THE MUTATION THEORY

A Dutch botanist, Hugo de Vries, built on the genetic studies of a monk named Gregor Mendel, who had experimented with crossbreeding garden peas. De Vries' work concerning mutations is still used by many evolutionists today. In 1905 he published *Species and Varieties: Their Origin by Mutation*. This book described his work with a species of evening primrose. He cultivated several previously wild varieties and produced what he called a completely new species.

De Vries was convinced that new species arise by beneficial mutations, which are then passed on to succeeding generations. However, many scientists today agree that the different

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<sup>3</sup> Adapted from John W. Klotz, *Genes, Genesis, and Evolution* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1970), pp. 34–35.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 34.

kinds of plants produced in de Vries' experiments were not new species but merely varieties of the same species. In addition, his theory was open to even more severe criticism, as Klotz notes:

Most, if not all, of de Vries' "mutations" were not mutations as we know them today, but were due to the breeding out of recessive characters present in the stock but not showing themselves (similar to the birth of an albino child to two normal parents both of whom were "carriers" of the trait) and to chromosomal rearrangements within the cells....

Today we do see mutations in various plants and animals. These are sudden, abrupt changes in the organism which are due to changes in the genes. They are inherited, and hence are passed down from generation to generation. For instance, in the latter part of the eighteenth century there appeared in a purebred New England flock of sheep a lamb with very short, bowed legs. This lamb was bred and gave rise to the Ancon breed of sheep. It is obvious that this character would be one desirable to the breeder. Such an animal cannot jump fences and cannot run fast and thus lose weight. Incidentally, it is also obvious that such a character is unfavorable to the sheep. Such a sudden inheritable variation is known as a mutation.

There have been literally thousands of such mutations, some striking and significant, and others insignificant. Like the Ancon mutation in the sheep, however, most of these mutations have proved to be harmful to the organism.<sup>5</sup>

In the modern theory of evolution, natural selection and genetic manipulation (through breeding and/or mutations) are the basic mechanisms by which change and development are accomplished. Evolution, in that view, is the general cause of all development and differentiation among plant and animal life throughout the history of life on earth.

## TERMINOLOGY

We should define some terms we are using. Much of the conflict between the evolution and creation views arises because both evolutionists and creationists tend to misunderstand what the other is saying.

*Evolution* generally means a process of change in a certain direction. When we refer to evolution, we mean that life as we know it today has come through a process (and is still in the process) of development from simple to more complex, single to multiple, "lower" to "higher" forms of life. Scientists also use the term *evolution* to describe a variety of lesser degrees of change. Some scientists use *evolution* to refer to what most people think of as individual variations within a "family" grouping of a particular species. Those smaller changes are often referred to as *microevolution*.

Finally, evolution can refer to our initial definition above, where there is change from one species to another, or changes in other major categories of organisms. Such major change is often referred to as *macroevolution*.

It is also important to understand the terms *species* and *mutation*. In further discussion, in fact, we will find that some evolutionary arguments fall because of a faulty understanding of

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid., pp. 38–39.

what a species is or what a mutation is. Duane Thurman has a good, concise definition of *species*.

A species is a basic unit of classification which can be recognized and placed in a classification system without even considering evolution. The concept originated independent of evolutionary theory. It is defined in several different ways, depending upon the backgrounds and purposes of the investigators. Some, such as Linnaeus, defined a species as a group of individuals which looked alike. He said there was an unbridged gap (that is, a lack of common characteristics) between species....

A species may be characterized in several different ways, but most definitions agree on the following: a species has certain designated characteristics in common; it usually does not interbreed with other species in nature; and if members of one species do breed with members of another, they usually will not produce fertile offspring.<sup>6</sup>

Most scientists agree on the basic definition of a *mutation*: an abrupt change in the genetic code of an individual that can then be passed on to successive generations (as either a dominant or recessive trait). Disagreement occurs, however, when one discusses the significance of mutations in (1) the development of new varieties and/or species and in (2) whether a particular “new” characteristic is the result of a true mutation, i.e., it is not just an unobserved normal genetic trait.

Mutations are important to evolutionists because the presence of mutations is used to account for a small divergent group within a species being able to survive and adapt to a hostile change in the environment. We must remember, however, that the vast majority of mutations observed in the laboratory and field are *harmful* mutations. Far from promoting survival, they often ensure the demise of the affected individuals.

An example from language may be helpful in demonstrating how an organism may undergo certain dramatic mutations within its kind while being unable to evolve into a new kind.<sup>7</sup>

A sentence, like an organism, is a complex system. To be functional, a sentence must avoid ungrammatical or nonsense strings of letters just as an organism must avoid nonfunctional variations.

Consider the sentence, “He sat on the bed,” and all the possible variations that one could make while changing only *one* letter at a time. Each change must create a logical and grammatically correct sentence.

*He sat on the bed.*

She sat on the bed.

She sat *in* the bed.

We sat on the bed.

We sat *in* the bed.

We *sit* in the bed.

We *sit* on the bed.

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<sup>6</sup> L. Duane Thurman, *How to Think about Evolution* (Downers Grove, Ill.: Inter-Varsity, 1978), pp. 90–91.

<sup>7</sup> This example is adapted and expanded by Dave and Neta Jackson in *Hot Topics Youth Electives* (Elgin, Ill.: David C. Cook Publishing Co., 1990), pp. 54–55. It was originally from Michael Denton, *Evolution: a Theory in Crisis* (Bethesda, Md.: Alder and Alder, 1985), pp. 88–89.

We sit on the beds.  
We sat on the beds.  
He sat in the bed.

If you were to change *bed* to *bid* (as in delaying a financial transaction), you could get another set of variations. *Bid* could then be changed to *bit* (as in drill bit—it would be rather uncomfortable to sit on one, but logically and grammatically correct) for another round. *Bed* could also be changed to *bud* (as in flower bud).

The options are quite impressive. On the other hand, notice that limits are clearly reached rather quickly. For instance, it is impossible to evolve such a closely related sentence as “He sat on the chair” without passing through four, nonfunctional mutations:

*He sat on the bed.*  
He sat on the *ced*.  
He sat on the *chd*.  
He sat on the *cha*.  
He sat on the *chai*.  
He sat on the *chair*.

From a biological perspective, four such mutants couldn’t survive any better than the four intermediate sentences communicate anything meaningful. It’s the futility of intermediary stages that limit macroevolution. A change must be functionally beneficial—or at least not a handicap—for it to last.

## THE EVOLUTIONARY PICTURE

By *macroevolution* we mean the process by which simple organisms developed into complex organisms over a long period of time, transforming primitive life forms into the complex and varied life forms in our world today. If we were to draw a word picture of macroevolution, it would be something like this:

We start with the primitive, nonliving early earth environment. Macroevolutionists assume that nonliving things developed into living things. (See chapter 4 for further information on the origin of life.) Since they believe that all living forms in evidence today developed from common original ancestors, macroevolutionists assume that all plants and animals are somehow germinally related. Macro~evolutionists see the progress of evolution as a sort of tree or family lineage, with just a few main branches. For example, all of the invertebrates are related; they represent an ancient part of the tree of life. From the invertebrates developed the vertebrates, all of whom are closely interrelated (and related by ancestry to the invertebrates). Finally, macroevolutionists divide the vertebrates into their own chronologically occurring “families” of amphibians, reptiles, birds, and mammals. This is often referred to as the “General Theory of Evolution.”

Macroevolutionists describe this tree in detail and yet *have no hard evidence of its actual development*. Almost all aspects of the general theory are supported only by inference or by interpreting the data with the presupposition that evolution is already an established fact.

To summarize the most important features of and the contrasts between the evolutionary model and the creation model, we reproduce below a concise chart.<sup>8</sup>

*Creation Model*

*Evolution Model*

By acts of a creator

By naturalistic mechanistic processes due to properties inherent in inanimate matter

Creation of basic plant and animal kinds with ordinal characteristics complete in first representatives

Origin of all living things from a single living source which itself arose from inanimate matter. Origin of each kind from an ancestral form by slow gradual change.

Variation and speciation limited within each kind

Unlimited variation. All forms genetically related.

Can new species develop, which are clearly defined and separated from other similar groups? That would be consistent with creation. Or does genetic evidence support the possibility of the formation of new species *ad infinitum*, and across the boundaries of existing groups? That would be consistent with evolution.

The findings of genetics do not point in the direction of evolution, but rather that the families must have come into being independently of each other. Molecular genetics especially has provided strong support for this conclusion. Molecular research has brought to light certain kinds of “shifts” in the relationship of genetic factors. Such shifts can form the basis of the development of new species (i.e., within a family—which is consistent with the biblical account). Nowhere, however, have scientists been able to observe consistent and major sequences of genetic changes that would mirror macroevolutional development in the past. In fact, the most significant and species-changing genetic trends are usually produced artificially by the direct intervention of humans who interbreed and hybridize plants and other organisms for various purposes. The deliberate manipulation of genetic material for a designed end does not reflect blind chance and random development.

## **SPECIES DEVELOPMENT AND THE GENESIS ACCOUNT OF CREATION**

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<sup>8</sup> Duane T. Gish, *Evolution: The Fossils Say No* (San Diego: Creation-Life, 1978), p. 50.

We do not believe that the biblical account of creation denies any change in species as the result of human intervention or selective adaptation or crossbreeding. That is neither the intent nor the vocabulary of Genesis. When Genesis 1 states that God created the plants and animals to reproduce “after their own *kind*,” it does not mean that the species type and limits are always inviolate. The Genesis word *kind* is a general term, having application in different contexts to species or families. Klotz discusses the Hebrew term in Genesis and its relationship to the scientific term species:

We shall have to agree that the Bible does not use the term “species.” The Hebrew word used is *min*, which is probably best translated “kind.” The word does not mean species in the same sense that we use the term today....

Accepting the definition of species given [previously], we shall certainly have to admit that there have been new species.... True, most of the demonstrable instances have arisen in very artificial situations and under laboratory conditions, so that it is unlikely that they could have arisen in that way out in nature. Nevertheless they are new species in the generally accepted sense of the term. And it is not correct to say that no new species have arisen since Creation.<sup>9</sup>

Understanding the Genesis *kind* and the ambiguity in scientific classification systems removes the artificial dichotomy between *limited speciation* and *special creation*.

## CONCLUSION

We conclude our survey of evolution and creation by stating that *there is no direct evidence of the macroevolution proposed by scientists who presuppose a naturalistic and mechanistic world*. On the contrary, many pieces of evidence pointed to by evolutionists can be used by creationists to support the creation model. Thurman provides a summary for our present discussion:

Recent research still has not produced the evidence called for.... The evolutionist crosses these gaps by faith in evolution in the same way that a creationist crosses the gaps by faith in God. It is not a matter of whether or not one has faith, because either choice requires it. It should be understood that the object of faith is one of the biggest differences between evolutionists and creationists.<sup>10</sup>

## CHAPTER 6

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<sup>9</sup> Klotz, *Genes*, pp. 72–73.

<sup>10</sup> Thurman, *Evolution*, p. 112.

## *The Testimony of the Fossils*

Over the last 150 years, scientists have found and catalogued millions of fossils (remains of plants and animals). Many fossils are records of plants and animals that are now extinct. Many others are identical to plants and animals alive today. Fossils are scattered through many different rock formations. Klotz gives a good description of fossils:

Fossils are the hard parts of plants and animals which have been preserved by petrification. Sometimes bones and teeth are preserved by having their pores filled with mineral matter, and in this case the hard material of the bone or tooth remains intact and unaltered. In other cases the original substance of the hard part is dissolved away and replaced, often particle by particle, by mineral matter, such as silica or carbonate of lime. Wood is commonly preserved in this way, and the process may be so delicate that the cells and other microscopic structures of the wood are preserved even after all the organic matter has disappeared.<sup>1</sup>

Evolutionists assume that the rock strata (layers) containing fossils developed gradually over a period of millions of years. For a fossil to form from a dead organism, that organism must be preserved from corruption by forces that would otherwise disintegrate it long before its physical components could be replaced, almost molecule by molecule, by mineral (rock) deposits. That so many millions of plants and animals were preserved this way is remarkable. Some fossils represent the entire organism, even its soft parts, which would typically decay long before calcification could take place. How did that remarkable preservation take place? And how do we account for the huge deposits of fossils that seem almost like mass graves because of the abundance of fossils?

Klotz offers a theory of fossilization consistent with the creation model:

Immediate burial is a first prerequisite for fossilization, and it should be such as to exclude the air so as to prevent oxidation of the organism. Usually this burial is effected by water-borne sediment, so that fossil remains of creatures making their homes in the shallower regions of the seas, rivers, and lakes are the most common. Thus the record is not truly representative of all habitats. Deep sea organisms are comparatively unknown, because so little of these deposits have been elevated onto land. Deposits formed near the mouths of rivers sometimes contain the remains of land animals, but these inclusions are purely accidental and, like the fossils of deep sea organisms, not too common. Wind-borne materials, such as loess or volcanic ash, sometimes yield fossils of land-living animals, and miring in bogs and quicksands has also provided fossils of land animals. Yet they are still relatively uncommon.<sup>2</sup>

Many fossil beds could have been formed through catastrophic means rather than by the “thousands of years in the making” evolutionary explanation. In a cave in Maryland, fossil remains of dozens of different mammals were found, together with those of many reptiles and

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<sup>1</sup> John W. Klotz, *Genes, Genesis, and Evolution* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1970), p. 185.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 203–204.

birds. These fossils represent animals from tropical, moderate, and polar regions together in one “grave.” In Germany there are lignite beds (a form of brown coal) containing large numbers of fossil plants, animals, and insects from various regions and climates of the world. The remarkable preservation of these animals is striking proof of sudden burial. Near Lompoc, California, enormous diatomite deposits were found containing millions of beautifully preserved fossil fish, usually in a position indicating sudden death.

The fossilization of such large organisms as whole trees presents another problem to the traditional evolutionary approach to fossilization. These gigantic fossils frequently have been found complete and intact, piercing two or more coal seams. Yet organisms of that size could never have been fossilized if they had been covered slowly during the slow deposition and subsequent coalification of peat bogs. They would have decayed first. We must conclude that they were covered almost immediately, as with sand and water.

### **FOSSILS “ACCORDING TO THEIR KINDS”**

According to the theory of evolution, all life forms have developed gradually and progressively. The fossil record does not support that. In nature there are a number of well-defined main groups of plants and animals without intermediate forms clearly linking them. The fossil record shows the same gaps, in spite of the fact that, according to evolution, all organisms, living or dead (fossilized), represent a continuous “family tree” development without any major gaps among the various groups. These very same gaps, however, are used by evolutionists to classify living forms, distinguishing among family groups, classes, species, etc. The inconsistency of the presence of complicated invertebrates in the Cambrian level is summarized by J. Kerby Anderson and Harold G. Coffin:

We have also seen that those invertebrates that first appear in the Cambrian period have been complex invertebrates. In no way can these early multicellular organisms be considered primitive. The later appearance of other invertebrates, groups such as the ammonites and insects, also do not give us any support for the various models of evolution. In summary, we should note that the explosion of life in the Cambrian period and the systematic gaps between major invertebrate “kinds” are much more supportive evidence for the creation model than for the various models of evolution.<sup>3</sup>

The oldest fossil-bearing strata (that is, of multicellular life forms), are those of the Cambrian period. In those strata, fossil remains of *highly* developed life forms have been found also (corals, sponges, worms, crustacea, etc.). Highly developed representatives of several main classifications, even of animal classes, have been found in the Cambrian layer without any trace of common or more simple ancestors. Evolutionists believe that these highly developed life forms required millions of years to evolve. Yet not a single authenticated multicellular fossil has been found in any strata earlier than the Cambrian.

Not a single proof in the fossil record supports the assumption that the single- and multiple-cell organisms are related in their germinal origins, or that all subsequent life forms are developed from earlier, more simple life forms. The theory of evolution is not documented by

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<sup>3</sup> J. Kerby Anderson and Harold G. Coffin, *Fossils in Focus* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1977), p. 44.

the fossil record. On the contrary, the oldest documentation we have shows that the main classifications of life forms existed side by side *from the beginning*. Rather than picturing the history of life as a gigantic family tree, we instead can picture it as a large graph of more or less closely associated bars, representing the history of major classes as separate from the beginning.

## TRANSITIONAL FORMS IN THE FOSSIL RECORD

Evolutionists are quick to point out that many orders and families of the animal kingdom are not represented in the Cambrian strata but appear only in more recent strata. This is used as evidence that those recent life forms developed or evolved from the earlier life forms so abundant in the Cambrian Age.

Part of the creationist's answer to the above is to question the evolutionist's methods of dating the different strata. We will discuss that at length later. For now we will merely say that without exception the animal and plant families, orders, and classes appear suddenly in "more recent" strata, without any intermediate forms. If they did develop from the Cambrian life forms, where are the *transition* fossils? There simply are no intermediates between invertebrates and vertebrates.

When fossil "proofs" for general evolution are presented, it is usually within the vertebrate classification, since the fish, amphibians, reptiles, birds, and mammals seem to appear in successive strata. Each of those classes, however, in their various orders, always appears suddenly in the fossil record, without intermediate forms. There are four classes of fish: the jawless, the placoderms (armored fish, now extinct), the cartilaginous fish (such as sharks), and the bony fish. The first two groups, which are alleged to be the ancestors of modern fish, contain several orders that are very different from one another and for which no common ancestors have been found among the fossils. The placoderms appear in strata where we would expect, according to the evolution model, to find the ancestors of the cartilaginous and bony fish. However, the placoderms themselves are a widely varied group with their own species, and any derivation of the higher fish from the placoderms is anatomically impossible. Then, too, the cartilaginous and bony fish appear suddenly, with no transitional forms in the fossil record.

According to evolutionists, the amphibians evolved from the fish, a process that must have taken millions of years and a tremendously large number of transitional forms to accomplish such a great transformation through minute adaptive and mutational changes. Several groups of fossil fish have been suggested as providing the transitional forms that led to amphibians. But it does not appear that any fossils have been found that can be authenticated as a transitional form between any of these fish and any amphibian fossil. Instead, we find that the various amphibian orders appear simultaneously, with marked differences among them and no known common ancestors. It needs to be pointed out that many evolutionists would take issue with the creationists' view of the fossil record.

The lineage of amphibians becomes more confused when we discover that during the Mesozoic Age there are no fossil amphibians at all. Between the various extinct amphibians of the Paleozoic Age and the three living subclasses of amphibians today, no fossil link exists. We propose that the dating system of the evolutionists is completely unreliable, and that the various forms of amphibians developed relatively quickly from the original amphibious prototypes, created by God.

Gish has an interesting discussion of the "fish to amphibian" hypothesis:

For a long time it was assumed that the fish that evolutionists believe gave rise to the amphibians became extinct about 70 million years ago. In rocks which evolutionists assume are 70 million years or younger, no fossils of the fish have ever been found. In about 1939, however, this type of fish was found to be alive and well off the coast of Africa. It is a cross-opterygian fish of the genus *Latimeria*. It was taken from a depth of about 5,000 feet. Here he is still very much the same fish that is supposed to have given rise to the amphibians multiplied millions of years ago. It would certainly be astounding to believe that he has remained so genetically and morphologically stable for all those millions of years while his cousin was evolving all the way to man! Furthermore, how could any creature be on this earth for 70 million years without leaving a trace in the fossil record? Perhaps there is something wrong with evolutionary assumptions!<sup>4</sup>

Evolutionists have fewer problems asserting their belief that amphibians evolved into reptiles. This is not because there exists clear fossil evidence of such an evolution, but because amphibian and reptilian skeletal structures are so similar. The major differences between amphibians and reptiles are in their soft parts, which are generally not fossilized. The evolutionists have the comparatively simple task of finding similar fossil skeletal parts and proclaiming them related or transitional forms.

## THE ORIGIN OF WARM-BLOODED ANIMALS

The warm-blooded animals are the only ones able to maintain a stable, relatively high body temperature. The origin of warm-bloodedness is one problem with which evolutionists are unable to cope by the use of fossil evidence. Mammals are also skeletally similar to the reptiles, but their soft parts are very different (hair, skin, mammary glands for the nursing of young, etc.).

The two most striking differences between the skeletal parts of mammals and reptiles are ears and jaws. All mammals (both fossil and living) have a single lower jawbone. All reptiles (fossil or living) have at least four bones on either side of the lower jaw. All mammals have three middle ear bones on each side. All reptiles have only one ear bone on each side. Not a single fossil exists with transitional forms of jaws and/or ears. But evolution tells us that the transitional forms must have existed. (Perhaps two of the lower jaw bones of some reptiles moved to their ears!) If evolutionists insist on a gradual transition, then how did the transitional forms chew with lower jaws that were not properly hinged, or how could they hear during the complete reorganization of the bones in their ears?

The evolution from reptiles to birds is also an enigma, despite the fact that evolutionists believe they can produce the fossil of a true transitional form, *Archaeopteryx*. However, *Archaeopteryx* is fully a bird, not a birdlike reptile. The development of a flying animal requires changes in virtually every structure of the nonflying ancestor. We would expect to find numerous transitional forms in a process that requires so many changes. When we consider that this must have taken place at least four times in the evolutionary process (insects, flying reptiles, birds, and bats), then the fossil remnants should be especially numerous. But no transitional series have been found leading to any of the four flying animal types we have today. All four kinds of flying animals appear suddenly in the fossil record, complete, and frequently in varying forms.

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<sup>4</sup> Duane T. Gish, *Evolution: The Fossils Say No* (San Diego: Creation-Life, 1978), p. 65.

Nevertheless, *Archaeopteryx*, a fossil bird from the Jurassic strata, is presented as the closest thing to a transitional form evolutionists have found yet. However, as Gish remarked, the *Archaeopteryx* was no true transitional form:

In not a single instance concerning the origin of flight can a transitional series be documented, and in only one case has a single intermediate form been alleged. In the latter case, the so-called intermediate is no real intermediate at all because, as paleontologists acknowledge, *Archaeopteryx* was a true bird—it had wings, it was completely feathered, it flew....It was not a halfway bird, it was a bird.<sup>5</sup>

The so-called reptile features of the *Archaeopteryx* fossils consist of clawlike appendages on the edges of the wings, teeth, vertebrae that are turned outward along the tail, and a small breastbone. However, those characteristics do not prove that *Archaeopteryx* is a transitional form between reptiles and birds, since some birds living today possess similar traits, such as claws on the wings.

## EVOLUTION AMONG MAMMALS

We have surveyed a few of the indications that plant and animal life was created in several groups or “kinds,” from which limited adaptation and development occurred. We reject the macroevolution model. When we look at the lack of evidence for the evolution of orders within the class of mammals, we come to the same conclusion.

Consider bats, which are said by evolutionists to have developed from insectivores (moles, shrews, etc.). It should be obvious that major changes must occur necessarily for a molelike animal to become a bat. The “hands” of the insectivore would have to grow enormously, since the flying web of the bat is stretched between the four elongated “fingers” and the hind legs. Fossil bats have been found, some in the lower reaches of the Tertiary strata. But again, even the oldest bats are still bats. Anderson and Coffin discuss the lack of evolutionary evidence for the bat:

If bats evolved from shrewlike ancestors, there is certainly no fossil evidence to support it. *Icaronycteris* is a very advanced flying mammal. Glenn Jepsen of Princeton University has stated that this Eocene bat “is not a ‘missing link’ between shrews or anything else and bats, but already a true bat.”<sup>6</sup>

## THE EVOLUTION AND CLASSIFICATION OF DIFFERENT MAMMALS

The various rodent families appear in the fossil record without any transitional forms. The evolutionary scheme has no explanation for the origin of beavers, old world porcupines, and others. Hares and rabbits used to be considered a suborder of the rodents, but today are

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p. 84.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., pp. 62–63.

considered a separate order. They are so intrinsically different that they cannot be classified with any other mammalian order. Even the oldest fossils of these animals exhibit all of the unique characteristics of the contemporary order. The same is true of all the thirty orders of primates.

This type of problem concerns the classification of man, too. Biologists consider man a part of the primate order, which also includes lemurs, monkeys, and apes. The evolutionists picture the primates as having developed from an order of insectivores. However, they have been unable to trace the true origin of the lower primates (lemurs, and tarsiers). The fossil record has no transitional forms; existing fossils of the lower primates are almost identical in form to living animals today. Any indication of transition from lower primates to other monkeys or the apes is absent.

## **DATING THE STRATA**

Although many textbooks assume that strata dating is absolutely certain, such is not the case. Thurman has a helpful discussion of the dating problem:

Evolutionists use several methods of dating fossils, all based on untestable assumptions. The most widely used method is based on the decay rate of several kinds of radioactive materials, such as the uranium-lead or potassium-argon “atomic clocks.” An age is estimated by measuring the amount of uranium remaining in a rock sample, comparing it to the amount of lead formed and multiplying this by the decay rate.

This method of dating fossils assumes several things, including: (1) only the radioactive material, and not any intermediate or final decay products (for example, lead) were initially present; (2) no intermediate or final product was added or lost since its initial formation (although some intermediate products are gases); and (3) the rate of radioactive decay has not varied since the beginning of time. Actually, what the scientists determine is only the amount of initial and decay products remaining in the sample. Determining the age requires calculations based on the above assumptions. If these assumptions are true, the calculated age is realistic. But until these assumptions can be supported, no dates based upon them can be known with certainty. There is some question as to just how far the present can be extended into the past, especially when billions of years are involved.<sup>7</sup>

## **CONCLUSION**

Our survey of the fossil record has been necessarily brief and selective. (For a much more comprehensive view of the fossil record, see Dr. Philip Johnson’s book *Darwin on Trial*.) We have seen consistently, however, that the objective record does not support the evolution model. Instead, the record is consistent with the creation model. If the general theory of evolution is true, the fossil record would almost certainly provide abundant confirmation, or at the least it would not testify to the inconsistencies of the system. However, we find that the fossil record

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<sup>7</sup> L. Duane Thurman, *How to Think About Evolution* (Downers Grove, Ill.: Inter-Varsity, 1978), pp. 106–107.

lacks any significant objective verification of evolution and does point to inconsistencies in evolutionary theory.

We are convinced that no fact in science, including the objective evidence of fossils, will ever controvert the biblical account.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Josh McDowell, *Josh McDowell's Handbook on Apologetics*, electronic ed. (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1997).

**God, Evidence for.** The best known arguments for God's existence are the cosmological argument, the teleological argument, the moral argument, and the ontological argument. Respectively, these are the arguments from *creation* (Gk., *cosmos*, "universe, world"), *design* (Gk., *telos*, "end, purpose"), and the idea of a perfect *being* (Gk., *ontos*, "reality, being"). In addition to these the axiological argument, the anthropological argument, and the argument from religious experience are often used. The axiological argument (Gk., *axios*, "value, worth") is the argument from making value judgments. It is closely associated with the moral argument, the argument from a moral law to a Moral Law Giver.

***The Cosmological Argument.*** There is a universe rather than none at all, which must have been caused by something beyond itself. The law of causality (*see* CAUSALITY, PRINCIPLE OF) says that every finite thing is caused by something other than itself.

There are two basic forms of this argument. The first says that the cosmos or universe needed a cause at its *beginning*, the second form argues that it needs a cause to *continue* existing.

*A Cause at the Beginning.* The argument that the universe had a beginning caused by something beyond the universe can be stated this way:

1. The universe had a beginning.
2. Anything that had a beginning must have been caused by something else.
3. Therefore the universe was caused by something else (a Creator).

*Scientific evidence.* Both scientific and philosophical evidence can be used to support this argument. According to the second law of thermodynamics, in a closed, isolated system, such as the universe is, the amount of usable energy is decreasing. The universe is running down, hence cannot be eternal. Otherwise, it would have run out of usable energy long ago. Things left to themselves, without outside intelligent intervention, tend toward disorder. Since the universe has not reached a state of total disorder, this process has not been going on forever.

Another set of evidence comes from the widely accepted big bang cosmology. According to this view, the universe exploded into being some 15–20 billion years ago. Evidence offered for this includes the (1) "red shift" or Doppler effect noticed in the light from stars as they move away; (2) the radiation echo from space, which has the same wavelength that would be given off by a gigantic cosmic explosion; (3) discovery of a mass of energy such as was expected from an explosion.

Agnostic Robert Jastrow, founder-director of NASA's Goddard Institute of Space Studies, said, "A sound explanation may exist for the explosive birth of our Universe; but if it does, science cannot find out what the explanation is. The scientist's pursuit of the past ends in the moment of creation." But if the universe was created, then it is reasonable to conclude there was a Creator. For everything that has a beginning needs a Beginner.

*Philosophical evidence.* Time cannot go back into the past forever, for it is impossible to pass through an actual infinite number of moments. A theoretically infinite number of dimensionless points exists between my thumb and first finger, but I cannot get an infinite number of sheets of paper between them no matter how thin they are. Each moment that passes uses up real time that we can never again experience. Moving your finger across an infinite number of books in a library would never get to the last book. You can never finish an infinite series of real things.

If this is so, then time must have had a beginning. If the world never had a beginning, then we could not have reached now. But we have reached now, so time must have begun at a particular point and proceeded to today. Therefore the world is a finite event after all and needs a cause for its beginning. The argument can be summarized:

1. An infinite number of moments cannot be traversed.
2. If an infinite number of moments had to elapse before today, then today would never have come.
3. But today has come.
4. Therefore, an infinite number of moments have not elapsed before today (i.e., the universe had a beginning).
5. But whatever has a beginning is caused by something else.
6. Hence, there must be a Cause (Creator) of the universe.

*A Cause Right Now.* The previous version of the cosmological argument has been called the “horizontal argument,” since it argues in a linear fashion back to a beginning. This argument is also known as the *kalam* cosmological argument. It was formulated by the Arab philosophers of the Middle Ages and employed by Bonaventure (1217–1274). The contemporary philosopher, William Craig, has widely published on it. One problem with the argument is that it only argues that there was once a Creator at the beginning of the universe. It does not show the continuing need for a Creator. This is the point of the vertical form of the cosmological argument. The most famous proponent of this argument was Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274).

Something is keeping us in existence right now so we don’t just disappear. Something not only caused the world to come into being (Gen. 1:1), but something causes it to continue to be (cf. Col. 1:17). The world needs both an originating cause and a conserving cause. This argument answers the basic question: “Why is there something (right now) rather than nothing?” Briefly, it can be put this way:

1. Every part of the universe is dependent.
2. If every part is dependent, then the whole universe must also be dependent.
3. Therefore, the whole universe is dependent for existence right now on some Independent Being.

Critics respond that the second premise is the fallacy of composition. Just because every piece of a mosaic is square does not mean the whole mosaic is square. Also, putting two triangles together does not necessarily make another triangle; it may make a square. The whole may (and sometimes does) have a characteristic not possessed by the parts. Defenders answer that sometimes there is a necessary connection between the parts and the whole. If every piece of a floor is oak, then the whole floor is oak. And while putting two triangles together does not necessarily make another triangle, putting two triangles together will necessarily make another geometric figure. Being a geometric figure is part of a triangle’s nature, just as being dependent is the nature of everything in the universe. One dependent being cannot sustain another dependent being.

Some critics argue that the whole is greater than the parts, so while the parts are dependent, the whole universe is not. However, this doesn’t work in the case of the universe. If the contingent parts, which together compose the whole, vanish then the universe vanishes. Evidently the entire universe is dependent.

***The Teleological Argument.*** There are many forms of the teleological argument, the most famous of which derives from William Paley’s watchmaker analogy. Since every watch has a watchmaker, and since the universe is exceedingly more complex in its operation than a watch, it follows that there must be a Maker of the universe. In brief, the teleological argument reasons from design to an intelligent Designer.

1. All designs imply a designer.
2. There is great design in the universe.
3. Therefore, there must be a Great Designer of the universe.

Any time we have seen a complex design, we know by previous experience that it came from the mind of a designer. Watches imply watchmakers; buildings imply architects; paintings imply artists; and coded messages imply an intelligent sender.

Also, the greater the design, the greater the designer. Beavers make log dams, but they have never constructed anything like the Golden Gate Bridge. A thousand monkeys sitting at typewriters for millions of years would never produce *Hamlet* by accident. Shakespeare did it on the first try. The more complex the design, the greater the intelligence required to produce it.

It is important to note that by “complex design” is meant *specified complexity*. A crystal, for example, has specificity but not complexity. It, like a snowflake, has the same basic patterns repeated over and over. Random polymers, on the other hand, has complexity but no specificity. A living cell, however, has both specificity and complexity. This kind of complexity is never produced by purely natural laws. It is always the result of an intelligent being. It is the same kind of complexity that is found in a human language. Letter sequence in the four-letter genetic alphabet is identical to that in a written language. And the amount of complex information in a simple one-cell animal is greater than that found in Webster’s Unabridged Dictionary.

Agnostic astronomer, Carl Sagan, unwittingly provided an even greater example. He notes that the genetic information in the human brain expressed in bits is probably comparable to the total number of connections among neurons—about 100 trillion, 10<sup>14</sup> bits. If written out in English, say, that information would fill some 20 million volumes, as many as are stored in the world’s largest libraries. The equivalent of 20 million books is inside the heads of every one of us. “The brain is a very big place in a very small space,” Sagan said. He went on to note that “the neurochemistry of the brain is astonishingly busy, the circuitry of a machine more wonderful than any devised by humans.” But if this is so, then why does the human brain not need an intelligent Creator, as does even the simplest computer?

**The Ontological Argument.** The ontological argument moves from the conception of a Perfect or Necessary Being to the existence of such a Being. The first philosopher known to have developed the ontological argument (though not the first to call it this) was Anselm (1033–1109). In its simplest form it argues from the *idea* of God to the *existence* of God. There are two forms of the argument: one from the idea of a Perfect Being and the other from the idea of a Necessary Being.

**The Perfect Being.** According to this statement of the argument the mere concept of God as an absolutely perfect being demands that he exist. Briefly put:

1. God is by definition an absolutely perfect being.
2. But existence is a perfection.
3. Therefore, God must exist.

If God did not exist, then he would be lacking one perfection, namely, existence. But if God lacked any perfection, then he would not be absolutely perfect. But God is *by definition* an absolutely perfect being. Therefore, an absolutely perfect being (God) must exist.

Since the time of Immanuel Kant (1724–1804), it has been widely accepted that this form of the argument is invalid because existence is not a perfection. It is argued that existence adds nothing to the concept of a thing; it merely gives a concrete instance of it. The dollar in my mind

can have exactly the same properties as the one in my wallet. There is, however, a second form of the ontological argument that is not subject to this criticism.

*The Necessary Being.* Anselm argued that the very concept of a Necessary Being demands its existence:

1. If God exists, we must conceive of him as a Necessary Being.
2. But by definition, a Necessary Being cannot not exist.
3. Therefore, if a Necessary Being can, then it must, exist.

Since there is no contradiction in the idea of a Necessary Being, it would seem to follow that one must exist. For the very idea of a Necessary Being demands that it must exist. For if it did not exist, then it would not be a necessary *existence*.

Critics to this argument point out a problem: This is like saying: *If* there are triangles, then they must have three sides. Of course, there may not be any triangles. But the argument never really gets past that initial “if.” It never gets around to proving the big question that it claims to answer. It merely *assumes*, but does not prove, the existence of a Necessary Being. It only says that, if a Necessary Being exists—and that is the open question—it must exist necessarily, since that is the only way a Necessary Being can exist, if it exists at all.

The Ontological Argument cannot prove the existence of God, but it can prove certain things about his *nature*. For example, God must necessarily exist, if he exists at all. He cannot cease to exist or exist contingently.

***The Argument from Moral Law.*** The roots of the moral argument for God are found in Romans 2:12–15, in which humankind is said to stand unexcused since there is “a law written on their hearts.” Since the time of Kant this argument has been stated in various ways. The most popular form emanates from C. S. Lewis in *Mere Christianity*. The heart of the argument follows this basic structure:

1. Moral laws imply a Moral Law Giver.
2. There is an objective moral law.
3. Therefore, there is a Moral Law Giver.

The first premise is self-evident. Moral laws are different from natural laws. Moral laws don’t *describe what is*, they *prescribe what ought to be*. They can’t be known by observing what people do. They are what all persons should do, whether or not they actually do.

The weight of the argument rests on the second premise—there is an objective moral law. That is, there is a moral law that is not just prescribed by us but also *for* us. Humans do prescribe proper behavior for other humans. The question is whether there is evidence that a universal, objective prescription binds all humans. The evidence for such a law is strong. It is implied in our judgments that “The world is getting better (or worse).” How could we know unless there were some standard beyond the world by which we could measure it. Such statements as “Hitler was wrong” have no force if this is merely an opinion or Hitler’s moral judgments are right or wrong depending on the cultural norms. If he was objectively wrong, then there must be a moral law beyond all of us by which we are all bound. But if there is such a universal, objective moral law, then there must be a universal Moral Law Giver (God).

***The Argument from Religious Need.*** Many people claim not to need God. Sigmund Freud even considered the desire to believe in God an illusion. Is the desire for God based in reality, or is it based in unfulfillable human wishes? Is the basis for belief in God purely psychological, or is it factual? Whether humans feel a need for him, there is good evidence of God’s existence. But

the desire for God does exist, not as a psychological wish, but from real existential need. This need, in itself, is an evidence for the existence of God.

In skeleton form, the argument from the alleged need for God to his existence goes:

1. Human beings really need God.
2. What humans really need, probably really exists.
3. Therefore, God really exists.

For this argument to have a chance of standing, the second premise must be distinguished from the claim that what one really needs will be found. One may really need water and die of dehydration. However, that is quite different from arguing that one really needs water, and there is no water anywhere.

It would seem irrational to believe that there are real needs in the universe that are unfulfillable. There are many unfulfillable wants, but to suppose that there are unfulfillable needs is to assume an irrational universe. Likewise, it would seem reasonable to assume that, if human beings really need God, there probably is a God, even if not everyone finds him. As with other unfulfilled needs in life, it may be that some look in the wrong place or in the wrong way (cf. Prov. 14:12).

This leads us to the crux of the argument: Do human beings have a real need for God, or is it only a felt need? If there is a real need, then why do not all experience it? For example, most atheists claim that there is no real need for God.

*Even Atheists Need God.* Religious literature is filled with testimonies from believers who confess that they really need God. The psalmist wrote, “As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, O God” (Ps. 42:1). Jeremiah 29:13 declares, “You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.” Jesus taught that “man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God” (Matt. 4:4). Augustine summarized it well when he said the heart is restless until it finds its rest in God.

What is often not appreciated by unbelievers is the fact that the felt need for God is not limited to unthinking and uncritical religious people. Some of the greatest minds, including the founders of most areas of modern science, confessed their need. Not surprisingly this list includes theologians Augustine, Anselm, and Thomas Aquinas. But it also includes Galileo Galilei, Nicolaus Copernicus, William Kelvin, Isaac Newton, Francis Bacon, Blaise Pascal, René Descartes, Gottfried Leibniz, John Locke, and Søren Kierkegaard. One can hardly claim that intellectual deficiency led to their perceived need for God.

*Dealing with the feelings.* But if God is a need for everyone, why does everyone not reflect this need? Surprisingly, there is evidence that they do. Take, for example, the testimony of atheists and agnostics in their more candid moments. Julian Huxley, for example, frankly admitted a type of religious encounter:

On Easter Sunday, early in the morning, I got up at daybreak, before anyone else was about, let myself out, ran across to a favourite copse, penetrated to where I knew the wild cherry grew, and there, in the spring dew, picked a great armful of the lovely stuff, which I brought back, with a sense of its being an acceptable offering, to the house. Three or four Easters running I remember doing this. I was fond of solitude and of nature, and had a passion for wild flowers: but this was only a general basis. . . . But when sanctity is in the air, as at Easter, then it can have free play. [70]

Friedrich Schleiermacher defined religion as a feeling of absolute dependence on the All (Schleiermacher, 39). And even though Freud did not wish to call this feeling religious, he admits to feeling such a dependence. Paul Tillich defined religion as an ultimate commitment (Tillich, 7–8, 30). In this sense of the word *religion* most humanists have a commitment to humanism. *Humanist Manifesto II* says, “commitment to all humankind is the highest commitment of which we are capable” (Kurtz, 23). This is, to borrow Tillich’s phrase, an “ultimate commitment.” John Dewey defined the religious as any ideal pursued with great conviction because of its general and enduring value. In this sense humanism certainly involves a religious experience.

Erich Fromm was even willing to use the word *God* of the feeling of ultimate commitment to all humankind. And while he wished to disassociate himself from what he called “authoritarian” beliefs, he did admit that his humanist beliefs were religious. He felt that his devotion to humanity as a whole was a religious devotion. The humanistic object of that devotion he called “God” (Fromm, 49, 54, 87). Jewish existentialist Martin Buber said that the word *God* is the most heavily laden in our vocabulary but insisted that, by loving other persons, one has fulfilled personal religious obligations (Buber, *I and Thou*, 55).

Even the atheistic humanists (*see* HUMANISM, SECULAR) who deny having any religious experience often admit that they once did. Jean-Paul Sartre tells of experiences as a child. He wrote, “Nevertheless, I believed. In my nightshirt, kneeling on the bed, with my hands together, I said my prayers every day, but I thought of God less and less often” (Sartre, 102). Bertrand Russell admitted to once believing in God; so did Friedrich Nietzsche.

*The secular religion.* Whether past or present experience of devotion to God, to the “All” or to humankind, many humanists admit to some sort of experience that would be called “religious.” And although *Humanist Manifesto I* calls for giving up the belief in any form of extraterrestrial being (*see* Kurtz, 14–16), many atheistic humanists do insist that they have not thereby forsaken religion. In fact, the religious urge is so great, even in humanists, that August Comte set up a humanist cult with himself as the high priest. In the sense in which the word *religious* is currently defined by dictionaries, philosophers, theologians, and humanists themselves, humanism is a religion.

Due to an interesting series of events the United States Supreme Court has come to recognize secular humanism as a religion. Their ruling in *United States v. Kauten* (1943) allowed exemption to the military draft on the basis of conscientious objection, even if the person did not believe in a deity. The Second Circuit Court stated: “[Conscientious objection] may justly be regarded as a response of the individual to an inward mentor, call it conscience or God, that is for many persons at the present time the equivalent of what has always been thought a religious impulse” (Whitehead, 10).

In 1965 the Supreme Court in *United States v. Seeger* ruled that any belief is valid if it is “sincere and meaningful [and it] occupies a place in the life of its possessor parallel to that filled by the orthodox belief in God” (*ibid.*, 14). Having consulted the theologian Tillich, the Court defined religion to be belief “based upon a power or being or upon a faith, to which all else is subordinate or upon which all else is ultimately dependent” (*ibid.*).

In a very revealing article in *Humanist Magazine* (1964) the finger was placed on several weaknesses in this regard. In the article “What’s Wrong with Humanism?” the indictment is made that the movement is too intellectual and almost “clinically detached from life.” To reach the masses with their message, the writer suggests that an effort be undertaken to develop a humanist Bible, a humanist hymnal, ten commandments for humanists, and even confessional

practices (testimonies)! In addition, “the use of hypnotic techniques—music and other psychological devices—during humanist services would give the audience that deep spiritual experience and they would emerge refreshed and inspired with their humanist faith” (cited in Kitwood, 49). Rarely do humanists speak so freely about the psychological inadequacies of their system and the need to borrow Christian practices to rectify them.

*Weaknesses in the humanist religion.* T. M. Kitwood has summarized the deficiencies when he observed that secular humanism “does not evoke a response from the whole person, intellect, will and emotion.” Further, humanists “lack originality when making positive statements about man’s life, and easily descend to the platitudinous” (Kitwood, 48).

Another weakness of humanism may be that it fails to reckon with human nature. Some humanists have reflected an incredible naiveté about life. John Stuart Mill wrote that his father “felt as if all would be gained if the whole population were taught to read” (ibid., 50). Even Russell thought that “if we could learn to love our neighbor the world would quickly become a paradise for us all” (ibid.). Finally, Kitwood charges humanists with being “an aristocratic body, and as such insulated from some of the more terrible realities of life” (ibid., 51). One conclusion emerges clearly: Secular humanism does not measure up to the psychological realities of life. William James pointed out in his classic treatment on religious experience that those who set this world afire are themselves set aflame from another world. They are the saints not the secularists. They believed in a supernatural world, which secular humanism denies (James, 290).

Although secular humanists often confess to having religious, even mystical, experiences, they deny that these involve a personal God. But this is inadequate, first, because their experience is strangely personal for having no personal object. They speak of “loyalty,” “devotion” and “love” as basic values. But these are terms that make proper sense only when they have a personal object. Who, for example, can fall in love with the Pythagorean theorem? Or who would be religiously moved by the exhortation: “Prepare to meet thy  $E = MC^2$ ?” As Elton Trueblood insightfully observed, “The joy and wonder which men feel in the search for truth, including the quality of feeling of those scientists who think of themselves as materialists is the *same kind of feeling we know best when there is real communication between two finite minds*” (Trueblood, 115).

Only a personal object can really satisfy personal devotion. Perhaps this is what accounts for the lack of a satisfying religious experience among humanists. Huxley said his religious experience became dimmer over the years. He wrote, “I had been used, ever since the age of fifteen or sixteen, to have such moments come to me naturally. . . . But now . . . they were vouchsafed in diminishing measure, and (although sometimes with great intensity) more fleetingly” (Huxley, 77). Sartre confessed that his religious experiences ceased when he dismissed God from his life. He said, “I had all the more difficulty of getting rid of Him in that he had installed himself at the back of my head. . . . I collared the Holy Ghost in the cellar and threw him out; atheism is a cruel and long-range affair; I think I’ve carried it through” (Sartre, 252–53). Sartre’s confession of the difficulty and even cruelty of the life without God should not be surprising to anyone who truly understands the human person. Satisfaction originates in the personal. Human beings are fulfilled in what Buber called an “I-Thou” experience, not an “I-it” experience. That is, persons are satisfied best by persons (subjects), not by things (objects). Hence, it is not strange that a personal religious experience is not going to be fully satisfied in anything less than a personal object.

Tillich recognized that not every ultimate commitment was to something ultimate. In fact, he believed that to be ultimately committed to what is less than ultimate is idolatry (see Tillich, 57).

Buber pointed out that idols can be mental as well as metal (Buber, *Eclipse of God*, 62). Combining these two insights from their own thinkers, we may note, that when humanists make some finite ideal or goal the object of their religious commitment, they are idolaters.

Humanists recognize human life to be mortal. The race may be annihilated or become extinct. Why then do humanists treat humankind as eternal? Why an unswerving commitment to that which is changing and even perishing, the product of a blind evolutionary process? Is it not the height of humanistic arrogance for humanity to endow itself with divinity (see Geisler, chap. 15)? Such unlimited devotion humanists give to humanity is due only to the Infinite. The only thing worthy of an ultimate commitment is the Ultimate.

*The confessed need of the atheist.* One of the strongest indications that human beings need God is found in the very men who deny the need for God. The confessed needs of atheistic humanists is eloquent testimony to this point.

Nietzsche bemoaned his intolerable loneliness as compared to other poets who believed in God. He wrote,

I hold up before myself the images of Dante and Spinoza, who were better at accepting the lot of solitude. . . . and in the end, for all those who somehow still had a 'God' for company. . . . My life now consists in the wish that it might be otherwise . . . and that somebody might make *my* 'truths' appear incredible to me. [Nietzsche, 441]

Sartre admitted his own personal need for religion, saying, "I needed God." He added, "I reached out for religion, I longed for it, it was the remedy. Had it been denied me, I would have invented it myself" (Sartre, 97, 102). The French atheist Albert Camus added, "Nothing can discourage the appetite for divinity in the heart of man" (*The Rebel*, 147). Freud undermined the reality basis for God but admitted that he too felt the Schleiermachean sense of absolute dependence. He admitted that he experienced "a sense of man's insignificance and impotence in the face of the universe" (Freud, 57). Freud further admitted that this sense of absolute dependence is inescapable and cannot be overcome by science.

The same need for the divine is dramatized in Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*, a play with a title reminiscent of Martin Heidegger's phrase "waiting for God." Franz Kafka's novels express the futility of lonely, persistent attempts to find some meaningful cosmic otherness. Walter Kaufmann reaches the point that he confesses, "Religion is rooted in man's aspiration to transcend himself. . . . Whether he worships idols or strives to perfect himself, man is the God-intoxicated ape" (Kaufmann, 354–55, 399).

Other such nonbelievers as Julian Huxley have likewise taken a positive attitude toward man's apparently incurably religious needs. Huxley spoke of "the possibility of enjoying experiences of transcendent rapture, physical or mystical, aesthetic or religious . . . of attaining inner harmony and peace, which puts a man above the cares and worries of daily life" (cited in Kitwood, 38). What is this but another description of reaching out for a God?

If the need for God is so eradicable, even in humanists, why do so many seem capable of living without God? Some have suggested that the unbeliever is *inconsistent* at this point. The atheistic philosophy (see ATHEISM) of John Cage drove him to suicide when he tried to live in a purely random way. Jackson Pollock, on the other hand, chose to be inconsistent and live. His hobby was mushrooms and he wisely decided not to approach the question as to which are poisonous in a random manner, as was his view of the world.

In a frank interview with the *Chicago Sun Times* Will Durant, admits that the common man will fall to pieces morally if he thinks there is no God. But "a man like me," said Durant, "I

survive morally because I retain the moral code that was taught me along with the religion, while I have discarded the religion, which was Roman Catholicism.” Durant continued,

You and I are living on a shadow . . . because we are operating on the Christian ethical code which was given us, unfused with the Christian faith. . . . But what will happen to our children . . . ? We are not giving them an ethics warmed up with a religious faith. They are living on the shadow of a shadow. [Durant, 1B:8]

It is difficult to live on a shadow and more so to dwell on a shadow’s shadow. But this is precisely where humanists attempt to live without God.

Often ethics or aesthetics becomes a surrogate for God, but even this is satisfying only in so far as it rides piggyback on some belief in God. As Martin Marty noted, atheism “occurs and can occur only where belief is or has been. [This] explains why atheism . . . is itself a proof, by reason of its invariably polemical character” (Marty, 119–20). One who tries to overthrow everything—even the aesthetic and ethical shadows, finds with Camus that “for anyone who is alone, without God and without a master, the weight of days is dreadful” (Camus, *The Fall*, 133).

Sartre found atheism “cruel,” Camus “dreadful,” and Nietzsche “maddening.” Atheists who consistently try to live without God tend to commit suicide or go insane. Those who are inconsistent live on the ethical or aesthetic shadow of Christian truth while they deny the reality that made the shadow. But believers and unbelievers evidence a definite need for God. Viktor Frankl, in *The Unconscious God*, contends that “man has always stood in an intentional relation to transcendence, even if only on an unconscious level.” In this sense, he says, all men seek the “Unconscious God” (cited in Macdonald, 43).

**The Argument from Joy.** C. S. Lewis developed an argument from joy or the anticipation of heavenly bliss. This argument was stated by Lewis in *Mere Christianity* (12), *The Problem of Pain* (133), and *Surprised by Joy* (16–18). It was defended by Peter Kreeft in *Handbook of Christian Apologetics* and *The Heart’s Deepest Longing*.

The argument from joy goes like this: Creatures are not born with desires unless satisfaction for those desires exists. A baby feels hunger; food can satisfy. A duckling wants to swim; water fills its need. Men and women feel sexual desire; sexual intercourse fulfills that desire. If I find myself with a desire that no experience in this world can satisfy, I probably was made for another world. If no earthly pleasures satisfy the need, it does not mean the universe is a fraud. Probably earthly pleasures were never meant to satisfy it, but only to arouse it (Lewis, *Surprised by Joy*, 120).

*The Logic of the Argument from Joy.* The logic for the argument from joy goes like this:

1. Every natural innate desire has a real object that can fulfill it.
2. Human beings have a natural, innate desire for immortality.
3. Therefore, there must be an immortal life after death.

In defense of the first premise, it is argued that “If there is hunger, there is food; if thirst, drink; if eros, sex; if curiosity, knowledge; if loneliness, society” (Kreeft, *Handbook*, 250). Nature rushes to fill a vacuum. The second premise is supported by appeal to a mysterious longing that differs from all others in two ways: First, its object is indefinable and unobtainable in this life. Second, the mere presence of this desire in the soul is felt to be more precious and joyful than any other satisfaction. However inadequately we express it, what we long for is paradise, heaven, or eternity (ibid.). Even atheists experience this longing.

If these premises are true, then there is “more” than this life; there is a life to come. The fact that we complain about this world, pain, and death—but never about eternity—reveals a deep-seated desire for it. We may never attain it, but this no more disproves its existence than life-long singleness proves there is no marital bliss or starvation proves there is no such thing as food (ibid.).

**Evaluation.** This argument is not logically air-tight. Few if any of the arguments are. However, it has a certain existential force to it that cannot be denied. Even great unbelievers have admitted a longing for God. The famous unbeliever, Bertrand Russell, admitted in a letter to Lady Otto: “Even when one feels nearest to other people, something in one seems obstinately to belong to God, and to refuse to enter into any earthly communion—at least that is how I should express it if I thought there was a God. It is odd, isn’t it? I care passionately for this world and many things and people in it, and yet . . . what is it all for? There must be something more important, one feels, though I don’t believe there is” (*Autobiography*, 125–26).

Of course, it is possible that the universe is irrational, that it is mocking our most basic needs. But there is something in one that refuses to accept that. The desire for joy can be disbelieved, but it is harder to eradicate.

**Conclusion.** Few theists would rest their case for God on any one argument. Each argument seems to demonstrate a different attribute of God along with his existence. For example, the cosmological argument shows that God is infinitely powerful; the teleological argument reveals that he is intelligent; the moral argument demonstrates that he is moral and, if he exists, the ontological argument shows that he is a Necessary Being.

Some theists offer other arguments for the existence of God, such as the argument from religious need or the argument from religious experience (see EXPERIENTIAL APOLOGETICS). Most nontheists claim they do not need God, but their own writings and experiences betray their position. But if there is a real need for God, it is far more reasonable to believe that there is a real God who can really fill this real need.

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**God, Moral Argument for. See MORAL ARGUMENT FOR GOD.**

**God, Nature of.** Natural theology deals with what can be known about the existence (*see* COSMOLOGICAL ARGUMENT; KALAM COSMOLOGICAL ARGUMENT) and nature of God by natural reason (*see* REVELATION, GENERAL), apart from any supernatural revelation (*see* REVELATION, SPECIAL). According to classical Christian theists (*see* THEISM), such as Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274), all of the essential metaphysical attributes of God can be known by natural reason. This includes God's aseity, simplicity, immutability, eternity, simplicity, unity, infinity, and morality.

**Aseity (Self-Existence).** Most classical theists see God's Aseity or Pure Existence as a key attribute. The early Church Fathers, as well as Augustine (354–430), Anselm (1033–1109), and Aquinas, continually cite the Bible in support of this position. In defending God's self-existence (aseity) classical theists such as Aquinas are fond of citing Exodus 3:14 where God identifies himself to Moses as "I Am that I Am." This they understand to refer to God as Pure Being or Existence.

God is Pure Actuality, with no potentiality in his being whatsoever. Whatever has potentiality (potency) needs to be actualized or effected by another. And since God is the ultimate Cause, there is nothing beyond him to actualize any potential (i.e., ability) he may have. Nor can God actualize his own potential to exist, since this would mean he caused his own existence. But a self-caused being is impossible, since it cannot create itself. Something has to exist before it can do anything. Even God cannot lift himself into being by his own ontological bootstraps. Thus, God must be Pure Actuality in his Being.

Of course, God has the potential to create other things. But he cannot bring himself into being. He always was. And while God has the potential to *do* other things, he cannot *be* anything

other than what he is. He has the power to *create* other things (active potency), but he does not have the power (passive potency) to *exist* in any other way than he does, namely, as an infinite, eternal, necessary, and simple Being.

God's aseity means that he *is* Being; everything else merely *has* being. God is Pure Actuality; all other things have both actuality and potentiality. Thus, God cannot not exist. All creatures can be nonexistent. That is, they have the potentiality for nonexistence. Only God is a Necessary Being. All other beings are contingent.

***Simplicity (Indivisibility)***. Since God is not composed in his Being, but is Pure Existence, Pure Actuality with no potentiality; it follows that he is simple and indivisible. A Being that by nature is not composed cannot be decomposed. One that has no parts cannot be torn apart. Hence, God has absolute simplicity with no possibility of being divided. He is literally indivisible.

Likewise, a God of Pure Actuality with no potentiality cannot be divided. For if it were divisible, then it would have to have the potential to be divided. But Pure Actuality has no potentiality in its Being whatsoever. Hence, it must be absolutely simple or indivisible.

God's indivisibility follows also from his immutability (see below). For if God could be divided, he could change. But God is unchangeable by nature. Thus he cannot be divided. He must be absolutely simple in his nature.

***Necessity (Noncontingency)***. God is by nature an absolutely necessary Being. That is, he cannot not exist. God is not a may-be but a must-be kind of Being. He is not contingent, since he does not have the possibility not to exist. If he has no potentiality not to exist, then he must exist.

This is not to say that the ontological argument is valid. Aquinas considered and rejected Anselm's proof for God. If God (i.e., Pure Actuality) exists, then he must exist necessarily. But one cannot simply define him into existence. Aquinas offered his famous cosmological arguments for God's existence (*Summa Theologica*, 1.2.3). And once we know, from reason and revelation, that God exists, then we can be sure that he must exist necessarily. Such a Being has no potential not to exist.

***Immutability (Unchangeability)***. In his epic *Summa Theologica* (1a.9.1), Aquinas offers three basic arguments in favor of God's unchangeability. The first argument is passed on the fact that a God of Pure Actuality ("I-Am-ness") has no potentiality. It follows, therefore, that God cannot change (Exod. 3:14). Whatever changes has to have the potential to change. But as pure Actuality, God has no potential, so he cannot change.

The second argument for God's immutability follows from his simplicity. Everything that changes is composed of what changes and what does not change. God cannot change because an absolutely simple being has no composition. If everything about a being changed, then it would be an entirely new being. In fact, it would not be change but annihilation of one thing and a creation of something entirely new. Now if, in every change in a being something remains the same and something does not, then it must be composed of these two elements. So an absolutely simple Being with no composition cannot change.

The third argument for God's unchangeability argues from his absolute perfection. Whatever changes acquires something new. But God cannot acquire anything new, since he could not be better or more complete. Therefore, God cannot change. If he did, he would not be God for he would have lacked some perfection.

Aquinas also argues that God alone is immutable (*Summa Theologica*, 1a.9.2). All creatures exist only because of the will of the Creator. His power brought them into existence, and it is his power that keeps them in existence. Therefore, if he withdrew his power they would cease to

exist. Whatever can cease to exist is not immutable. Therefore, God alone is immutable; everything else could cease to exist.

**Impassability (without Passions).** A long-recognized attribute of God that has recently come under attack is *impassability*. God is without passions. Passion implies desire for what one does not have. But God, as an absolutely perfect Being, lacks nothing. To lack something he would have to have a potentiality to have it. But God is Pure Actuality with no potentiality whatsoever. Therefore, God is completely and infinitely satisfied in his own perfection.

However, to say that God is impassable in the sense that he has no passions or cravings for fulfillment is not to say that he has no feelings. God feels anger at sin and rejoices in righteousness. But God's feelings are unchanging. He always, unchangingly, feels the same sense of anger at sin. He never ceases to rejoice in goodness and rightness. Thus, God has no changing passions, but he does have unchanging feelings.

**Eternity (Nontemporality).** God is not temporal (*Summa Theologica*, 1a. 10, 1). He is beyond time. Aquinas offers several arguments in support of this conclusion. The first argument goes:

1. Whatever exists in time can be computed according to its before and afters.
2. Changeless being, as God is, has no before or afters; it is always the same.
3. Consequently, God must be timeless.

Time is duration characterized by substantial and accidental changes. A substantial change is a change in what something *is*. Fire changes what a piece of wood is. An accidental change is a change in what something *has*. Growing knowledge is an accidental change in a being. Aquinas sees three levels of being in relation to time and eternity:

1. God in *eternity* is Pure Actuality, without essential or accidental change.
2. Angels and saints who dwell in the spiritual world of heaven live in *aeviternity* (or *aevum*).
3. Human beings, comprising soul and body, form and matter, live in *time*.

Eternity (God) endures without any potency. Aeviternity (angels) endure with completely actualized potency. Their changes are not essential but accidental. Spiritual beings in aeviternity do not change in their essence, though they do undergo accidental changes. Angels increase in knowledge by divine infusion, and they have changeableness with regard to choice, intelligence, affections and places (*ibid.*, 1a.10.6). But with no substantial changes in aeviternity, angels are immutable in their level of grace and charity. What is true of the angels is also true of the elect in heaven.

Time (humanity) endures with progressive actualized potency.

The second argument for God's eternity similarly follows from immutability. It begins with the premise that whatever is immutable does not change in the state of its being. Whatever is in time goes through a succession of states. So whatever is immutable is not temporal. This argument stresses another aspect of time; whatever is temporal has successive states, one after the other. God does not, so he is not temporal.

Total immutability necessarily implies eternity (*ibid.*, 1a.10.2). For whatever changes substantially is in time and can be computed according to before and after. Whatever does not change cannot be in time, since it has no different states by which before and after can be computed. It never changes. Whatever does not change is not temporal. Not only is God eternal, but he alone is eternal (*ibid.*, 1a.10.3), for he alone is essentially immutable.

Aquinas distinguishes eternity from endless time (ibid., 1a.10.4). First, whatever is essentially whole (eternity) is essentially different from what has parts (time). Eternity is now forever; time includes past, present, and future, now and then. The implication of this is that God's eternity is not divided; it is all present to him in his eternal now. So it must be essentially different from time in successive moments.

Second, endless time is just more an elongation of time. But eternity differs qualitatively. It differs essentially, not merely accidentally. Eternity is an essential, changeless state of being that transcends moment-by-successive-moment reality. Time measures that reality, or rather the stage on which reality plays out.

Third, an eternal being cannot change, whereas time involves change. By change can the measurements of before and after be made. Whatever can be computed according to before and after is not eternal. Endless time can be computed according to before and after. Hence, endless time is not the same as eternity. The eternal is changeless, but what can be computed by its before and after has changed. It follows, then, that the eternal now cannot live in relation to endless before and afters.

Obviously, Aquinas saw a crucial difference between the "now" of time and the "now" of eternity (ibid.). The now of time is movable. The now of eternity is not movable in any way. The eternal now is unchanging, but the now of time is ever changing. There is only an analogy between time and eternity; they cannot be the same. God's now has no past or future; time's now does.

Some have mistakenly concluded that Aquinas did not believe in God's duration for eternity, because he rejected temporality in God. Aquinas argued that duration occurs as long as actuality exists. But eternity, aeviternity, and time endure in different ways.

It follows, therefore that the essential difference in the quality of the duration in time, aeviternity, and eternity comes from the condition of the actuality. God *is Pure Actuality*. Angels *have received total actuality* from God in their created spiritual forms. Human beings *progressively receive actuality* in both spiritual form and material body.

Since God endures without potentiality, he cannot endure progressively. He endures in a much higher way—as Pure Actuality.

**Immensity.** Along with eternity is the attribute of immensity (nonspatiality). God is not limited in time, nor is he limited in space. In God's immanence he fills space, but he is not spatial. Only material things exist in space and time, and God is not material. "God is spirit" (John 4:24). As spiritual, God is not material or spatial. It is part of God's transcendence that he is beyond both time and space.

**Unity.** Classical theists have offered three reasons for God's unity (ibid., 1a.11.3). The first argument is from the simplicity of God. An absolutely simple being cannot be more than one, since to be more than one there must be parts, but simple beings have no parts. Absolutely simple beings are not divisible. God is an absolutely simple being. Therefore, God cannot be more than one being.

God's perfection argues for his unity. If two or more gods existed, they would have to differ. In order to differ, one must have what the other lacks. But an absolutely perfect being cannot lack anything. Therefore, there can only be one absolutely perfect being. God's unity also can be inferred from the unity of the world. The world is composed of diverse things. Diverse things do not come together unless they are ordered. But the world has an ordered unity. Therefore, there must be one Orderer of the world.

Theists argue that essential unity is better explained by one Orderer than by many orderers. For one is the essential cause of oneness, but many is only the accidental cause of oneness. Therefore, it is reasonable to infer that there is only one cause of the world, not many.

**Relatability (to the World).** One criticism of classical theism is that an eternal, unchanging God could not relate to a changing world. Aquinas anticipated this objection and treated it extensively.

There are three kinds of relations: One where both terms are ideas; one where both terms are real; and one where one term is real and one is an idea (ibid., 1a.13.7).

Now since creatures are dependent on God but God is not dependent on them, they are related as real to an idea. That is, God *knows* about the relationship of dependence but he does not *have* it. When there is a change in the creature there is no change in God. Just as when the man changes his position from one side of the pillar to the other, the pillar does not change; only the man changes in relation to the pillar. So, while the relationship between God and creatures is real, God is in no sense dependent in that relationship.

Aquinas is only denying *dependent* relationships, not all real ones. God never changes as he relates to the world, but real changes do occur in that relation with the world. The man's relation to the pillar really changes when he moves, but the pillar does not change.

The real but unchanging relation of God to the world is made even more clear when Aquinas considers how the eternal God relates to a temporal world (ibid., 1a.13.7, ad 2). God condescends to relate to humans as if he shared time with them. He can create a temporal relation that in no way changes him. Eternity can move in time, though time cannot move in eternity. To have a relationship with the temporal world, God does not have to be temporal. It makes no more sense to say God has to be temporal in order to relate to a temporal world than to say he has to be a creature in order to create.

God is really related to creatures as their Creator. But creatures are really related to God only because he is their Creator. They are dependent on that Creator-creature bond; he is not. Therefore, the relation of God to creatures is real and not merely ideal. However, it is a real relationship of dependence on the part of the creatures but not a relation of dependence on the part of God (ibid., 1a.13.7, ad 5).

**God's Knowledge. God Knows Himself.** If God is absolutely simple, can he know himself? All knowledge involves both a knower and a known. But God has no such duality. Aquinas argues that in self-knowledge the knower and known are identical. Hence, God can only know himself through himself (ibid., 1a.14.2). Since God is simple, he knows himself simply.

God also knows himself perfectly. Something is known perfectly when its potential to be known is completely realized. And there is no unactualized potentiality to know himself. Therefore, God's self-knowledge is completely actualized (ibid., 1a.14.3).

God's knowledge is identical with his essence. For if God's acts of knowledge were really distinct from his essence, then they would be related as actuality to potentiality. But there can be no potentiality in God. Therefore, God's knowledge and essence are really identical (ibid., 1a.14.4). This does not mean that God cannot know things other than himself. For God is the efficient cause of all things.

**God Knows and Does.** Even though God knows other things than himself, nonetheless, he knows them through himself. For God does not know other things through himself either successively or inferentially but simultaneously and intuitively (ibid., 1a.14.7, ad 2). God's knowledge is more perfect because he does not have to know things discursively through their causes but knows them directly and intuitively (ibid., 1a.14.7 ad 3, 4). God not only knows all

things in and through himself, but he also causes all things by his knowledge. God causes all things by his being, but God's being and his knowledge are identical (ibid., 1a.14.8). This does not mean that creation is eternal because he is eternal. For God causes all things as they are in his knowledge. But that creation should be eternal was not in God's knowledge (ibid., 1a.14.8, ad 2).

An effect pre-exists in the mind of its efficient cause. Hence, whatever exists must pre-exist in God, who is its efficient cause. God knows all of the various kinds of perfection in himself, as well as those which can participate in his likeness. Therefore, God knows whatever exists perfectly, insofar as it pre-exists in him (ibid., 1a.14.5).

*God Knows Every Creature Ideally.* God knows his own essence perfectly. And knowing his essence perfectly entails knowing it according to every mode by which it can be known, namely, in itself and as participated in by creatures. But every creature has its own proper form, in which it is like God. It follows, therefore, that God knows the form or idea of every creature as it is modeled after him. Perfect knowledge involves the ability to distinguish one thing from another. That is, he knows not only what things have in common (*esse*) but how they differ (*essence*). Therefore, God knows all things in their individual essences. But all things pre-exist in God's knowledge. Therefore, all things pre-exist in God's knowledge, not only with regard to their existence but also with regard to their individual essences.

The basis for what God knows is his own essence, but the extent of what he knows is not limited to that one essence but reaches to all things like it (ibid., 1a.15.2). God's knowledge of all things in himself does not mean that he only knows other things in general but not in particular. For God's knowledge extends as far as does his causality. And God's causality extends to singular things, since he is the cause of every individual thing. Therefore, God knows singular things (ibid., 1a.14.11). God has a perfect knowledge of everything. And to know something only in general but not in particular is improper knowledge. So, God knows everything properly. That is, he does not know the radii of circles merely by knowing the center; he knows the radii as well as the center.

*God Knows Evil.* For perfect knowledge of things must include knowing all that can occur to them. Evil can occur as a corruption of good things. Hence, God can know evil (*see* EVIL, PROBLEM OF). But things are knowable in the way in which they exist. Evil is a privation in good things. Therefore, God knows evil as a privation in a good (ibid., 1a.14.10).

*God Knows Changing Things.* Since God is unchanging and his knowledge is identical with his essence, he knows past, present, and future in one eternal now. Therefore, when time changes, God's knowledge does not change, since he knew it in advance. God knows change, but not in the *way* we know it, in successive time frames. From eternity God knows the whole of before and after the temporal now of human history (ibid., 1a.14.15).

God knows the same things we do, but he does not know them the same way we know them. Our knowledge is discursive, moving from premises to conclusions. In human knowledge there is twofold discursiveness: One thing is known *after* another, and one thing is known *through* another. But God cannot know things sequentially, since he is timeless and knows all things eternally at once. Nor can God know things inferentially, for he is simple and knows all things through the oneness of himself. Therefore, God cannot know anything discursively (sequentially, from topic to topic), inasmuch as discursive knowledge implies a limitation to consider one thing at a time on the part of the knower (ibid., 1a.14.7).

*God Knows All Possibilities.* By knowing himself perfectly God knows perfectly all the different ways his perfections can be shared by others. For there is within the essence of God all

the knowledge of all possible kinds of things his will could actualize. Hence, God knows all the particular things that could ever be actualized (ibid., 1a.14.6).

*God's Knowledge Allows Free Will.* Pulling these strands of thought about God's knowledge together shows us how God's sovereignty works alongside human free will. God's knowledge is not simply of the actual; he also knows all possible sorts of potential. He knows what is and ever could-be. For God knows whatever is in any way it can be known. Now both the actual and the potential are real. Only the impossible has no reality. Thus, whatever is potential is real. It follows that God can know what is potential as well as what is actual (ibid., 1a.14.9).

This means that God can know future contingents, that is, things that are dependent on free choice. For the future is a potential that pre-exists in God. And God knows whatever exists in himself as the cause of those things (ibid., 1a.14.13). Since God is a timeless being, he knows all of time in one eternal now. But the future is part of time. Therefore, God knows the future, including the free acts to be performed in it. Of course, whatever God knows is known infallibly, since God cannot err in his knowledge. Future contingents are known infallibly. They are contingent with regard to their immediate cause (human free choice) but necessary with regard to God's knowledge. God can do this without eliminating free choice, for an omniscient being can know whatever is not impossible to know. And it is not impossible for a timeless being to know a necessary end caused by a contingent means. God can know a *must-be* through a *may-be* but not a *can't-be*.

Therefore, an omniscient Being knows future actions as necessarily true events. If an action will occur and God knows it, then that event must occur, for an omniscient Mind cannot be wrong about what it knows. Therefore the statement "Everything known by God must necessarily be" is true if it refers to the statement of the truth of God's knowledge, but it is false if it refers to the necessity of the contingent events (ibid., 1a.14.5).

**God's Will.** Will can be defined as a being's rational inclination toward its own good. Whatever has intellect also has will, for will follows upon intellect. Further, every nature inclines to its own proper end or good. When the end is rational then the inclination is a rational inclination. God has rational inclination toward the good of his own nature. Therefore, God has will (ibid., 1a.19.1).

Having will does not mean that God changes. For the object of God's will is his divine Goodness. And whatever is in oneself necessitates no movement outside oneself to attain. Hence, God does not have to move outside himself to attain his own proper end. And will is an inclination toward one's own end. So, there is will in God, inasmuch as he inclines toward his own good. Will also involves love and delight in what is possessed. God loves and delights in the possession of his own nature. Therefore, God has will in the sense of delight but not in the sense of desire (ibid.).

*God's Will Causes Things to Be.* Simply because God wills things only in himself does not mean that he wills only himself. For it is in accord with the nature of being to communicate its good to others. And God is being par excellence; he is the source of all being. Hence, it is in accord with the nature of God to will other beings than himself (ibid., 1a.19.2). So God wills things other than himself in and through himself. God is not other than himself, but he can will things other than himself in himself. For will implies a relationship. Hence, although God is not other than himself, yet he wills things other than himself (ibid., 1a.19.2, ad 1).

God is not moved by anything outside himself when he wills to create through himself (ibid., 1a.19.2, ad 2). But in willing things other than himself, God is not moved by any insufficiency in himself but by the sufficiency in himself, that is, by his own goodness. Therefore, willing other

things through his own sufficiency denotes no insufficiency in God (ibid., 1a.19.2, ad 3). Just as God knows many things through the oneness of his essence, he can will many things through the oneness (good) of his will (ibid., 1a.19.2, ad 4).

*God Must Will and Can Will.* God wills things in two ways. Some things—his own goodness, for example—he must will. He cannot choose to will otherwise. These things he wills with *absolute* necessity. Other things God wills with *conditional* necessity—the goodness of creatures, for example. Whatever is willed by conditional necessity is not absolutely necessary. Creation is willed by conditional necessity.

Of course, God wills other things *because of* his own goodness but not as *necessitated* by it. For God can exist without willing other things. God need only will his own goodness necessarily and other things contingently. Therefore, these other things need not be willed with absolute necessity. Of course, it is necessary to God's will that he will his own nature necessarily. But God need not will anything other than himself. When God did will things other than himself, he must have willed these things voluntarily (ibid., 1a.19.3, ad 3).

It would seem that God must will things necessarily. As a Necessary Being he must know necessarily whatever he knows. It would seem then that he must will necessarily what he wills.

Aquinas responds that divine knowing is necessarily related to the created thing known, because the knowledge in the Knower is one with his essence. But divine willing is not necessarily related to the created thing willed. Willing relates to things as they exist in themselves, outside of the divine essence. God knows necessarily what he knows but does not will necessarily what he wills. Further, all things exist necessarily in God, but nothing exists necessarily outside him. But God need only will what is necessarily of his own nature. Therefore, God need only will other things as they exist in him but not as they exist in themselves outside of himself (ibid., 1a.19.3).

*All Created Effects Pre-exist in God's Will.* God's will is the cause of all things, so all created things pre-exist in God's knowledge. Will is the inclination to put into action what one knows. Therefore, all created effects flow from God's will (ibid., 1a.19.4). Of course, God must bestow good on all he chooses to create; God cannot create evil. But it is not necessary that God should will any other being or good than himself. Therefore, God need only bestow good on what he chooses to create (ibid., 1a.19.4, ad 1).

*God's Will Is Uncaused.* As to whether God's will is caused, Aquinas says that, rather, God's will *is* the cause of all things. What is the cause of all needs no cause. For in God the means and the end pre-exist in the cause as willed together. Human will looks to a desired end and what may be done to reach that goal. God's will causes both the end willed and the means to that end. And since all things pre-exist in the First Cause (God's will), there is no cause for God's will (ibid., 1a.19.5).

*God's Will Can Never Fail.* The will of God is the universal cause of all things. Therefore, the will of God is always fulfilled. What fails to accomplish God's will in one order does so in another order. For example, what falls from the order of his favor returns to the order of his justice. When particular causes fail, the universal cause does not fail. God cannot fail (ibid., 1a.19.6).

One may speak of an *antecedent* and *consequent* will of God. God wills antecedently that all should be saved (2 Peter 3:9). But God wills consequently that some will be lost, namely, those whom justice demands. But what is willed antecedently is not willed absolutely but conditionally. Only the consequent is willed absolutely in view of all the circumstances. Of course, God wills some things through secondary causes. And first causes are sometimes

hindered through defects in secondary causes. The movement of the body is hindered by a bad leg. Likewise, God's antecedent will is sometimes hindered by a defect in a secondary cause. But his consequent will is never frustrated. For first universal causes cannot be hindered by defective secondary causes, any more than goodness, as such, can be hindered by evil. However, God is the universal first cause of being, and his will cannot be hindered in his causing of being (ibid., 1a.19.6, ad 2).

*God Does Not Change His Mind.* Neither can God's will be changed, for God's will is in perfect accord with his knowledge. He is omniscient, so what he knows will be will be. Therefore, God's will is unchangeable. This does not mean that God does not will that some things change. But God's will does not change, even though he does will that other things change (ibid., 1a.19.7). When the Bible speaks of God "repenting," it means that from where we stand it looks as if he has changed his mind. God knew from eternity how it would fall out. And God's will includes intermediate causes, such as human free will. So God knows what the intermediate causes will choose to do. And God's will is in accord with his unchangeable knowledge. Therefore, God's will never changes, since he wills what he knows will happen. What is willed by conditional necessity does not violate human freedom, since what is willed is conditioned on their freely choosing it. God wills the salvation of human beings conditionally. Therefore, God's will to salvation does not violate human free choice, but uses it.

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### **God, Need for. See GOD, EVIDENCE FOR.**

**God, Objections to Proofs for.** Most of the traditional objections to arguments for God's existence developed out of issues first posed by David Hume and Immanuel Kant. Some of these are treated more fully under the specific apologetic framework to which they are related, such as the moral argument, the ontological argument, and the teleological argument. This overview lists arguments and objections to the existence of God. These are responses to points raised by Christian apologists. Arguments against the existence of God raised by nontheists themselves are discussed in *God, Alleged Disproofs of*.

**Finite Causes for Finite Beings.** The cosmological argument reasons from a finite effect to an infinite Cause (God). This conclusion is challenged by those who insist that all one needs to account for a finite effect is a finite cause. Positing an infinite Cause is metaphysical overkill.

However, *every* finite being or effect is limited, and *every* limited being is only adequately explained if it were caused by some Being that is not limited. The first Cause is the unlimited limiter of every limited thing. If this Cause were limited (i.e., caused), it would need a cause beyond itself by which to ground its limited existence. Inescapably, *every* limited being is caused. But Pure Actuality, or Existence as such, is unlimited. And the Actuality that provides the limits for everything else that is actualized must itself be unlimited in its existence. The first Cause must be uncaused, and an Uncaused Cause must be the unlimited or infinite Cause of everything else.

**No Necessary Being.** It is urged that such terms as *Necessary Being* and *Uncaused Cause* are meaningless, since nothing in our experience corresponds to them. This is not a valid objection. The very sentence, “A Necessary Being has no meaning,” is meaningless unless the words *necessary being* can be defined. The claim is self-defeating.

There is nothing incoherent among such terms if they are not contradictory. We know what *contingent* means, and *necessary* is the opposite, namely, “noncontingent.” The meanings of these terms are derived from their relationship to what is dependent upon them. And these meanings are twofold: First, the terms *necessary* and *infinite* are negative. *Necessary* means “not contingent.” *Infinite* means “not finite.” We know what these limitations mean from experience, and, by contrast, we know that God does not have any of them. A negative term does not denote a negative attribute. It is not the affirmation of nothing; rather, it is the negation of all contingency and limitation in the first Cause. The positive content of what God is derives from the causal principle. He is Actuality because he causes all actuality. He is Being since he is the Cause of all being. However, as Cause of all being his being cannot be caused. As the Ground of all contingent being, he must be a Necessary (noncontingent) Being.

**Unprovable Causality.** Since all forms of the cosmological argument depend on the principle of causality (*see CAUSALITY, PRINCIPLE OF*), it would fail without the principle. But can that principle be proved? Normally we think it is obvious, based on experience. But experience may be illusion. Everything not based on experience is simply a tautology, that is, true only by definition and so not proof in itself.

This critique springs from Hume’s epistemological atomism—that all empirical impressions are “entirely loose and separate.” Hume believed necessary causal connection could not be established empirically from sensible experience. But causality is supported by metaphysical necessity. We need not rely solely on empirical observation. Hume himself never denied that things have a cause for their existence. He said, “I never asserted so absurd a proposition as that anything might arise without a cause” (Hume, 1:187).

It would be ontologically ill-advised to suppose that something could arise from nothing. The principle of causality used by Aquinas is that “every limited being has a cause for its existence.” This principle is based in the fundamental reality that nonexistence cannot cause existence; nothing cannot produce something. It takes a producer to produce (*see CAUSALITY, PRINCIPLE OF*).

The need for a cause of existence is rooted in the nature of finite, changing beings as composed of *existence* (actuality or act) and *essence* (potentiality or potency). Existence as such is unlimited; all limited existence is being limited by something distinct from existence itself (this limiting factor will be called “essence”); whatever is being limited is being caused, for to be limited in being is to be caused to be in a certain finite way. A limited existence is a caused existence.

Rather, all limited beings are composed beings, composed of existence and essence. Their essence limits the kind of existence they can have. Likewise, an unlimited Being is an uncomposed Being (i.e., a Simple Being). Such a Being has no limiting essence as such. Its essence is identical to its unlimited existence. The need for causality, then, is derived from an analysis of what finite being is. Upon examination, finite being is seen to be caused being, and caused being must have a cause.

**Contradictions from Causality.** Many nontheists misunderstand the principle of causality. They assume the principle insists that “every *thing* has a cause.” If this were true it would follow that one should never stop seeking a cause, even for God. However, the principle should not be

stated: “Every *being* has a cause.” Rather, it is “Every *finite, contingent being* has a cause.” In this way there is no contradiction between a First Cause, which is not contingent, and the principle of causality, which holds that all finite beings need a cause. Once one arrives at an infinite and necessary being, there is no need to seek a further cause. A necessary being explains (grounds) its own existence. It exists because it must exist. It cannot not exist. Only what *can* not exist (namely, a contingent being) needs an explanation. To ask of a necessary being why it exists is like asking why necessity must be necessary, or why circles must be round.

***An Infinite Series of Causes.*** One objection to the cosmological argument is that a First Cause is unneeded because an infinite series of causes is possible. Infinite series are common to mathematics.

The suggestion of an infinite series is only raised in the horizontal (kalam) form of the cosmological argument (*see* KALAM, COSMOLOGICAL ARGUMENT). In the vertical form of Thomas Aquinas, the very first cause outside of a finite, contingent, changing being must be infinite and uncaused (*see* GOD, EVIDENCE FOR). This is so, because *every* finite being needs a cause. Hence, one finite being cannot cause the existence of another. There cannot be even one intermediate link between the Creator and his creatures. The very first cause outside of beings whose existence is being actualized must be the Actualizer of being.

Mathematically infinite series are possible, but not actual ones. The former are abstract; the latter are concrete. It is possible to have an infinite number of points on one line on this page. But one cannot get an infinite number of letters on this line, no matter how small they are (*see* INFINITE SERIES). Points are abstract or theoretical entities; a series of causes of existence is comprised of actual entities. An infinite number of the former are possible, but not of the latter. The reason for this is simple: No matter how many dominos one has in a line, one more could be added. The number cannot be infinite.

Furthermore, an infinite series of simultaneous and existentially dependent causes is not possible. There must be a here-and-now ground for a simultaneous series of causes, none of which would otherwise have a ground for its existence. An ungrounded infinite regress is tantamount to affirming that the existence in the series arises from nonexistence, since no cause in the series has a real ground for its existence. Or, if one cause in the series grounds the existence of the others, then it must be a First Cause, but then the series is not infinite. Otherwise the cause causes its own existence, while it is causing the existence of everything else in the series. That is impossible.

***The Invalid Ontological Argument.*** Kant believed that ontological sleight-of-hand imports a Necessary Being into every cosmological argument. Such a move invalidly argues from experience to necessity. This criticism is not applicable to the metaphysical form of the cosmological argument (*see* COSMOLOGICAL ARGUMENT; THOMAS AQUINAS).

Since the cosmological argument begins with existence, not thought, it does not have to smuggle existence into the equation. The first premise is, “Something exists.” There is no beginning with “that from which nothing greater can be conceived,” by which Anselm began his ontological argument.

The cosmological argument proceeds with principles grounded in reality, not in thought. They are ontologically grounded principles, rather than rationally inescapable ideas. It is based on metaphysical truth that “Nothing cannot cause something,” rather than the rational assertion that “Everything must have a sufficient reason” (*see* SUFFICIENT REASON, PRINCIPLE OF). The argument concludes with “Pure Actuality is the cause of existence for all limited existence,” rather than with “a Being which logically cannot not be.”

***The Concept of Necessity.*** One objection is that the principle of necessity applies only to logical constructs or ideas, not to real-life existence. In fact *necessary* is misapplied to the “Necessary Being” of the cosmological argument.

This argument fails because the objection is self-defeating. Either the statement “Necessity does not apply to real life” is itself a statement about existence, or else it is not. If it is a statement about existence, it is self-defeating, for it claims to be both necessary and about reality, while it is saying no necessary statements can be made about reality. If it is merely a metastatement, or statement about statements (and not really a statement about reality), then it is uninformative about what kind of statements may or may not be made about reality.

This criticism also begs the question. Critics claim to “know” that necessity does not apply to being because there is no Necessary Being. There is no valid way in advance, while looking at the argument for God’s existence, to know if a Necessary Being exists. The concept is not contradictory. It simply means not-contingent, which is a coherent idea. But if there is no *a priori* way to know that a Necessary Being cannot exist, then it is possible that necessity truly *may apply* to being, namely, if a Necessary Being does, in fact, exist.

***Metaphysical Contradictions.*** Kant offered several alleged contradictions or antinomies that he thought result from applying cosmological argumentation to reality. At least three of these antinomies apply to the cosmological argument.

***The Antinomy about Time.*** If we assume that time applies to reality, a contradiction seems to result that the world is *both* temporal and eternal. *Thesis:* The world must have begun in time, or else an infinity of moments have elapsed before it began, and this is impossible (since an infinity of moments can never be completed). *Antithesis:* The world could not have begun in time, for that implies that there was a time before time began, and this is contradictory.

Kant’s view of time is incorrect. Time is not a continuum of successive moments that exist without beginning or end. Thus, creation did not begin in time that was already there; creation *was* the beginning of time. The only thing “prior” to time is eternity, and eternity is prior in a causal, not a temporal, way.

Further, this argument overlooks the possibility of an eternal creation, which some theists, such as Aquinas, thought philosophically possible. In any event, Kant’s objection, if valid, would charge only the horizontal (*kalam*) form of the cosmological argument (*see* KALAM COSMOLOGICAL ARGUMENT). It does not touch the vertical form of the argument based on a here-and-now cause of existence. This type of cosmological argument is not dependent on a specific view about the origin of creation, but only its present conservation in existence. The finite world demands a cause right now, regardless of whether it began in time or is eternal.

***The Antinomy of Causality.*** Theists are charged with arguing that the world both has a First Cause and does not have a First Cause. *Thesis:* Not every cause has a cause or else a series of causes would not begin to cause as they in fact do. *Antithesis:* A series of causes cannot have a beginning, since everything demands a cause. Hence, the series must go on infinitely.

The antithesis of this alleged dilemma is incorrect in stating that *every* cause needs a cause. According to the principle of causality (*see* CAUSALITY, PRINCIPLE OF), only *finite*, contingent things need causes. Thus the Cause of finite being is not finite. Only finite causes need a cause; the first uncaused Cause needs no cause, because it is not finite.

***The Antinomy of Contingency.*** Kant insists that everything must be both contingent and not be contingent, if we assume that these concepts apply to reality. *Thesis:* Not everything is contingent or else there would be no condition for contingency. The dependent must be

depending on something that is not dependent. *Antithesis*: Everything must be contingent, for necessity applies only to concepts, not to things.

This objection fails because there is no way to deny that necessity can apply to reality without making a necessary statement about reality. Only an ontological disproof could establish Kant's point. And ontological disproofs (*see* GOD, ALLEGED DISPROOFS OF) are self-defeating. Further, the cosmological argument has already concluded that something necessarily exists. The validity of this argument is the refutation of Kant's contention that necessity does not apply to existence.

***Cosmological God.*** The objection is made that the cosmological argument does not prove a theistic God. There are many other concepts of God besides theism (*see* WORLDVIEW). This First Cause may not be identified with a theistic God any more than with polytheistic gods, a pantheistic god, a panentheistic god, a deistic god, or even the material universe of *atheism* (*see* ATHEISM; DEISM; FINITE GODISM; PANENTHEISM; PANTHEISM; POLYTHEISM).

***God Is Not the Gods of Polytheism.*** There cannot be more than one unlimited existence as such. More than the Most is not possible. Such a Cause is pure Act or Actuality, an Act that is unlimited and unique. Only actuality as conjoined with potency is limited, such as is found in contingent beings. To differ, one being would have to lack some characteristic found in the other. But any being that lacked some characteristic of existence would not be an unlimited, perfect existence. In other words, two infinite beings cannot differ in their potentiality, since they have no potentiality; they are pure actuality. And they cannot differ in their actuality, since actuality as such does not differ from actuality as such. Hence, they must be identical. There can be only one unlimited Cause of all limited existence.

***God Is Not the God of Pantheism.*** Pantheism affirms that an unlimited and necessary Being exists but denies the reality of limited and finite beings. But change is a fundamental fact of finite existence. Pantheism is contrary to our experience of change. If all change, including that in our minds and consciousness, is unreal, then no river moves, no tree grows, and no human ages. If there is any real change, there must really be changing beings distinct from God, for God is an unchanging Being.

***God Is Not the God of Panentheism.*** Panentheism, also known as dipolar theism or process theology, asserts that God has two poles: an *actual pole* (which is identified with the changing temporal world) and a *potential pole* (which is eternal and unchanging). Such a conception of God must be rejected. The conclusion of the cosmological argument demonstrates the need for a God of pure Actuality with no potentiality (pole) at all. Further, God cannot be subject to limitations, composition, or spatiotemporality as an unlimited being. Moreover, the theistic God cannot have poles or aspects, since he is absolutely simple (i.e., uncomposed) with no duality at all (premise 5). A partly limited unlimited existence is a contradiction.

Nor can God be subject to change. For anything that changes must be composed of actuality and potentiality for change. Change is a passing from potentiality to actuality; from what can be to what has actually become. But since existence as such has no potentiality, it cannot change. Anything that changes proves thereby that it possessed some potentiality for the change it underwent. A pure and unlimited actuality cannot change.

Finally, the God of panentheism is a confusion of the world process with the God who grounds that process. God is in the process as the unchanging basis for change, but God is not of the process. God is the cause of all finite, changing existence, but he is beyond all finitude and change. God changes relationally (by entering changing relationships with the world), but he

does not change essentially. When the person moves from one side of the pillar to the other, there is a real change in relationship, but there is no change in the pillar.

*God Is Not the God of Deism.* A deistic God is not the here-and-now cause of the universe, as is the theistic God. Since the universe is a dependent being, it needs something Independent on which to depend—at all times. The universe never ceases to be dependent or contingent. Once contingent, always contingent. A contingent being cannot become a Necessary Being, for a Necessary Being cannot come to be or cease to be. So, if the universe ever ceased being contingent, it would become a Necessary Being, which is impossible.

*God Is Not the God of Finite Godism.* An uncaused cause is not finite. For every finite being needs a cause, that is, it is caused. But this cause is uncaused. Hence, it cannot be finite or limited. Rather, it is the unlimited Limiter of every limited being. In short, everything limited is caused. Thus, this uncaused Being must be unlimited.

*God Is Not the God of Atheism.* The uncaused Cause cannot be identical with the material universe, as many atheists believe. As ordinarily conceived, the cosmos or material universe is a limited spatiotemporal system. It is, for example, subject to the second law of thermodynamics and is running down. But an Uncaused Cause is unlimited and not running down. Further, since space and time imply limitations to a here-and-now kind of existence and an uncaused Cause is not limited, then it cannot be identical to the space-time world. The theistic God is in the temporal world as its very ground of continuing existence, but he is not of the world in that it is limited and he is not.

If, in response, one claimed that the whole of the material universe is not temporal and limited, as are the parts, this would only demonstrate what theism claims. For his conclusion is that there exists, beyond the contingent world of the limited spatiotemporality, a “whole” reality that is eternal, unlimited, and necessary. In other words, it agrees with theism that there is a God beyond the limited, changing world of experience. It is a substitute for God which admits that there is a “whole” reality that is “more” than the experienced part of reality and that has all the essential metaphysical attributes of the theistic God.

Therefore, the conclusion of the cosmological argument must be the God of theism, namely, the one, indivisible, infinite, necessary, uncaused Cause of everything that exists, both when it came to exist and right now as it continues to exist.

*No Here-and-Now Cause.* But much of the above reasoning comes to naught if, as some critics argue, there could be a beginning cause without the need for one now. Either such a Cause has long since gone out of existence, or at least it is not necessary to sustain the universe.

A God who caused the universe and subsequently ceased to exist could not be the theistic God demonstrated by the cosmological argument. The theistic God is a Necessary Being, and a Necessary Being cannot cease to be. If it exists, it must, by its very nature, exist necessarily. A Necessary Being cannot exist in a contingent mode any more than a triangle can exist without three sides.

A necessary being must cause a contingent being at all times. For a contingent being must always be contingent as long as it exists, since it cannot become a Necessary Being. But if a contingent being is always contingent, then it always needs a Necessary Being on which it can depend for its existence. Since no contingent being holds itself in existence, it must be held in existence at all times by a Necessary Being.

For a complete discussion of this argument, see the “objections” section of COSMOLOGICAL ARGUMENT. As is explained in that article, existing is a moment-by-moment process. No thing receives all of its being at once, nor even the next instant of it. Existence comes one moment at a

time. At each moment of dependent be-ing there must be some independent Being by whom the moment of being is given. God as Pure Actuality is actualizing everything that is actual.

**Arbitrary Models.** This objection states that it is only because we have modeled reality as contingent or composed of actuality and potentiality that we are, therefore, forced to conclude that there is a Necessary Being or Pure Actuality. This, they insist, is an arbitrary and loaded way to view reality.

Theists point out that the contingency/necessity model is not arbitrary but is logically exhaustive. Either there is only a Necessary Being, or else there is a contingent being(s) as well as a Necessary Being. But there cannot be merely a contingent being(s). For contingent beings do not account for their own existence, since they are but might not be.

Likewise, either everything is one undifferentiated Pure Actuality or pure potentiality or a combination of actuality and potentiality. No other possibility exists. But there cannot be two Pure Actualities, since actuality as such is unlimited and unique. There cannot be two ultimates or two infinite beings. So whatever else exists must be a combination of actuality and potentiality. But since no potentiality can actualize itself, then beings composed of actuality and potentiality must be actualized by Pure Actuality.

**Modal Fallacies.** Modal logic is based on the distinction between the possible and the necessary. This form of reasoning has developed its own list of fallacies. Some modal logicians would argue that it is possible for all the parts of my car to break down at one time, but this does not mean that all the parts necessarily will break down at one time. Thus, though all contingent beings possibly do not exist, they do not necessarily not exist at one time and thus would need no universal cause of existence.

As far as modal logic is concerned, this objection is correct and would cast doubt on some forms of the argument from contingency. However, this objection does not apply to Aquinas's argument, since it is not concerned with showing that all things that could *not exist* needed a single cause to produce their existence, but that all things that *do exist* (though possibly could not exist) need a cause for their present existence, both individually and in toto.

A second possible charge of committing a modal fallacy is that it is illegitimate to infer from the fact that the world necessarily needs a being as First Cause that the world needs a *Necessary Being* as First Cause. Again, as it is stated, that charge would be correct, but the cosmological argument of Aquinas does not make that inference. God is not considered a Necessary Being because the argument necessarily demonstrates his being. He is called Necessary Being because ontologically he cannot not be. We learn of his Necessary Being, not from the rigor of our premises, but because the cause of all contingent being cannot be a contingent being, but must be a Necessary Being.

The mistake of many theists, especially since Gottfried Leibniz (1646–1716), is to cast the cosmological argument in a context of *logical necessity* based on the principle of *sufficient reason*. This ultimately leads to contradictions and an invalidated argument. In contrast, other theists (including Aquinas) used the principle of existential causality to infer the existence of unlimited Cause or Actualizer of all existence. This conclusion is not rationally inescapable, but it is actually undeniable. If any contingent being exists, then a Necessary Being exists; if any being with the potentiality not to exist does exist, then a Being with no potentiality not to exist must exist.

**Imperfect World, Imperfect Cause.** It is also objected that, if there is a cause of the universe, it need not be perfect, since the world is imperfect. If a cause resembles its effects, then it would

seem that the world must be caused by an imperfect, finite, male and female group of gods. For this is what we know as the causes of like imperfect things in our experience.

The ultimate cause, however, cannot be imperfect, since the not perfect can only be known if there is ultimately a Perfect by which it is known not to be perfect. Nor must the cause be identical to its effect. The cause cannot be less than the effect, but it can be more. The cause of finite being cannot be imperfect, since it is Being itself or Pure Actuality. Only Pure Actuality can actualize a potency (potentiality). No potency can actualize itself. Hence, the Cause of being must be perfect in its Being, since it has no potency, limitations, or privation that can constitute an imperfection.

***The Explanation of Chance.*** Why posit an intelligent cause (designer) of the world when chance can explain the apparent design? Given enough time, any “lucky” combination will result. The universe may be a “happy accident” (*see* CHANCE).

For one thing, there has not been enough time for chance to work. One former atheist, Fred Hoyle, calculated that, given the geological time span of billions of years, the chances are still only one to 1030,000 that so complex a form as even a one-celled animal would emerge by purely natural forces (Hoyle). The chances are virtually zero that chance was responsible.

Second, chance does not “cause” anything; only forces do. And it is known that natural forces do not produce specified complexity, such as that found in living things. Chance is only an abstraction that describes the intersection of two or more lines of causes.

Finally, it is unscientific and irrational to appeal to chance. As even the skeptic David Hume noted, science is based on observation about regularly recurring events. And the only kind of cause known to rational beings that can cause the specified complexity found in living things is an intelligent cause (*see* EVOLUTION, CHEMICAL).

***A Possible Nonexistence.*** According to this objection, it is always possible to conceive of anything, including God, as not existing. Hence, nothing exists necessarily. Since God is said to be a Necessary Being, then even he must not exist necessarily; therefore God must not exist at all.

This is a valid objection to the ontological argument, but not against the cosmological and teleological arguments. It is possible that nothing would ever have existed, including God. So a total state of nothingness is not an impossible state of affairs. However, something does undeniably exist, and so this objection is irrelevant. For as long as something finite does exist there must be a Cause for its existence.

***Only a Logical Existence.*** Some antitheists argue that it is logically necessary for a triangle to have three sides, but it is not necessary for any three-sided thing to exist. Even if it were logically necessary for God to exist, that does not mean he actually does exist.

At best, this is an objection only to the ontological argument. Theists need not, and most theists do not, conceive of God as a *logically* necessary being but as an *actually* necessary being.

It is logically possible that no triangle exists, but if it does exist, it actually necessarily has three sides. It is logically possible that there is no Necessary Being. But if a Necessary Being exists, then it is actually necessary for it to exist. For a Necessary Being must exist necessarily.

***Inferring Cause from Experience.*** There is an unsurpassable gulf between the thing-to-me (*phenomena*) and the thing-in-itself (*noumena* or real), Kant said. We cannot know the noumena; we know things only as they appear to us, not as they really are. Therefore, we cannot validly infer a real cause from effects we experience.

This objection begs the question and is self-defeating. It begs the question by supposing that our senses do not provide us information about the real world. It wrongly assumes that we sense

only sensation rather than sense reality. It mistakenly believes that we know only our ideas, rather than knowing reality through our ideas. Second, in claiming that one cannot know reality, one is making a statement about reality. The agnostic claims to know enough about reality to be sure that nothing can be known about reality. This is a self-defeating claim.

How can Kant know that reality causes our experiences unless there is a valid causal connection between the real (noumenal) world of the cause and the apparent (phenomenal) world of the experience? What is more, one could not even know his own ideas were the result of his mind unless there were real connections between cause (mind) and effect (ideas). Nor would he write books, as agnostics do, assuming that readers would look at the phenomenal effects (words) and be able to know something about the noumenal (real) cause (mind).

***The Cause of God.*** Bertrand Russell (1872–1970) argued that if everything needs a cause, then so does God. And if all things do not need a cause, then neither does the world. But in neither case do we need a First Cause.

The major premise is false. Theists do not claim that *everything* needs a cause. The principle of causality states only that everything that *begins* (or is finite) needs a cause. If something does not have a beginning, then it obviously does not need a Beginner. Nontheists such as Russell acknowledge that the universe does not need a cause—it is just “there.” If the universe can just “be there” without a cause, why can’t God?

***Arbitrary or Not Ultimate.*** Russell believed that the moral law is either beyond God or else it results from his will. But if it is beyond God, then God is not ultimate, since he is subject to it (and hence, is not the Ultimate good). And if God decided what would be moral, then he is arbitrary and not essentially good, in which case he would not be worthy of our worship. So, in either case no God worthy of the name exists.

Theists respond in two ways. Voluntarists take the dilemma by the horn and agree that the moral law flows from God’s will but deny that this is arbitrary. God is the source of all good. What he wills to be right, is right. And what he wills to be regarded as wrong, is wrong. God’s will is the ultimate court of appeal.

Essentialists go through the horns of a dilemma, pointing out that there is a third alternative: God’s will is subject to what is essentially good, but this Good is his own unchangeable nature. That is, something is not good simply because God wills it (voluntarism). Rather, God wills it because it is good. It is good because it is in accord with his unchangeably good nature. In this way God is neither arbitrary nor less than ultimate.

***All-Powerful Existence.*** Theists claim God is all powerful. But many nontheists insist this is impossible. The logic of their argument is:

1. If God were all powerful, then he could do anything.
2. And if he could do anything, then God could make a rock so big that he can’t move it.
3. But if God could not move this rock, then he could not do everything.
4. Hence, an all-powerful God that can do anything cannot exist.

Put in this form, the theist rejects the first premise as an improper definition of omnipotence. God cannot literally do anything. He can only do what is possible to do consistent with his being as God. He cannot do what is logically or actually impossible. God cannot do some things. He cannot cease being God. He cannot contradict his own nature (cf. Heb. 6:18). He cannot do what is logically impossible, for example make a square circle. Likewise, God cannot make a rock so heavy that he cannot lift for the simple reason that anything he can make is finite. Anything that is finite he can move by his infinite power. If he can make it, he can move it.

**Both Good and Evil, Being and Nonbeing.** Nontheists say that, if God is infinite, then he is everything, including opposites. He is both good and evil. He is both perfect and imperfect. He is also both Being and nonbeing. But these are opposites, and God cannot be opposites. Further, the theist cannot admit that God is evil or nonexistent. Therefore, no theistic God exists.

The theist rejects the premise that God is everything; he is only what he is—an absolutely perfect Being. And God is not what he is not—an imperfect being. He is the Creator and not a creature. God is pure and necessary existence. So, he cannot be nonexistent. God cannot be opposite of what he is, any more than a triangle can be a square or a circle can be a rectangle.

When we say that God is unlimited or infinite, we do not mean that he is everything. It does not mean, for example, that God is limited and finite. The unlimited cannot be limited. The uncreated Creator cannot be a created creature. The standard for all good cannot be evil.

**A Projection of Imagination.** Ludwig Feuerbach (1804–1872) argued that humans made God in their image. God is only a projection of what we think of ourselves. Ideas of God come from our ideas of human beings. Hence, God is only a projection of these ideas. He does not exist beyond them.

This kind of argument makes a serious error: Who can know that God is “nothing but” a projection without “more than” knowledge? The essence of his argument can be stated this way:

1. God exists in human consciousness.
2. But humans cannot go beyond their own consciousness.
3. Therefore, God does not exist beyond our consciousness.

The problem with this argument is the second premise. Simply because we cannot go beyond our consciousness does not mean nothing exists beyond our consciousness. I cannot go beyond my mind, but I know there are other minds beyond mine with whom I converse. If we cannot go beyond our consciousness, then Feuerbach could not make the statement that no God is there. How does he know there is no God out there, unless his knowledge can go beyond his consciousness? To make “nothing-but” statements (such as, “God is nothing but a projection of our imagination”) implies “more-than” knowledge.

Simply because we do not go beyond our own consciousness does not mean that our consciousness is not aware of things that are beyond us. We cannot *get* outside of ourselves, but we can *reach* outside of ourselves. This is precisely what knowledge does. Consciousness is not simply consciousness of itself. We are also conscious of others. When we read a book we are not simply conscious of our own ideas; we are conscious of another mind who wrote the words from which we got those ideas. Consciousness does reach beyond itself. That is what the senses and mind enable us to do.

**An Illusion.** Sigmund Freud insisted that God is an illusion—something we wish to be true but have no basis for believing, beyond our wish. This argument is developed in the article, Freud, Sigmund. His apparent reasoning:

1. An illusion is something based only in wish but not in reality.
2. The belief in God has the characteristics of an illusion.
3. Therefore, belief in God is a wish not based in reality.

Of course, in this form the theist challenges the minor premise. Not all who believe in God do so simply because they wish for a Cosmic Comforter. Some find God because they thirst for reality; others because they are interested in truth, rather than feeling good. God is not only a comforting Father; he is also a Judge who punishes. Christians believe in hell, and yet no one

really wishes this to be true. Freud, in fact, may have it backwards: perhaps our image of earthly fathers is patterned after God, rather than the reverse. Certainly the desire for God is not the only basis for believing that God exists (*see* GOD, EVIDENCE FOR). Freud's argument would, at best, apply only to those who had no other basis than their own wish that God exists.

What is more, the reality of God's existence is independent of the reasons people do or do not wish him to exist. Either God does not exist or he does. Desires cannot draw the truth an inch either way. Freud's disbelief might itself be an illusion, based on his own desire not to follow God and obey God (cf. Ps. 14:1; Rom. 1:18–32).

**Chance and Origins.** If chance can explain the origin of the universe (*see* EVOLUTION), there is no need for a cause. This objection to proofs for God's existence is subject to several criticisms.

An effect cannot be greater than its cause. The Cause of intelligent beings must be intelligent. It cannot give perfections it does not have to give (*see* FIRST PRINCIPLES; TELEOLOGICAL ARGUMENT).

It is unscientific to speak of chance causing the incredibly complex and intelligent patterns found in the structure of life (*see* TELEOLOGICAL ARGUMENT) and the universe (*see* BIG BANG). Only intelligent intervention adequately explains the organization of DNA in the simplest organism.

Chance is only a statistical *description* of the likelihood of events. Only forces or powers can cause events. Chance merely describes the likelihood of a force (or forces) producing a given event.

Chance cannot be a cause in terms of the cosmological argument. Chance is not a power, and a nonpower cannot cause anything.

Even the critic who proposes chance explanation of the entire universe would not agree that the very words used to express his ideas were a product of chance.

**The Possibility of Nothing.** Some critics object to the cosmological argument on the ground that it is logically possible that nothing ever existed, including God. If it is logically possible that God never existed, then it is not logically necessary that he does exist.

The theist can readily admit that it is possible for a Necessary Being not to exist so long as nothing else ever existed either. However, *if* there is a Necessary Being then it is not possible that he does not exist. A *logically* Necessary Being need not necessarily actually exist. But an *actually* Necessary Being must necessarily actually exist. The atheists' objection to the concept of a necessary being applies only to a logically necessary being, not to an actually necessary being.

While it is *logically* possible that nothing ever existed, including God, it is not *actually* possible. Something does exist. As long as it is not actually possible for a total state of nothingness, then something must necessarily and eternally exist (e.g., God), since nothing cannot produce something. And if there were ever a total state of nothingness, then there would always be a total state of nothingness. For nothingness cannot produce anything.

**A Necessary (Uncaused) Being.** But perhaps the whole idea of an uncaused Being is meaningless. It is a coherent concept in the sense of being noncontradictory. A contingent being is one that *can* not exist. A necessary being is one which *cannot* not exist. Since the latter is logically (and actually) opposite of the other, then to reject the coherence of a necessary being would involve rejecting the coherence of a contingent being. But those are the only two kinds of

being there can be. Hence, to reject the meaningfulness of the concept of a necessary being would be to reject the meaningfulness of all being. But to say “all being is meaningless” is to make a statement about being which purports to be meaningful. This is self-defeating.

Another way to show the meaningfulness of the concept of an uncaused Being is to point to the atheist’s concept of an uncaused universe. Most atheists believe it is meaningful to speak of a universe which had no cause. But if the concept of an uncaused universe is meaningful, so is the concept of an uncaused God.

**An Uncaused Universe.** Meaningful though an uncaused universe may be, pulling one together in practical terms is something else. The universe is a collection of parts, each contingent and so needing a cause. Either the whole universe is *equal* to all its parts or else it is *more* than all its parts. If it is equal to them, then it too needs a cause. The sum of many dependent parts will never equal more than a dependent whole, no matter how big it is. Adding up *effects* never yields a cause; it produces only a big pile of effects. Only if the universe is *more* than all its effects can it be uncaused and necessary. But to claim that there is a something more, uncaused and necessary on which everything in the universe is dependent is to claim exactly what the theist means by a Necessary Being on which all contingent beings depend for their existence.

The whole issue can be clarified by asking the nontheist this question: If everything in the universe (i.e., every contingent being) suddenly ceased to exist, would there be anything left in existence? If not, then the universe as a whole is contingent too, since the existence of the whole is dependent on the parts. But if something remained after every contingent part of the universe suddenly ceased to exist, then there really is a transcendent necessary uncaused Something which is not dependent on the universe for its existence. But in either case, the atheists’ claim fails.

**Unconvincing Arguments.** Some object that theistic arguments persuade only those who already believe, and who do not need them. Therefore, they are useless. But, whether anyone is convinced by an argument depends on several factors. For one thing, even if the argument is sound, persuasiveness will depend in part on whether the argument is understood.

Once the mind understands the argument, giving assent to it is a matter of the will. No one is ever forced to believe in God simply because the mind understands that there is a God. Personal factors may lead a person to remain uncommitted to belief. Theistic arguments do not automatically convert unbelievers. But persons of good will who understand the argument ought to accept it as true. If they do not, it does not prove that the argument is wrong; rather, it shows their reluctance to accept it.

**Conclusion.** Many objections have been proposed against the proofs for the existence of God. They are usually based on a misunderstanding of the proofs. None succeed in falsifying the arguments. If they did they would be a proof that you cannot have a proof. That is a self-defeating argument in itself.

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**Evolution.** Evolution covers three basic areas: the origin of the universe; the origin of first life, and the origin of new life forms. Respectively, these are called cosmic evolution, chemical evolution, and biological evolution (*see* EVOLUTION, BIOLOGICAL; EVOLUTION, CHEMICAL; EVOLUTION, COSMIC). Because differing implications and arguments set apart the apologetics relating to each of these evolutionary highways, they will be discussed in separate articles.

In the broad sense, *evolution* means development, but more specifically it has come to mean the theory of common ancestry. It is the belief that all living things evolved by natural processes from earlier and more simple forms of life. Theistic evolution posits a God who got the process going (by creating matter and/or first life) and/or has guided it. Naturalistic evolution believes the entire process is natural including the origin of the universe and first life by spontaneous generation.

For other discussions relating to a critique of evolution science, see ADAM, HISTORICITY OF; ANTHROPIC PRINCIPLE; BIG BANG THEORY; CREATION, VIEWS OF; DARWIN, CHARLES; MISSING LINKS; ORIGINS, SCIENCE OF, and TELEOLOGICAL ARGUMENT.

**Evolution, Biological.** Some ancient Greeks believed in evolution. However, before Charles Darwin (1809–1882), theories of evolution tended to arise out of a pantheistic worldview (*see* PANTHEISM) and lacked scientific credibility. Darwin theorized a mechanism, called “natural selection,” to make evolution work. This placed evolution in the naturalistic framework that has been its stronghold ever since. Much of what Darwin taught has been rejected and surpassed, but his doctrine of natural selection has been maintained.

Biological evolution is divided into micro-evolution (small scale) and macro-evolution (large scale). Opponents of macro-evolution generally accept micro-evolution, since this process simply describes the ability of various forms of life to adapt to their environment. For example, there are several hundred kinds of dogs, but they are all canines. Their differences in breed “evolved” (developed) through both natural and artificial selection. Macro-evolution embraces evolution on the large scale, from microbe to man, from the first one-cell animal to human beings as the highest animal so far developed in the chain.

Most macro-evolutionists believe that life first began as a result of chemical reactions in what Darwin called a “warm little pool.” Research has shown that it is possible to generate the essential proteins necessary for life using only a few basic gases and water. This has encouraged the view that life arose from nonliving matter (*see* EVOLUTION, CHEMICAL). New life forms are said to have evolved through mutations and natural selection. As conditions on earth changed, animals adapted new characteristics to meet the challenges. Those who adapted survived and those that did not passed into extinction. The great variety of extinct animals represented among fossils, and their similarities to living species are used to confirm this thesis.

**Scientific Basis.** Evolution, like other approaches to past events, is a *speculative*, rather than an *empirical*, science. Speculative science deals with past singularities for which there are no recurring patterns of events by which they can be tested. Theories of evolution and creation also are called theories of *origin science* (*see* ORIGINS, SCIENCE OF), rather than *operation science*. Operation science is empirical science; it deals with the way things operate now. It studies regular and repeated phenomena. Its answers can be tested by repeating the observation or experiment. Its basic principles are *observability* and *repeatability*. Micro-evolution is a legitimate study of operation science, especially as it relates to genetics.

Since origin science deals with past singularities it is more of a *forensic* science. Past events of origin were not observed and cannot be repeated. They must be reconstructed by viewing the

evidence that remains. Just as a forensic scientist attempts to reconstruct how the homicide occurred from physical evidence, so the origin scientist tries to reconstruct the origin of the universe, first life, and new life forms from the evidence.

***The Principles of Origin Science.*** Instead of observation and repetition, the origin scientist uses principles of causality and analogy. The principle of *causality* (see CAUSALITY, PRINCIPLE OF; FIRST PRINCIPLES), which is at the root of modern science and all rational thought, states that every event has an adequate cause. In science, the principle of *analogy* (or uniformity) states that the present is the key to the past. Or, more precisely, the kinds of causes that produced certain kinds of effects in the present are the kinds of causes that produce similar events in the past.

***Two Kinds of Causes.*** Causality comes in two basic varieties: *natural* and *intelligent*. Intelligent causes are sometimes called *primary causes* and natural causes are called *secondary causes*. Most sciences seek natural causes in the laws of physics or chemistry. Others, however, deal with intelligent causes. Archaeology, for example, seeks an intelligent cause for the cultural remains of the past. Astronomers in the SETI (Search for Extra Terrestrial Intelligence) Program have tuned their radio telescopes into outer space, searching for a message from intelligent beings. Both of these sciences believe they can tell when they have found an effect that demands an intelligent cause by the special marks a mind leaves on what it produces. For example, there is an obvious difference between alphabet cereal spilled on the table and the arranged series of letters: “Tom, take out the garbage. Mom.” Those who believe there is an intelligent cause for the origin of the universe, first life, and/or new life forms are called “creationists.” Those who believe these can be explained by purely natural, nonintelligent causes are called “evolutionists.” “Theistic evolutionists” try to synthesize the two views.

Three basic areas of dispute separate creationists and evolutionists on the question of *origins*: (1) the origin of the universe (see EVOLUTION, COSMIC), (2) the origin of first life (see EVOLUTION, CHEMICAL), and (3) the origin of human life. Historically, these areas have been called “cosmogony, biogony, and anthropogony” (see MISSING LINKS), in distinction to the operation sciences cosmology, biology, and anthropology.

***Origin of New Life Forms. Naturalistic Explanation of Origins.*** New life forms have come either from natural or supernatural (intelligent) causes. Darwin made one of his greatest contributions to the theory of evolution with his analogy of selection by breeders to selection in nature. This principle of natural selection became the hallmark of evolution because it provided a system by which new developments of life forms could be explained without recourse to a supernatural cause.

Darwin was aware that there were serious flaws with the analogy between breeders and nature, but he hoped that what humans could do in a few generations could be done by nature in several hundred generations. However, time is not the only factor which weakens the analogy. E. S. Russell wrote:

It is unfortunate that Darwin ever introduced the term “natural selection,” for it has given rise to much confusion of thought. He did so, of course, because he arrived at his theory through studying the effects of selection as practiced by man in the breeding of domesticated animals and cultivated plants. Here the use of the word is entirely legitimate. But the *action of man in selective breeding is not analogous to the action of “natural selection,” but almost its direct opposite. . . . Man has an aim or an end in view; “natural selection” can have none. Man picks out the individuals he wishes to cross, choosing them by the characteristics he seeks to perpetuate or enhance. He protects them and their issue by all means in his power, guarding them thus from the operation of*

natural selection, which would speedily eliminate many freaks; he continues his active and purposeful selection from generation to generation until he reaches, if possible, his goal. Nothing of this kind happens, or can happen, through the blind process of differential elimination and differential survival which we miscall “natural selection.” [cited in Moore, 124]

*Evidence of the Fossil Record.* It is seldom fully appreciated that the only real evidence for or against evolution is in the fossil record. Every other argument for evolution is based on *what could have been*. Only the fossil record records examples of *what actually did happen*. Darwin recognized this as a problem as well and wrote in *On the Origin of Species*, “Why then is not every geological formation and every stratum full of such intermediate links? Geology assuredly does not reveal any such finely graduated organic chain, and this, perhaps, is the most obvious and gravest objection which can be urged against my theory” (Darwin, 280).

In the century and a half since Darwin wrote, the situation has only become worse for his theory. Noted Harvard paleontologist Stephen Jay Gould has written, “The extreme rarity of transitional forms in the fossil record persists as the trade secret of paleontology. The evolutionary trees that adorn our textbooks have data only at the tips and nodes of their branches; the rest is inference, however reasonable, not the evidence of fossils” (Gould, 14). Eldredge and Tattersall agree, saying, “Expectation colored perception to such an extent that the *most obvious single fact about biological evolution—non-change—*has seldom, if ever, been incorporated into anyone’s scientific notions of how life actually evolves. If ever there was a myth, it is that evolution is a process of constant change” (Eldredge, 8).

What does the fossil record suggest? Evolutionists such as Gould now agree with what creationists from Louis Agassiz to Duane Gish have said all along, that the fossil record includes two features particularly inconsistent with gradualism:

*Stasis.* Most species appear in the fossil record looking much the same as when they disappear; morphological change is limited and directionless.

*Sudden appearance.* In any area, a species does not arise gradually. It appears all at once and fully formed (Gould, *ibid.*, 13–14).

There is no real indication that one form of life transforms into a completely different form. While these two features seem to invalidate classical evolution, they are somewhat problematic to creationists also.

Some creationists say that the fossil record reflects the debris of the great flood, either because some animals were better able to escape the waters or by hydrodynamic sorting as the remains settled. These scientists are concerned with preserving evidence of a young earth because they believe creation was in seven literal twenty-four-hour-periods and that there are no large gaps in the early genealogies of Genesis.

Others, known as “old-earth creationists,” hold that the earth need not be only thousands of years old. This group understands the fossil record to show that creation was accomplished in a series of stages, each new appearance in the geological strata pointing to a new moment of direct creation. Invertebrates appeared first, followed by a long period of nature balancing itself before the next burst of creation. Fish appeared next and then amphibians, until man was created. The latter view does agree with the fossil record, but there is no consensus among creationists about the age of the earth. This is a hotly debated issue, but both sides agree that the fossil evidence supports creation better than evolution.

Some evolutionists have attempted to deal with the fossil evidence by introducing the idea of punctuated equilibrium. These scientists say that the jumps in the fossil record reflect real catastrophes which induced sudden major changes in the existing species. Hence, evolution is not gradual, but punctuated by sudden leaps from one stage to the next. The theory has been criticized because no evidence has been shown for a mechanism of secondary causes needed to make these sudden advances possible. Their theory appears to be based solely on the absence of transitional fossils. This view breaks with Darwin, who understood evidence of suddenness to be evidence in favor of creation. To accept the idea of punctuation as a result of a primary cause comes dangerously close to a creationist view.

*The Evidence of Vestigial Organs.* Evolutionists have used the presence of “vestigial organs” in humans as a support. They argue that, since the human body has organs for which there is no known use, they are left over from an earlier animal stage in which they were useful. The fact that vestigials can be removed with no apparent harm to the body indicates that they are useless. The appendix, ear muscles, and the third eyelid are placed into this category.

However, just because functions for these organs are not known does not mean that none exist. Since scientific knowledge is finite and progressive, there may be functions of which science is not yet aware. That they can be removed without apparent harm to the body is meaningless. Other organs may compensate for their loss. Also, a loss may exist that is not readily detectable. Some organs, such as tonsils, may be more important at an earlier stage in the person’s development as, for example, during early childhood to help fight off diseases. And organs such as a kidney or a lung can be removed without serious loss, yet they have a function.

It is significant that the list of vestigial organs has shrunk from around 100 when the idea was first proposed to about a half dozen today. There are hints about purposes for some of those. The appendix may aid in digestion and may be helpful in fighting off disease. Rabbits have a large appendix, and complete vegetarians may get more benefit from theirs. The muscle of the outer ear helps protect against freezing in colder climates. The “third eyelid” or *nictitating membranae* is used in humans to collect foreign material that gets in the eye. The “tail” or coccyx is necessary for sitting with comfort. The endocrine glands, once thought to be vestigial, are now known to be of great importance in the production of hormones. The thymus has been found to be involved in protecting the body against disease.

Even if some organs are truly leftovers from an earlier period in human development, this would not prove evolution. They may be left over from an earlier stage of the human race, rather than from prehuman species. One might even say that an organ has lost its function would not demonstrate that we are evolving, but devolving—losing some organs and abilities. This is the opposite of evolution.

*The Evidence of the Genetic Code.* Creationists reason that there are real limitations to evolutionary change that are built into the genetic code of every living being. Changes within this structure indicates design for each major category of life form. Each new life form came into being by an act of intelligent intervention that arranged genetic information to fit functions. Just as letter sequences vary to form different words, DNA patterns vary to produce different species. If it requires intelligence to create *King Lear* from a selection of the words found in a dictionary, then it also requires intelligence to select and sort genetic information to produce the variety of species which work together as a system in nature.

The sudden appearance of these life forms strengthens the case that a supernatural intelligence was at work to accomplish this organization. In accordance with the principle of uniformity, this is the most plausible solution to the problem. So, the greatest problem for

evolutionists is not “missing links,” but an explanation for the origin of complex new systems of genetic information.

*The Evidence from Specified Complexity.* Not only was the first living cell exceedingly complex, but higher forms of life are even more complex. If the genetic information in a one-cell animal exceeds that in a volume of the *Encyclopedia Britannica*, the information in the human brain is greater than that in the Library of Congress. If it takes an intelligent cause to produce the simple first life form, no less is needed for human life.

Complexity has always been a major problem for evolution. It amounts to the same problem encountered in examining the origin of first life (*see* EVOLUTION, CHEMICAL). The breeding analogy used to illustrate how natural processes did it all contains a great deal of intelligent intervention that is overlooked in the theory. Breeders manipulate according to an intelligent plan for encouraging specific developments. Informationally speaking, this is going from a state of complexity in the DNA code to a higher, or at least more specific, state of complexity. It is like changing the sentence,

“She had brown hair.”

to the more complex statement,

“Her auburn tresses shone in the sun.”

This increase in information encoded into the DNA strand requires intelligence just as surely as did the original coding to produce life. Indeed, if Darwin’s analogy proves anything, it shows the need for intelligent intervention to produce new life forms. The principle of uniformity leads unhesitatingly to this conclusion once it is realized that we are working within origin science, not operation science.

*The Evidence from Systemic Change.* Macro-evolutionary changes demand large-scale changes from one type of organism to another. Evolutionists argue that this occurred gradually over a long period. One serious objection to this view is that all functional changes from one system to another must be simultaneous (*see* Denton, 11). For example, one can make small changes in a car gradually over a period of time without changing its basic type. One can change the shape of the fenders, its color, and its trim gradually. But if a change is in the size of the piston, this will involve simultaneous changes in the cam shaft, block, and cooling system. Otherwise the new engine will not function.

Likewise, changing from a fish to a reptile or a reptile to a bird calls for major changes throughout the system of the animal. All these changes must occur simultaneously or blood oxygenation will not go with lung development, will not match nasal passage and throat changes, autonomic breathing reflexes in the brain, thoracic musculature, and membranes. Gradual evolution cannot account for this.

To make this same point in terms of the genetic code, one cannot go from small gradual changes in a simple genetic code to a more complex DNA molecule without major simultaneous changes, particularly not by random mutations. Small, random changes to “Mary had a little lamb. . .” will never produce *King Lear*, even if all the letters of the alphabet and punctuation are present. The first small random change might read, “Mary sad a little lamb.” The next, “Mary sad a litter lamb.” And the next, “Mary sad a litter lgmb.” With each single change the message gets more garbled. It is a long way from *King Lear* and going in the wrong direction. Only an intelligent being can reform the same letters of the English language into *King Lear*—by simultaneous and systematic redevelopment.

The English alphabet has twenty-six letters; the genetic alphabet has only four, but the method of communicating by sequence of letters is the same. Information scientist Hubert P. Yockey insists, “It is important to understand that we are not reasoning by analogy. The sequence hypothesis applies directly to the protein and the genetic text as well as to written language and therefore the treatment is mathematically identical” (Yockey, 16). It turns out that a single strand of DNA carries the same amount of information as one volume of an encyclopedia.

Each new form of life has its own, unique code that, although it is similar in the letters used, differs vastly in the message conveyed. One can use the very same words and convey an entirely different message. Hence, the evolutionist argument from the high similarity of the words in an ape and a human being do not prove common ancestry. The two sentences “You do love me” and “Do you love me?” have the same words but convey a totally different message. With ingenuity one could construct a paragraph (or even a whole book) in which exactly the same sentences which conveyed a completely different message. A very rudimentary example might go something like this:

John came before Mary. Mary came after John [= later than]. So John and Mary came together [= at the same place].

Compare this with the same sentences in a different order which convey a different meaning:

Mary came after [= pursued] John. John came before Mary [= in her presence]. So John and Mary came together [= in a personal relationship].

A high degree of similarity of genetic information in an ape and a human means absolutely nothing. It is the way the pieces are put together that makes a world of difference. Hear this evolutionist’s testimony: “When we get down to the business of trying to establish an evolutionary series of sequences, we cannot find the linear, primitive-to-advanced arrangement we had expected.” In fact, “instead of a progression of increasing divergence, each vertebrate sequence is equally isolated [e.g.] from the cytochrome sequence for the dogfish.” Thus, “in this and countless other comparisons, it has proved impossible to arrange protein sequences in a macro-evolutionary series corresponding to the expected transitions from fish > amphibian > reptile > mammal” (Thaxton, 139–40).

**Conclusion.** Now that we have new evidence about the nature of the universe, the information stored in DNA molecules, and further fossil confirmation, the words of Agassiz resound even more loudly than they did when first written in 1860:

[Darwin] has lost sight of the most striking of the features, and the one which pervades the whole, namely, that there runs throughout Nature unmistakable evidence of thought, corresponding to the mental operations of our own mind, and therefore intelligible to us as thinking beings, and unaccountable on any other basis than that they own their existence to the working of intelligence; and no theory that overlooks this element can be true to nature. [Agassiz, 13]

There are two views of the origins of new life forms. One says that everything came about by natural causes; the other looks to a supernatural (intelligent) cause. The overwhelming evidence support is in favor of the latter.

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**Evolution, Chemical.** Chemical evolutionists claim that purely natural laws can explain the origin of first life by spontaneous generation. Creationists insist that an intelligent cause is necessary to construct the basic building blocks of life. Contrary to widespread opinion, the positive evidence for an intelligent cause is not based on the statistical improbability of life arising by chance. Rather, it is because science is not based on chance; it is based on observation and repetition (*see* ORIGINS, SCIENCE OF).

In spite of the well-established fact, based on the work of Louis Pasteur (1822–1895), that life does not begin spontaneously from nonlife, all naturalistic scientists believe that it did at the beginning. The scientific basis for this conclusion is the experiments of Harold Urey and Stanley Miller. They showed that the basic building blocks of life (amino acids) can be obtained from purely chemical elements (hydrogen, nitrogen, ammonia, and carbon dioxide gases) by natural laws without any intelligent intervention. By passing an electrical discharge through these cases they produced these fundamental elements of life. Supposing lightning passing through similar cases in a primal atmosphere, first life may have arisen by a purely natural process on earth or somewhere else.

The theory is that shortly after the earth was cooled enough to allow it, the combination of hydrogen, nitrogen, ammonia, and carbon dioxide reacted to form elementary amino acids, which in time developed into the DNA chains and finally into cells. This process is said to have taken several billion years and the extra energy of the sun, volcanic activity, lightning, and cosmic rays was needed to keep the process going.

**The Problems.** That life could arise by purely natural causes is subject to serious objections.

It is contrary to the universal scientific experience that life never arises from nonlife. The premodern, fallacious belief that it could was based on ignorance of microscopic bacteria. Once Pasteur sterilized the container, killing the bacteria, no life emerged. The same inability is recognized by principles of causation. A fundamental causal concept demands that an effect cannot be greater than its cause (*see* CAUSALITY, PRINCIPLE OF). Just as nonbeing cannot produce being, nonlife cannot produce life. Water does not rise higher than its source on its own.

The origin-of-life experiments involve illegitimate investigator interference. For example, intelligent intervention is manifest at several levels. Why are certain gases (such as hydrogen) included and others (such as Oxygen) excluded? Is this not an intelligent choice, based on a

knowledge of what will and will not work? Further, who constructed the apparatus for the experiment? Why does it not have a different design? Why did they choose to inject an electrical discharge? Obviously, intelligent choices were being made at several levels.

There is an unwarranted assumption that primal conditions on earth (or elsewhere) were similar to those in the experiment. Two crucial conditions are now known to have been different. Since the experiment will not work with oxygen present, it was assumed that the earth's early atmosphere had no oxygen. But this is now known to be false. That fact in itself is sufficient to falsify the experiment and the chemical evolution theory. Further, as even many chemical evolutionists admit, chemicals in the concentration used in the experiment are not found anywhere on earth. The whole primal soup scenario is a myth (see Thaxton, chap. 4).

The analogy between the Miller experiment and known conditions on the early earth is invalid, since it overlooks the presence of destructive forces. Oxygen would destroy the process. The energy needed from the sun and cosmic radiation damage the very substances produced. Under the conditions required for life to have arisen spontaneously, it is more likely that the elements would be destroyed faster than they could be produced. Nature is filled with destructive forces that tear down and bring disorder. This is part of the second law of thermodynamics (*see THERMODYNAMICS, LAWS OF*).

Even if the right chemicals could be produced, no satisfactory answer has been given for how they could have been arranged properly and enclosed in a cell wall. This would require another set of conditions altogether.

Further, evolutionists have never shown any mechanism that can harness the energy to do the work of selecting amino acids and sorting out which will build each gene to develop a living organism. It doesn't do any good to have a drawer full of batteries if there is no flashlight—a mechanism for harnessing energy—to contain them. The DNA molecule is very complex. See a description of this complexity in *EVOLUTION, BIOLOGICAL*.

Granting that there may have been enough energy available to do the work, the only systems that can harness the energy to do this kind of work are either living or intelligent. It is easy to pump a lot of energy into a system at random to make it hot, but to organize it and create information requires intelligence.

Finally, even with all the intelligent interferences in the Miller experiments, which invalidate the results for a purely natural processes, the result has not been a single living cell. An amino acid is only a chemical. However biologically interesting it may be, it is not alive. One crucial missing ingredient—the code of life or DNA—is positive evidence for a creative intelligence.

***Other Naturalistic Theories.*** Other theories have been advanced to explain the origins of first life on earth. One is that natural laws were involved that have not yet been discovered, but scientists can only point out the need when the laws they do know about militated against creation of life. Others suggest that life may have come to earth from somewhere else in the universe, either on a meteorite or on an ancient spaceship, but both of these solutions just push the question back one step: Where did that life come from? Thermal vents in the sea floor and clay deposits are being studied as possible breeding grounds for life's beginnings, but this does not account for a way to harness energy to make specified complexity possible. The most probable cause, and the only one that the evidence supports, is an intelligent cause. The only significant debate is between pantheist and theist, both of whom insist there must be a Mind behind the specified complexity in living things, differing only on whether it is beyond the universe or only in it.

***Evidence of Intelligence.*** Evidence is lacking for a natural cause of origin, but is there positive evidence pointing to an intelligent cause of first life?

The key to knowing which kind of cause is involved in questions of origin is the principle of analogy (uniformity). This is one of the fundamental principles in any scientific understanding of the past. Archaeology uses it to posit an intelligent cause for artifacts that might have originated with past civilizations. The SETI program sorts through radio waves from the cosmos in its search for extraterrestrial life, looking for something that breaks with uniformity.

*The Principle of Analogy (Uniformity).* By observing over and over what kinds of effects are produced by causes, we can determine which kind of cause is needed to produce life. We know that round stones are regularly caused by natural laws involved in the motion of water and rubbing one another. Flint and obsidian will not turn into a spear or arrow point that way. The only question, then, is whether a living cell is more like a round stone or a projectile point. Anyone viewing the faces on Mount Rushmore knows these stone shapes were formed by an intelligent cause. It is not just that natural causes never produce the kind of specified information shown on Mount Rushmore. It is also known by repeated observation that intelligent causes do produce this kind of specificity.

*Specified Complexity Points to an Intelligent Cause.* The kind of evidence that indicates an intelligent cause of life is called specified complexity. Carl Sagan said that a single message from outer space would confirm his belief that there is extraterrestrial life. Such communication would be *specified complexity*. Or, to be more precise, since we know that complex messages always result from an intelligent cause, it remains only to see whether a living cell contains a complex message. With the discovery of the DNA code of life, the answer is clear. In all of nature, only living cells have complex messages known as specified complexity. A chunk of quartz has specificity but no complexity. The message in a crystal is repetitive, like the message: starstarstarstar. A chain of random polymers (called a polypeptide) is complex, but it does not give a specific message. It looks more like this: *fqpizgenyatkpvno*. Only a living cell has both specificity and complexity that is not repetitious and communicates a message or a clear function, such as: *This sentence has meaning*. Hence, a living cell calls for an intelligent cause. Science speaks of simple life and complex life. Even the simplest one-celled organism has enough information that if spelled out in English would fill a volume of the *Encyclopedia Britannica*.

A clear and distinct message—a complex design with a specified function—was caused by some form of intelligence that intervened to impose limits on the natural matter that it would not take by itself. Some natural phenomena are orderly and awe inspiring, but clearly caused by natural forces. The Grand Canyon and Niagara Falls required only the blind forces of wind and water to shape them. The same cannot be said for Mount Rushmore or a hydroelectric plant. These required intelligent intervention.

*The Confirmation of Information Theory.* Studies in Information Theory confirm that one can determine an intelligent cause simply by the letter frequencies. In a series of letters that carry a message (even if we do not know what the message is) there is a certain letter frequency. This is what makes unknown codes decipherable and makes it possible to remove background noise from a tape and clarify the message.

What could explain the sudden appearance of life and also provide for the informational organization of living matter? If we apply the principle of uniformity (analogy) to the question, the only cause that we know routinely does this kind of work is intelligence. The reasonable assumption is that it also required intelligence to do it in the past. Uniform experience proves this

to us, and, as David Hume said, “as a uniform experience amounts to a proof, there is here a direct and full *proof*, from the nature of the fact” (Hume, 122–23). Since it is not possible that we are speaking of human intelligence or even living beings in the natural sphere, it had to be a supernatural intelligence. This does create a disjunction in the course of nature, which irritates most scientists; however, once it is admitted that there is a radical disjunction from nothing to something at the beginning of the universe, there can be little objection to the idea of one more intervention when the evidence clearly points to it.

*The Confirmation from Molecular Biology.* Michael Behe’s book, *Darwin’s Black Box*, provides strong evidence from the nature of a living cell that it could not have originated or evolved by anything but intelligent design. The cell represents, in many cases, irreducible complexity that cannot be accounted for by small incremental changes called for by evolution.

Darwin admitted: “If it could be demonstrated that any complex organ existed which could not possibly have been formed by numerous, successive, slight modifications, my theory would absolutely break down” (*Origin of Species*, 154). Even evolutionists, such as Richard Dawkins, agree:

Evolution is very possibly not, in actual fact, always gradual. But it must be gradual when it is being used to explain the coming into existence of complicated, apparently designed objects, like eyes. For if it is not gradual in these cases, it ceases to have any explanatory power. Without gradualness in these cases, we are back to miracle, which is a synonym for the total absence of [naturalistic] explanation. [83]

Behe provides numerous examples of irreducible complexity that cannot evolve in small steps. He concludes,

No one at Harvard University, no one at the National Institutes of Health, no member of the National Academy of Sciences, no Nobel Prize winner—no one at all can give a detailed account of how the cilium, or vision, or blood clotting, or any complex biochemical process might have developed in a Darwinian fashion. But we are here. All these things got here somehow; if not in a Darwinian fashion, then how? [187]

Other examples of irreducible complexity that Behe points out include aspects of DNA reduplication, electron transport, telomere synthesis, photosynthesis, and transcription regulation (*ibid.*, 160). “Life on earth at its most fundamental level, in its most critical components, is the product of intelligent activity” (*ibid.*, 193). Behe adds, “The conclusion of intelligent design flows naturally from the data itself—not from sacred books or sectarian beliefs. Inferring that biochemical systems were designed by an intelligent agent is a humdrum process that requires no new principles of logic or science” (*ibid.*). Thus, “the result of these cumulative efforts to investigate the cell—to investigate life at the molecular level—is a loud, clear, piercing cry of ‘design!’ The result is so unambiguous and so significant that it must be ranked as one of the greatest achievements in the history of science. The discovery rivals those of Newton and Einstein” (*ibid.*, 232–33).

**Conclusion.** As Hume showed, in the empirical world we posit causal connections only because we see certain events conjoined over and over. And since the present is the key to the past, the same applies to causes of origin. Hence, it is unscientific to posit anything but an intelligent cause for the first living cell, since repeated experience tells that the only kind of cause known to be able to produce specified complexity, as life has, is an intelligent cause. Chemical evolution, then, fails the scientific test. And it is beside the point to speculate that a

natural cause is still possible, since science is based on evidence which points clearly in the direction of an intelligent cause by constant conjunction which David Hume called a “proof.”

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**Evolution, Cosmic.** Either the universe had a beginning or it did not. If it did have a beginning, then it was either caused or uncaused. If it was caused, then what kind of cause could be responsible for bringing all things into being?

**An Eternal Universe.** Traditionally, cosmic evolutionary scientists have believed that the universe, in some form, always existed. Matter is eternal. The main scientific support is the first law of thermodynamics (*see* THERMODYNAMICS, LAWS OF) that “energy can neither be created nor destroyed.”

Creationists respond that this is a misunderstanding of the first law which should be stated: “The actual amount of energy in the universe remains constant.” Unlike the misstated version of the first law, this is based on scientific observation about what occurs and is not a dogmatic philosophical assertion about what can or cannot happen. There is no scientific evidence that the universe is eternal.

Fred Hoyle proposed his steady-state theory to avoid this conclusion. It affirms that hydrogen atoms are coming into existence to keep the universe from running down. This also calls for the universe to be constantly generating hydrogen atoms from nothing. This hypothesis has fatal flaws. There is no scientific evidence that such an event ever occurred. And such an occurrence would be contrary to the principle of causality (*see* CAUSALITY, PRINCIPLE OF), which affirms that there must be an adequate cause for every event. Creationists quickly note that only a Creator would be an adequate cause for the creation of new hydrogen atoms out of nothing (*see* CREATION, VIEWS OF).

Holding to such beliefs as the steady-state theory or the eternality of matter theory has a high cost for the scientist, for both violate a fundamental law of science: the principle of causality. Both views require that the scientist believe in events happening without a cause. Even the great skeptic David Hume said, “I never asserted so absurd a proposition as that anything might arise without a cause” (Hume, 1:187). Yet this absurd proposition is accepted by scientists who make their living by the law of causality. If the whole universe is uncaused, why should we believe that the parts are caused? If the parts are all caused, then what evidence could suggest that the whole is uncaused? Nothing in the principle of causality supports this conclusion.

Some cosmic evolutionists argue for some kind of rebound theory, whereby the universe collapses and rebounds forever. But there is no evidence that enough matter exists to stop and pull back by gravitational forces the expanding universe even once. What is more, this hypothesis runs contrary to the second law of thermodynamics, which dictates that, even if the universe rebounded, it would, like a bouncing ball, eventually peter out (*see* BIG BANG THEORY).

***Universe with a Beginning.*** Creationists can offer evidence that the universe is not eternal but had a cause. Though he is not himself a theist, Robert Jastrow, founder and former director of NASA's Goddard Institute for Space Studies, has summarized the evidence in his book *God and the Astronomers*. Jastrow points out three lines of evidence—the motions of the galaxies, the laws of thermodynamics, and the life story of the stars—indicate that the universe had a beginning (Jastrow, 111). Now if we are speaking of a movement from no matter to matter, we are clearly in the realm of unrepeatable events covered by origin science.

***The Second Law of Thermodynamics.*** Perhaps the most significant piece of evidence is the second law of thermodynamics. According to this law, “The amount of usable energy in the universe is decreasing.” Or, stated another way, “In a closed isolated system, the amount of usable energy is decreasing.” Or, “Left to themselves, things tend to disorder.” No matter which way it is stated, this law shows that an eternal universe would have run out of usable energy or reached a state of total disorder. Since it has not, it must have had a beginning.

The first law of thermodynamics says that the actual amount of energy in the universe remains constant—it doesn't change. The second law of thermodynamics says that the amount of *usable* energy in any closed system (which the whole universe is) is decreasing. Everything is tending toward disorder and the universe is running down. Now if the overall amount of energy stays the same, but we are running out of usable energy, then what we started with was not an infinite amount. You can't run out of an infinite amount. This means that the universe is and always has been finite. It could not have existed forever in the past. So it must have had a beginning. And, if it had a beginning, then it must have been caused, since every event has an adequate cause (*see CAUSALITY, PRINCIPLE OF*).

***The Motion of the Galaxies.*** Scientists argue that the universe is not simply in a holding pattern, maintaining its movement from everlasting to everlasting. It now appears that all of the galaxies are moving outward, as if from a central point of origin, and that all things were expanding faster in the past than they are now. Looking out into space, we are also looking back in time. We are seeing things as they were when the light was given off by those stars many years ago. The light from a star 7 million light-years away tells us what it was like and where it was 7 million years ago. Using a 200-inch telescope, Allan Sandage compiled information on forty-two galaxies, as far as 6 billion light years away. His measurements indicate that the universe was expanding more rapidly in the past than it is today. This result lends further support to the belief that the universe exploded into being (Jastrow, *God and the Astronomers*, 95).

***The Radiation Echo.*** A third line of evidence that the universe began is the radiation “echo” which seems to come from everything. It was first thought to be a malfunction or static on the instruments. But research has discovered that the static was coming from everywhere—the universe itself has a low-level radiation from some past catastrophe that looks like a giant fireball. Says Jastrow,

No explanation other than the big bang has been found for the fireball radiation. The clincher, which has convinced almost the last doubting Thomas, is that the radiation discovered by Penzias and Wilson has exactly the pattern of wavelengths expected for the light and heat produced in a great explosion. Supporters of the Steady State theory have tried desperately to find an alternative explanation, but they have failed. [ibid., 5]

***The Discovery of a Great Mass of Matter.*** Since Jastrow first recorded the three lines of evidence for the beginning of the universe a fourth has been discovered. According to the big-bang theory there should have been a great mass of matter associated with the original explosion

of the universe into being, but none was known until 1992. By means of the Hubble space telescope, astronomers found the very mass of matter predicted by big-bang cosmology. Thus the combined evidence provides an overwhelming case for the fact that the universe had a beginning.

**Cause of the Cosmos.** If the universe is not eternal but came into existence, the law of causality tells us that it must have had a cause. For whatever comes to be is caused. Hence, the universe was caused.

Logically, if we are looking for a cause which existed before the universe (nature) began, we are looking for a supernatural cause. Even Jastrow, a confirmed agnostic, has said as much: “That there are what I or anyone would call supernatural forces at work is now, I think, a scientifically proven fact” (ibid., 15, 18). Since he is speaking from the viewpoint of operation science, he probably means that there is no secondary cause which can explain the origin of the universe. But with the recognition of origin science, we can posit a supernatural primary cause that seems to be the most plausible answer to the question.

**Conclusion.** Jastrow sums up the cosmic evolutionists enigma well. He concludes his book:

For the scientist who has lived by his faith in the power of reason, the story ends like a bad dream. He has scaled the mountains of ignorance; he is about to conquer the highest peak; as he pulls himself over the final rock, he is greeted by a band of theologians who have been sitting there for centuries. [ibid., 105–6]

After being embarrassed by the evidence that the cosmos had a beginning, Albert Einstein declared his desire “to know how god created this world. I am not interested in this or that phenomenon, in the spectrum of this of that element. I want to know his thought, the rest are details” (cited in Herbert, 177).

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**Evolution, Human.** See **DARROW, CLARENCE; DARWIN, CHARLES; DEWEY, JOHN; EVOLUTION, BIOLOGICAL; MISSING LINKS.**

**Evolution, Theistic.** *Definition.* Broadly speaking, theistic evolution is the belief that God used evolution as his means of producing the various forms of physical life on this planet, including human life. However, there are several kinds of evolution in which God is said to be involved. Indeed, there are various conceptions of God connected to evolution.

***Kinds of Evolution Involving God.*** Not all forms of evolution involving God are technically forms of theistic evolution, since many of them do not involve a theistic concept of God. The following typology is intended as suggestive, not exhaustive.

***Theistic Evolution.*** By “theistic” evolution is meant the belief that a theistic God used an evolutionary process he had created to produce all living species of life. In addition, “theistic” means that God performed at least one miracle after his original creation of the universe *ex nihilo* (see CREATION, THREE VIEWS). Otherwise, there is no difference between theism and deism on the matter of origins. Of course, a theistic evolutionist (who does not deny more than two supernatural acts of creation) could still believe in other miracles in the Bible after creation, such as the Virgin Birth or resurrection.

***Minimal Theistic Evolution.*** The minimal theistic evolutionist believes that God performed two supernatural acts of creation: (1) the creation of matter out of nothing, and (2) the creation of first life. After that every other living thing, including human beings, emerged by natural processes that God had ordained from the beginning.

***Maximal Theistic Evolution.*** The maximal theistic evolutionist holds that God performed at least three supernatural acts of creation: matter, first life, and the human soul. After the initial creation of matter and life, all animal organisms, including the human body, evolved by natural laws God established from the very beginning. This is the traditional Roman Catholic view, at least for the last century.

The belief in any more supernatural acts of creation would probably be better called a minimal form of creationism (though this is an arbitrary line), since it would hold that God supernaturally intervened at least four times in creation. Most scholars who hold this, also believe that God supernaturally intervened many more times than this. They often refer to themselves as Progressive Creationists. Bernard Ramm and Hugh Ross (*The Fingerprints of God*) fit into this category.

***Deistic Evolution.*** Deism does not believe in any supernatural acts or miracles after the initial act of creating the material universe out of nothing. As far as the evolutionary process and the production of life forms, including human beings, there is no real difference between deistic evolution and naturalistic evolution, which includes atheism and agnosticism.

***Pantheistic Evolution.*** Another form of evolution involving a belief in God is called pantheistic evolution. Pantheism, unlike theism and deism, believes that God is all and all is God. God is the universe or Nature. Benedict Spinoza and Albert Einstein held this kind of belief. Former atheist Sir Fred Hoyle adopted this view in his book *Evolution from Space* (1981). According to this view, God created first life and then many basic forms of life at various times after that, as is indicated by the great gaps in the fossil record. However, the God who intelligently intervened to form these various kinds of life did so from within the universe, not from outside it. For God is the Mind of the universe. God is Nature.

***Panentheistic Evolution.*** Unlike pantheism, which believes God is All, panentheism holds that God is in all. Panentheism is distinguished by its belief that God is the Vital Force within the universe and within the evolutionary force. Henri Bergson expressed this view in his book *Creative Evolution* in 1907. This seems also to be the position of the Roman Catholic evolutionist, Teilhard de Chardin. According to this position, evolution is a continuous process that moves forward, sometimes even “leaps” forward, by virtue of the immanent divine Force within the universe.

***Evaluation.*** Since the essence of all these views are critiqued elsewhere under deism, pantheism, and panentheism, it is not necessary to do so here. It remains only to point out that its

view of evolution of living organisms assumes the antisupernaturalistic presuppositions of atheism and agnosticism. Only theism truly believes in supernatural acts from a God who is beyond the universe and who occasionally intervenes in it.

Many of the same arguments used against naturalistic or materialistic evolution apply also to these other forms of evolution involving God. For it makes no difference whether the natural processes were created by a theistic God or not. The evidence shows that nonintelligent natural laws do not have the ability to bring life or new life forms into existence, to say nothing of human beings (*see* DARWIN, CHARLES; MISSING LINKS).

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**Deism.** *Deism* is the belief in a God who made the world but who never interrupts its operations with supernatural events. It is a theism minus miracles (*see* MIRACLE). God does not interfere with his creation. Rather, he designed it to run independent of him by immutable natural laws (*see* SPINOZA, BENEDICT). In nature, he has also provided all that his creatures need to live.

Deism flourished in the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries but began to die in the nineteenth century. Today its tenets live on in antisupernatural denial of miracles (*see* MIRACLES, ARGUMENTS AGAINST), critical views of the Bible (*see* BIBLE CRITICISM), and the practice of those who believe in a supreme being who has little or nothing to do with their lives.

Deism flourished in Europe, especially France and England, and in late-eighteenth-century America (*see* Orr, chaps. 3–4). Some of the more prominent European deists were Herbert of Cherbury (1583–1648), the Father of English deism; Matthew Tindal (1656–1733); John Toland (1670–1722), and Thomas Woolston (1669–1731). Some of the notable American deists were Benjamin Franklin (1706–1790), Stephen Hopkins (1707–1785), Thomas Jefferson (1743–1826), and Thomas Paine (1737–1809). The effects of views of the American deists, especially Paine and Jefferson, are more widely felt today through the United States’ political foundation and heritage (*see* Morais, chaps. 4, 5).

**Various Kinds of Deism.** All deists agree that there is one God, who created the world. All deists agree that God does not intervene in the world through supernatural acts. However, not all

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<sup>9</sup> Norman L. Geisler, *Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics*, Baker reference library (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 1999), 224-34.

deists agree on God's concern for the world and the existence of an afterlife for human beings (*see* IMMORTALITY). Based on these differences, four types of deism are discernible. The four range from ascribing minimal concern on the part of God to allowing his maximum concern for the world without supernaturally intervening in it (Morais, 17, 85–126).

*The God of No Concern.* The first type of deism was largely of French origin. According to this view, God is not concerned with governing the world he made. He created the world and set it in motion, but has no regard for what happens to it after that.

*The God of No Moral Concern.* In the second form of deism, God is concerned with the ongoing happenings of the world but not with the moral actions of human beings. Man can act rightly or wrongly, righteously or wickedly, morally or immorally. It is of no concern to God.

*The God of Moral Concern for This Life.* The third type of deism maintains that God governs the world and does care about the moral activity of human beings. Indeed God insists on obedience to the moral law that God established in nature. However, there is no future after death.

*The God of Moral Concern for This Life and the Next.* The fourth type of deism contends that God regulates the world, expects obedience to the moral law grounded in nature, and has arranged for a life after death, with rewards for the good and punishments for the wicked. This view was common among both English and American deists.

**Basic Beliefs.** Although there are points upon which deists differ, beliefs they hold in common allow an understanding of their common worldview.

*God.* All deists agree that there is one God (*see* THEISM). This God is eternal, unchangeable, impassable, all-knowing, all-powerful, all-good, true, just, invisible, infinite—in short, completely perfect, lacking in nothing.

God is an absolute unity, not a trinity. God is only one person, not three persons. The Christian theistic concept of the trinity is false, if not meaningless. God does not exist as three coequal persons. Of this Jefferson scoffed that “the Trinitarian arithmetic that three are one and one is three” is “incomparable jargon.” Paine believed that the trinitarian concept resulted in three Gods, and thus was polytheistic (*see* POLYTHEISM). In contrast, deists contend that God is one in nature and one in person.

*The Origin of the Universe.* The universe is the creation of God (*see* CREATION AND ORIGINS). Before the universe existed, there was nothing except God (*see* CREATION, VIEWS OF). He brought everything into being. Hence, unlike God, the world is finite. It had a beginning while he has no beginning or end.

The universe operates by natural laws. These laws flow from the very nature of God (*see* ESSENTIALISM, DIVINE). Like him they are eternal, perfect, and immutable, representing the orderliness and constancy of his nature. They are rules by which God measures his activity and rules he expects to be the standard for his creation.

*The Relation of God and the Universe.* God is as different from the universe as a painter is from a painting, a watchmaker is from a watch, and a sculptor is from a sculpture (*see* TELEOLOGICAL ARGUMENT). But, like a painting, watch, and sculpture, the universe reveals many things about God. Through its design it displays that there exists a cosmic Designer, what this Designer is like, and what he expects. The universe also reveals that it must have been caused to exist by Another and that its regularity and preservation in existence is attributable to Another. There is a God who created, regulates, and sustains the world. And this world is dependent on God, not God on the world.

God does not reveal himself in any other way but through creation. The universe is the deist's Bible. Only it reveals God. All other alleged revelations, whether verbal or written, are human inventions (*see* REVELATION, SPECIAL).

*Miracles.* Miracles do not occur (*see* MIRACLES, ARGUMENTS AGAINST). God either cannot intervene in nature, or he will not. Those deists who believe God cannot perform miracles often argue from the immutability of the laws of nature. A miracle would violate natural laws. But natural laws are immutable, hence cannot be violated, for a violation would involve a change in the unchangeable. Therefore, miracles are impossible. Those deists who think God could perform a miracle but would not, often argue from the proneness of humans toward superstition and deception, the lack of sufficient evidence in support of a miracle, and the unbroken human experience of nature as uniform. They insist that it magnifies the nature of the perfect Mechanic that he made the machine of nature to run without constant need of repair. For deists all miracle accounts are the result of human invention or superstition.

*Human Beings.* Deists agree that humanity has been created by God and is adequately suited to live happily in the world. The human being is personal, rational, and free (*see* FREE WILL), endowed with natural rights that should not be violated by any individual, group, or government. The human being has the rational ability to discover in nature all that needs to be known to live a happy and full life.

Like all other animals, *Homo sapiens* was created with strengths and weaknesses. Strengths are reason and freedom. Among weaknesses is a tendency toward superstition and a desire to dominate others of his race. Both of these innate weaknesses have led to supernatural religions and oppressive governments.

*Ethics.* The basis of human morality is grounded in nature (*see* LAW, NATURE AND KINDS OF; REVELATION, GENERAL). In nature each person discovers how to be self-governing, to associate with other creatures, and to relate to God. For many deists the only innate human principle is the desire for happiness. How this innate desire is satisfied is governed according to reason. A person who fails to act by reason becomes miserable and acts immorally.

Deists differ on the universality of moral laws. They agree that the basis of all value is universal, because it is grounded in nature. But they disagree as to which moral laws are absolute and which are relative. The fact that there is a right and a wrong is not in dispute. The problem is in determining exactly what is right and wrong in each case and circumstance. Some deists, such as Jefferson, conclude that specific moral rules are relative. What is considered right in one culture is wrong in another (*see* MORALITY, ABSOLUTE NATURE OF). Other deists would argue that a correct use of reason will always lead one to an absolute right and an absolute wrong, though the application of these absolutes may vary with culture and circumstance.

*Human Destiny.* Though some deists deny that humanity survives death in any respect, many believe that people live on. For most of these deists, the afterlife is of an immaterial nature where the morally good people will be rewarded by God and the morally bad ones will be punished.

*History.* In general, deists had little to say about history. They commonly held that history was linear and purposeful. They also held that God did not intervene in history through supernatural acts of revelation or signs called miracles. They differed on whether God concerned himself with what occurs in history. Many French deists in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries believed God was utterly unconcerned. Most English deists looked to God to exercise a certain degree of providential care over the affairs of history, yet without miraculous intervention.

Many deists held that the study of history had great value. For, if nothing else, history demonstrates the human tendency toward superstition, deception, and domination, and the terrible consequences which follow when this tendency goes unchecked and unchallenged.

*An Evaluation of Deism. Contributions.* Positive things may be learned from deism. Many have agreed with the deists' insistence on the importance and use of reason in religious matters (*see* APOLOGETICS, NEED FOR; FAITH AND REASON; LOGIC). The many claims made about miracles and supernatural revelation must be verified. No reasonable person would step into an elevator if he had good reason to believe that it was unsafe. Neither should anyone trust a religious claim without good reason to believe that it is true.

Deists have been commended for their belief that the world reflects the existence of a God (*see* COSMOLOGICAL ARGUMENT). The regularity and orderliness of the world suggests a cosmic Designer. The inadequacy of the world to account for its operations and existence seems to imply an ultimate explanation beyond the world—God. The limited perfections discoverable in nature may imply that there is an unlimited perfect Being beyond nature who created and sustains all things. This natural evidence is available for all to view and respond to in a reasonable way.

Deists have also been credited with exposing much religious deception and superstition. Their relentless attacks on many beliefs and practices have helped people to evaluate their religious faith and to purge it of corruption.

*Criticisms of Deism.* Yet there is reason to criticize the deistic worldview. A being who could bring the universe into existence from nothing could certainly perform lesser miracles if he chose to do so. A God who created water could part it or make it possible for a person to walk on it. The immediate multiplication of loaves of bread and fish would be no problem to a God who created matter and life in the first place. A virgin birth or even a physical resurrection from the dead would be minor miracles in comparison to the miracle of creating the universe from nothing. It seems self-defeating to admit a great miracle like creation and then to deny the possibility of lesser miracles.

The deists' understanding of universal natural law is no longer valid. Scientists today consider the laws of nature to be general, not necessarily universal. Natural laws describe how nature generally behaves. They do not dictate how nature must always behave (*see* MIRACLES, ARGUMENTS AGAINST).

If God created the universe for the good of his creatures, it seems that he would miraculously intervene in their lives if their good depended on it. Surely their all-good Creator would not abandon his creation. Instead it would seem that such a God would continue to exercise the love and concern for his creatures that prompted him to create them to begin with, even if it meant providing that care through miraculous means (*see* EVIL, PROBLEM OF).

Assuming, then, that miracles are possible, then one cannot reject out of hand every claim to supernatural revelation without first examining the evidence for its support. If it lacks supporting evidence, it should be rejected. But if the evidence does substantiate the claim, then the alleged revelation should be considered authentic. It certainly should not simply be ruled out of court without further investigation.

Further, simply because many individuals and groups have invented and abused religious beliefs is not sufficient ground for rejecting supernatural religions. Scientific discoveries have been abused, but few suggest that abuse makes the discoveries false or a reason to abolish science. Also, the mutability of human language and the fact of human error does not appear to be a valid argument against supernatural revelation (*see* BIBLE, ALLEGED ERRORS IN; BIBLE, EVIDENCE FOR). An all-powerful, all-knowing God could conceivably overcome these problems.

At least such problems should not rule out the possibility that God has revealed himself, either verbally or in written form. Again, the evidence should first be consulted.

Finally, the deists' case against Christianity and the Bible has been found wanting (*see* BIBLE CRITICISM). What antisupernaturalist has adequately answered such Christian theists as J. Gersham Machen, and C. S. Lewis (*see* Lewis, esp. *Miracles*; Machen)? They have built an extensive and solid case from science, philosophy, and logic against the belief that miracle stories in the Bible are necessarily mythical (*see* MYTHOLOGY AND THE NEW TESTAMENT).

For example, Paine's belief that most of the books of the Bible were written by people other than the ones who claimed to write them and written very late is still proclaimed as indisputable fact by many critics. But there is not one credible shred of evidence that has not been rejected for good reason by archaeologists and biblical scholars. More than 25,000 finds have confirmed the picture of the ancient world given in the Bible (*see* ARCHAEOLOGY, NEW TESTAMENT; ARCHAEOLOGY, OLD TESTAMENT). There is sufficient evidence to support the authorship claims and early dates for most biblical books (*see* NEW TESTAMENT, DATING OF; NEW TESTAMENT DOCUMENTS, RELIABILITY OF).

Further, the deistic attack against such Christian teachings as the Trinity, redemption, and deity of Christ (*see* CHRIST, DEITY OF), shows a superficial and naive understanding of these teachings.

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## QUESTIONS ABOUT SCIENCE AND EVOLUTION

Two men were walking through the forest and happened across a glass ball lying on the carpet of twigs and fir needles. There were hardly any sounds other than the pair's own footsteps and certainly no signs of other people. But the very obvious inference from the evidence of the ball was that someone had put it there. Now one of these men was a scientist, trained in the modern view of origins, and the other a layman. The layman said, "What if the ball were larger, say ten feet around, would you still say that someone put it there?" Naturally, the scientist agreed that a larger ball would not affect his judgment. "Well, what if the ball were huge—a mile in diameter?" probed the layman. His friend responded that not only would someone have put it there, but that there should be an investigation to find out what caused the ball to be there. The layman then pursued one more question, "What if the ball were as big as the whole universe? If little balls need causes, and bigger balls need causes, doesn't the biggest ball of all need a cause too?"

The Bible's views on the origins of the universe, first life, and new life forms, have caused many to falter in their acceptance of the Scriptures as truth. Modern science claims to have proven them wrong beyond a shadow of a doubt. The theory of evolution is now posited as fact. Who is right? The Bible or science?

This chapter will deal with this problem by stating a basic argument, then applying that argument to the three areas of origins: the universe, first life, and new life forms. But before we embark, let's be sure that we understand what evolution is and how modern evolutionists view origins.

Most of us think of evolution as an invention of Charles Darwin in 1859, but it is really a very old view that has naturalistic philosophical roots. In chapter 3, we mentioned that nontheists say the universe is uncaused—it just always was and will be. All matter (if it exists in any sense) carries in it the principles of life. The idea of life arising from nonliving things is not a problem with this starting point. Indeed, it would be inevitable. Equally certain would be the progress from less complex life forms to more complex ones, since all things would be ever striving toward perfection and the realization of higher states.

Modern evolution does not look very much like this picture. Since many scientists are materialistic, they hold to the basic design but without the spiritual connotations. However, without the spiritual aspects guiding the system, there is no mechanism to explain the progress of species. Enter Charles Darwin. He provided a mechanism to make evolution work beginning with matter alone. He called it natural selection. Much of what Darwin taught has been rejected and surpassed by modern evolutionists, but the doctrine of natural selection has been maintained.

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### Modern Science and Creation

The ancient Greeks viewed science as a philosophical matter. Reason was the chief tool of science rather than experimentation. Much of this attitude came from their belief that the world was a corruption of perfection. The world was to them an uncreated, unknowable, yet necessary evil which God directed but did not really control. Only when the theistic view of Creation took over did science begin to study the world experimentally. It was the thought that God had created matter that made it a thing worth studying. In this view, matter was real, good, and knowable. By seeing God as the Creator in complete control, science could make the assumption that the universe made sense. Most of the scientists who formulated the

studies of modern science were creationists. Without this basis, modern science would probably never have gotten started.

As to the origin of the universe, classic evolutionists have said that the world was uncaused. Carl Sagan has expressed this in his saying, “The Cosmos is all that is or ever was or ever will be.”<sup>1</sup> This view is still being taught by those who have not kept up with new discoveries in cosmology (study of the universe). Evolutionists also teach that life first began as a result of chemical reactions in what Darwin called a “warm little pool.” Research done in the last thirty years has shown that it is possible to generate some amino acids necessary for life using only a few basic gases, water, and an electrical charge. This has encouraged the view that life arose from nonliving matter. As to new life forms, these are said to have evolved through natural selection. As the conditions of the earth changed, animals adapted new characteristics to meet the new challenges. Those who adapted survived and those that did not passed into extinction. The great variety of extinct animals found in fossils and their similarities to living species are used to confirm this thesis. If virtually all scientists agree on these principles and have the evidence to prove it, can we still believe the Bible?

## THE BASIC ARGUMENT AGAINST EVOLUTION

Let it first be said that we need not argue on religious grounds. We do not need to simply stand firm crying, “The Bible said it; I believe it; that settles it!” That attitude can be good, but there are good scientific grounds to reject evolution and believe in Creation. In fact, it is all based on the whole idea of what science is.

Science is based on causality; every event has a cause. Things don’t happen willy-nilly. Even if we can’t know specifically what *particular* cause produced a certain event, we can say what *kind* of cause it must have been because of the kinds of effects we see today. The idea that whatever caused some effect in the past will cause the same effect in the present is called the principle of uniformity. All science is based on finding causes using these two principles: causality and uniformity.

When scientific principles were first being developed into the scientific method, scientists like Francis Bacon, Johannes Kepler, Issac Newton, and William Kelvin made a distinction between primary and secondary causes. A primary cause was a first cause that explained singularities—events that only happened once and had no natural explanation. Secondary causes were thought of as natural causes and laws that govern the way things normally operate. Unfortunately, some scientists began using supernatural causes to explain natural irregularities like earthquakes and meteors. When the truth was learned about these things, scientists eliminated primary causes from consideration altogether and sought to explain everything in terms of natural causes. But just as it was wrong for supernaturalists to explain ordinary events using primary causes, it is also wrong for the naturalist to explain all singularities by natural causes.

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<sup>1</sup> Carl Sagan, *Cosmos* (New York: Random House, 1980), p. 4.

## THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN OPERATION AND ORIGIN SCIENCE

Operation science deals with the way things normally operate. It examines how the world normally works in the present. It studies things that happen over and over again in a regular and repeated way. Operation science seeks answers that are testable by repeating the experiment over and over, and falsifiable if the cause does not always yield the same effect. Its conclusions should allow one to project what will happen in future experiments. Operation science likes things to be very regular and predictable. No changes; no surprises. So the idea of a supernatural being coming around to stir things up occasionally is strongly resisted. Because of this, it usually seeks out natural (secondary) causes for the events it studies.

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### Creationists Who Founded Modern Science

Kepler—Astronomy  
Pascal—Hydrostatics  
Boyle—Chemistry  
Newton—Physics  
Steno—Stratigraphy  
Faraday—Magnetic theory  
Babbage—Computers  
Agassiz—Ichthyology  
Simpson—Gynecology  
Mendel—Genetics  
Pasteur—Bacteriology  
Kelvin—Thermodynamics  
Lister—Antiseptic surgery  
Maxwell—Electrodynamics  
Ramsay—Isotopic chemistry

### ORIGIN SCIENCE OPERATION SCIENCE

Studies past Studies present

Studies singularities Studies regularities

Studies unrepeatable Studies repeatable

Re-creation not possible Re-creation possible

How things began How things work

May find primary cause Finds secondary causes

Origin science is not just another name for giving evidence to support creationism. It is a different kind of science. Origin science studies *past singularities*, rather than present normalities. It looks at how things *began*, not how they work. It studies things that only happened once and, by their nature, don't happen again. It is a different type of study that requires a different approach. Rather than being an *empirical* science like physics or biology, it is more like a *forensic* science. Remember the TV show about a medical examiner named Quincy? Each week he tried to find out what and/or who caused a past singularity (a person's death) by examining the effect and deciding what kind of thing could have caused that event. That is what origin science seeks to do.

Now origin science works on different principles than operation science does. Since the past events that it studies cannot be repeated today, it uses analogies between the kinds of cause/effect relationships that we see today and the kind of effect that is being studied. Also, origin science does not claim to give definitive answers, but only plausible ones. We did not observe the events of origins, and we cannot repeat them (just as Quincy could not ask the murderer to kill the victim again). So the remaining evidence must be studied and interpretations of it measured by what seems most likely to explain the evidence. And just as operation science recognizes that some events demand an intelligent cause, origin science also admits an intelligent cause when the evidence calls for it.

The first step in the basic argument against evolution is that it has taken the wrong approach. It has applied the principles of operation science to the study of origins. It is seeking regular and repeated causes for events that occurred only once. It has forced the operations that are presently working in the world to explain how the world got here in the first place. Using this method, it is a foregone conclusion that it originated by a process; processes are what operation science studies. But it is confusion to assume that unique and singular events, such as the beginning of the universe or first life, should be studied in terms of a regular and repeated process. To understand origins, we must use origin science, not operation science.

## EVIDENCE FOR INTELLIGENT PRIMARY CAUSES

But there is a second part to this argument. Because origin science is not restricted to secondary causes (the natural causes that operate the universe), it sometimes finds evidence to suggest an intelligent primary cause. On the TV show, Quincy had to determine whether he was looking for a natural cause of death or a murderer—an intelligent cause. What kind of evidence would show that an intelligent being has intervened? Carl Sagan has said that a single message from outer space would confirm his belief that there is extraterrestrial life. In other words, some normal events, such as communication, require an intelligent cause. This is a type of order known as *specified complexity*.

### Three Types Of Order

1. Orderly (repetitive) and specified  
GIFT GIFT GIFT GIFT  
Example: crystal, nylon

2. Complex (unrepeating) and unspecified  
TGELDHT TBWMHQCU PUQXHBT  
Example: random polymers
3. Complex (unrepeating) and specified  
A MESSAGE IS RIDING ON THIS SEQUENCE  
Example: DNA

This is more than simply design or order. It is order of a complex nature that has a clear and specific function. A chunk of quartz has order in its crystals, but it is repetitive, like the message: FACE, FACE, FACE, FACE. A chain of random polymers (called a polypeptide) is complex, but it does not give any specific function or message. It looks like this: DLAKI CHNAOR NVKOEK. But specified complexity has order that is not repetitious and communicates a message or a clear function, such as: THIS SENTENCE CARRIES A MESSAGE.

Now one of these types of design is the work of intelligent intervention, and I think you know which one it is. It is obvious that wherever we see a clear and distinct message—a complex design with a specified function—it was caused by some form of intelligent intervention imposing limits on the natural matter that it would not take by itself. There are natural phenomena that are orderly and awe-inspiring, but clearly caused by natural forces. We can see that the Grand Canyon and Niagara Falls did not require intelligence but only the forces of wind and water to shape them. However, the same cannot be said for the faces on Mount Rushmore or a hydroelectric plant. In these there is clearly a specified message or function. For these we know there must have been intelligent intervention. Whether it be a sculpture, a name written in the sand, or a smoke signal we instantly recognize that it took some smarts to do that—it just didn't happen by itself. And all of our present experience confirms this to us. It is universally true of things that we find in the world today, so it is reasonable to assume that it has always been that way.

### BASIC ARGUMENT STATED

Our basic argument has now made two points. First, it is valid science to look for intelligent primary causes to events that show signs of intelligence. Archeologists do it all the time. When they find pottery or arrowheads, they rightly conclude that some intelligent being produced it. Operation science is only concerned with secondary natural causes, but origin science is not so restricted and is the proper method for studying unique, past events. Second, present experience tells us that an intelligent cause should be sought wherever we find specified complexity. This gives us a criteria to show when an intelligent cause is operating and when it is not. So if it is valid for science to look for primary causes and we have some way of identifying them, the basic argument for Creation goes like this:

- I. Origin science should be used to study origins.
  - A. There are two kinds of science: operation science and origin science; and we must use one or the other to study origins.
  - B. Operation science should not be used to study unique, unrepeatable past events because it is devoted to studying the normal operations of the present.

- C. So, origin science is the proper method for studying origins because it studies unique, unrepeated events, which origins are by definition.
- II. Origin science admits the possibility of primary intelligent causes.
- III. Primary intelligent causes can be identified when there is evidence of specified complexity.
- IV. Therefore, wherever there is evidence of specified complexity, origin science should posit a primary intelligent cause.

We may now apply this type of argument to the three areas of origins: the origin of the universe, the origin of first life, and the origin of new life forms.

## THE ORIGIN OF THE UNIVERSE

There are two views of origins. One says that everything came about by natural causes; the other looks to a supernatural cause. In the case of the origin of the universe, either the universe had a beginning or it did not. If it did have a beginning, then it was either caused or uncaused. If it was caused, then what kind of cause could be responsible for bringing all things into being?

Evolutionary scientists have told us that the universe either came from nothing by nothing or that it was always here. One such theory is called the steady state theory and also calls for the universe to be constantly generating hydrogen atoms from nothing. In either case, holding to such beliefs has a high cost for the scientist, for both of these violate a fundamental law of science: the law of causality. Both views require that the scientist believe in events happening without a cause. Even the great skeptic David Hume said, “I never asserted so absurd a proposition as that anything might arise without a cause.”<sup>2</sup> Yet this absurd proposition is accepted by men who make their living by the law of causality. If the whole universe is uncaused, why should we believe that the parts are caused? If the parts are all caused, then what evidence could suggest that the whole is uncaused? Nothing in the principle of causality supports this conclusion. The evidence is just not there.

Rather, a great deal of evidence now supports the option that the universe had a beginning. Robert Jastrow, founder and former director of NASA’s Goddard Institute for Space Studies, has summarized the evidence in his book *God and the Astronomers*, saying, “Now three lines of evidence—the motions of the galaxies, the laws of thermodynamics, and the life story of the stars—pointed to one conclusion: all indicated that the Universe had a beginning.”<sup>3</sup> Now if we are speaking of a beginning of the universe—a movement from no matter to matter—then we are clearly in the realm of unrepeatability covered by origin science.

## THE LAWS OF THERMODYNAMICS

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<sup>2</sup> David Hume, *Letters*, ed. by J.Y.T. Greig (Oxford: Clarendon, 1932), vol. 1, p. 187.

<sup>3</sup> Robert Jastrow, *God and the Astronomers* (New York: Warner Books, 1978), p. 111.

The first law of thermodynamics says that the actual amount of energy in the universe remains constant—it doesn't change. The second law of thermodynamics says that the amount of usable energy in any closed system (which the whole universe is) is decreasing. Everything is tending toward disorder and the universe is running down. Now if the overall amount of energy stays the same, but we are running out of usable energy, then what we started with was not an infinite amount. You can't run out of an infinite amount. This means that the universe is and always has been finite. It could not have existed forever in the past and will not exist forever into the future. So it must have had a beginning.

### THE MOTION OF THE GALAXIES

Scientists argue that the universe is not simply in a holding pattern, maintaining its movement from everlasting to everlasting. It is expanding. It now appears that all of the galaxies are moving outward as if from a central point of origin, and that all things were expanding faster in the past than they are now. Remember that as we look out into space, we are also looking back in time, for we are seeing things not as they are now, but as they were when the light was given off many years ago. So the light from a star 7 million light-years away tells us what it was like and where it was 7 million years ago.

The most complete study made thus far has been carried out on the 200-inch telescope by Allan Sandage. He compiled information on 42 galaxies, ranging out in space as far as 6 billion light years from us. His measurements indicate that the Universe was expanding more rapidly in the past than it is today. This result lends further support to the belief that the Universe exploded into being.<sup>4</sup>

This explosion, sometimes called the Big Bang, was a beginning point from which the entire universe has come. Putting an expanding universe in reverse leads us back to the point where the universe gets smaller and smaller until it vanishes into nothing. So the universe, at some point in the distant past, came into being out of nothing.

### THE RADIATION ECHO

A third line of evidence that the universe began is the radiation "echo" which seems to come from everything. It was first thought to be a malfunction or static on the instruments. But research has discovered that the static was coming from everywhere—the universe itself has low-level radiation from some past catastrophe that looks like a giant fireball.

No explanation other than the big bang has been found for the fireball radiation. The clincher, which has convinced almost the last doubting Thomas, is that the radiation discovered by Penzias and Wilson has exactly the pattern of wavelengths expected for the light and heat produced in a great explosion. Supporters of the Steady State theory have tried desperately to find an alternative explanation, but they have failed.<sup>5</sup>

Again, this evidence must lead one to conclude that there was a beginning of the universe.

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 95.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p. 5.

The law of causality tells us that whatever happens is caused, so what caused the universe to begin? It is possible that this big bang is simply the latest in a series of explosions that destroy all evidence of what came before. But that only backs the question up a few steps to “What caused the first explosion?” It is also possible that the steady state theory is right, that the universe had no beginning and is creating hydrogen from nothing to maintain energy without running down. But this explanation is contrary to the evidence and the law of causality. Both of these answers are possible; neither is plausible.

Logically, if we are looking for a cause which existed before the entirety of nature (the universe) existed, we are looking for a supernatural cause. Even Jastrow, a confirmed agnostic, has said as much: “That there are what I or anyone would call supernatural forces at work is now, I think, a scientifically proven fact.”<sup>6</sup> Since he is speaking from the viewpoint of operation science, he probably means that there is no secondary cause which can explain the origin of the universe. But with the recognition of origin science, we can posit a supernatural primary cause that seems to be the most plausible answer to the question. Jastrow closes his book *God and the Astronomers* with these words:

For the scientist who has lived by his faith in the power of reason, the story ends like a bad dream. He has scaled the mountains of ignorance; he is about to conquer the highest peak; as he pulls himself over the final rock, he is greeted by a band of theologians who have been sitting there for centuries.<sup>7</sup>

## THE ORIGIN OF FIRST LIFE

There are two views of origins. One says that everything came about by natural causes; the other looks to a supernatural cause. In the case of the origin of first life, either it came about by spontaneous chemical generation without intelligent intervention, or by the intervention of an intelligent being through special Creation.

### ORIGIN OF FIRST LIFE

SPONTANEOUS  
GENERATION  
(no intelligent intervention)

SPECIAL CREATION  
(intelligent intervention)

DNA Code  
Uniformity

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid., pp. 15, 18.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., pp. 105–106.

Evolutionists believe that life began in a spontaneous way from nonliving chemicals by purely natural processes. Shortly after the earth was cooled enough to allow it, they tell us, the combination of simple gases like hydrogen, nitrogen, ammonia, and carbon dioxide reacted to form elementary amino acids, which in time developed into DNA chains and finally cells. Of course, this is said to have taken several billion years and the extra energy of the sun, volcanic activity, lightning, and cosmic rays were needed to keep the process going. Experimentation begun by Stanley Miller and Harold Urey has attempted to reconstruct these conditions and has had success in producing various amino acids needed for life. From this, much of the scientific community has concluded that the spontaneous chemical generation of life from a prebiotic soup is the way life began.

There are, however, some very good reasons to reject this view. First, the early earth conditions necessary to produce life are just as likely to destroy it. The experimental work has shown that no oxygen can be present for the reaction to work. Also, the energy needed from the sun and cosmic radiation are damaging to the very substances produced. Under the conditions required for life to have arisen spontaneously, it is more likely that the elements would be destroyed faster than they could be produced. Even if the right chemicals could be produced, no satisfactory answer has been given for how they could have been arranged properly and been enclosed in a cell wall. This would require another set of conditions altogether.

Second, the geological record does not support this view. Evolutionists date this origin at about 3.5 billion years ago; however, cells capable of photosynthesis have been found in rock from South Africa dated more than 3.1 billion years old, and in Australian rock dated 3.5 billion years old five different kinds of cells have been identified. There also appears to be evidences of living cells in rock from Greenland dated 3.8 billion years ago. There are no signs in the geologic record of precellular life. But if the age of the earth is about 4.6 billion years and life seems to be abundant, complex, and diverse by 3.5 billion years, that allows only 170 million years after the earth cooled (3.98 billion years ago) for evolution to take place. This is considerably less than the 2 billion years originally estimated. Just to complicate matters further, there is growing evidence that the early earth was rich in oxygen but low in nitrogen—just the opposite of what evolution needs.

Third, the experiments which support the generation of living matter from nonliving chemicals are flawed by the very interference of the intelligent scientist performing the experiment. These experiments do not really reproduce the conditions of early earth. There were no traps to collect only the amino acids produced. The chemicals used were not nearly as concentrated and not hand-picked to form a better reaction. There were many sources of energy acting simultaneously on the chemicals, and not always in harmony. And the levels of energy and wavelengths of light were not controlled. In other words, the experimenters are only fooling themselves to think that they are observing a natural process. They have manipulated the process by their own intervention.

Finally, evolutionists have never shown any mechanism that can harness the energy to do the work of selecting amino acids and sorting which will build each gene to develop a living organism. It doesn't do any good to have a drawer full of batteries if we don't have a flashlight (a mechanism for harnessing energy) to put them in. The DNA molecule is very complex. In fact, it has the specified complexity that we spoke of earlier. The English alphabet has twenty-six letters; the Greek alphabet has twenty-four and the genetic alphabet has only four, but the method of communicating by the sequence of letters is the same. Information scientist Hubert P. Yockey insists, "It is important to understand that we are not reasoning by analogy. The

sequence hypothesis applies directly to the protein and the genetic text as well as to written language and therefore the treatment is mathematically identical.”<sup>8</sup> It turns out that a single strand of DNA carries the same amount of information as a volume of an encyclopedia. Granting that there may have been enough energy available to do the work, the only systems we know which can harness the energy to do this kind of work are either living (but these were not around before life began) or intelligent. It is easy to pump a lot of energy into a system at random if all you want to do is make it hot, but if you want to organize it—that is, put it in order and create information—that requires intelligence.

What could explain the sudden appearance of life and also provide for the informational organization of living matter? If we apply the principle of uniformity (analogy) to the question, the only cause that we know routinely does this kind of work in the present is intelligence. The reasonable assumption is that it also required intelligence to do it in the past. Uniform experience proves this to us and, as Hume said, “As a uniform experience amounts to a proof, there is here a direct and full *proof*, from the nature of the fact” that the information inherent in living things required an intelligent cause. Since it is not possible that we are speaking of human intelligence, or even living beings in the natural sense, it had to be a supernatural intelligence. This does create a disjunction in the course of nature, which irritates most scientists; however, once it is admitted that there is a radical disjunction from nothing to something at the beginning of the universe, there can be little objection to the idea of another intervention when the evidence clearly points to it.

Other theories have been advanced to explain the origins of first life on earth. One is that new natural laws need to be discovered, but scientists can only point out the need and cannot explain how the organizing work can be done. Others suggest that life may have come to earth from somewhere else in the universe, either on a meteorite or on an ancient spaceship, but both of these solutions just push the question back one step: Where did that life come from? Still others borrow from pantheism and hold that some mind within the universe can account for the origin of life. Thermal vents in the sea floor and clay deposits are being studied as possible breeding grounds for life’s beginnings, but none of these views really accounts for a way to harness the energy to make specified complexity possible. The most probable cause is a supernatural intelligence.

### ORIGIN OF NEW LIFE FORMS

EVOLUTION  
(no intelligent intervention)

CREATION  
(intelligent intervention)

Lack of Transitional Fossils  
DNA Information  
Principle of Uniformity

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<sup>8</sup> Hubert P. Yockey, “Self-Organization, Origin of Life Scenarios, and Information Theory” in *Journal of Theoretical Biology*, 1981, p. 16.

## THE ORIGIN OF NEW LIFE FORMS

There are two views of origins. One says that everything came about by natural causes; the other looks to a supernatural cause. In the case of the origin of new life forms, they appeared either by an evolutionary process of natural selection without any intelligent intervention or by special Creation through the work of an intelligent designer.

Darwin made one of his greatest contributions to the theory of evolution with his analogy of selection by breeders to selection in nature. This principle of natural selection became the hallmark of evolution because it provided a system by which new developments of life forms could be explained without recourse to a supernatural cause. The main evidence that he put forward to support this analogy was the fossil record. Introductory biology books ever since have pictured this gradual transition of life forms from simple to complex in acceptance of this view.

Darwin himself was aware that there were serious problems with the analogy between breeders and nature, but he hoped that what humans could do in a few generations could be done by nature in several hundred generations. However, time is not the only factor which weakens the analogy. E.S. Russell wrote:

### NATURAL SELECTION AND INTELLIGENT SELECTION

	<i>Artificial Selection</i>	<i>Natural Selection</i>
<i>Goal</i>	Aim (end) in view	No aim (end) in view
<i>Process</i>	Intelligently guided process	Blind process
<i>Choices</i>	Intelligent choice of breeds	No intelligent choice of breeds
<i>Protection</i>	Breeds guarded from destructive forces	Breeds not guarded from destructive processes
<i>Freaks</i>	Preserves desired freaks	Eliminates most freaks
<i>Interruptions</i>	Continued interruptions to reach desired goal	No continued interruptions to reach any goal
<i>Survival</i>	Preferential survival	Nonpreferential survival

Conclusion: Rather than being analogous, in the most crucial aspects, natural selection and artificial selection are exact opposites.

It is unfortunate that Darwin ever introduced the term “natural selection,” for it has given rise to much confusion of thought. He did so, of course, because he arrived at his theory through studying the effects of selection as practiced by man in the breeding of domesticated animals and cultivated plants. Here the use of the word is entirely legitimate. *But the action of man in selective breeding is not analogous to the action of “natural selection,” but almost its direct opposite....* Man has an aim or an end in view; “natural selection” can have none. Man picks out the individuals he wishes to cross, choosing them by the characteristics he seeks to perpetuate or enhance. He protects them and their issue by all means in his power, guarding them thus from the operation of natural selection, which would speedily eliminate many freaks; he continues his active and purposeful selection from generation to generation until he reaches, if possible, his goal. Nothing of this kind happens, or can happen, through the blind process of differential elimination and differential survival which we miscall “natural selection.”<sup>9</sup>

This objection is still a major problem for evolution. It amounts to the same problem that we saw in examining the origin of first life. The analogy used to prove that natural processes did it all contains a great deal of intelligent intervention that is overlooked in the theory. Breeders manipulate according to an intelligent plan to produce specific developments. Informationally speaking, this is going from a state of complexity in the DNA code to a higher, or at least more specific, state of complexity. It is like changing the sentence, “She had brown hair,” to the more complex statement, “Her tresses were auburn and shone in the sun.” This increase in information coded into the DNA requires intelligence just as surely as the original coding to produce life did. Indeed, if Darwin’s analogy proves anything, it shows the need for intelligent intervention to produce new life forms. Again, the principle of uniformity leads us to this conclusion once it is realized that we are working within origin science, not operation science.

But what of the fossil evidence that has been so widely proclaimed? Darwin recognized this as a problem as well and wrote in *The Origin of Species*, “Why then is not every geological formation and every stratum full of such intermediate links? Geology assuredly does not reveal any such finely graduated organic chain, and this, perhaps, is the most obvious and gravest objection which can be urged against my theory.”<sup>10</sup> In the 130 years since Darwin wrote, the situation has only become worse for his theory. Noted Harvard paleontologist Stephen Jay Gould has written, “The extreme rarity of transitional forms in the fossil record persists as the trade secret of paleontology. The evolutionary trees that adorn our textbooks have data only at the tips and nodes of their branches; the rest is inference, however reasonable, not the evidence of fossils.”<sup>11</sup> Eldredge and Tattersall agree, saying:

Expectation colored perception to such an extent that the *most obvious single fact about biological evolution—non-change*—has seldom, if ever, been incorporated into anyone’s

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<sup>9</sup> E.S. Russell, *The Diversity of Animals* ([1915] 1962), p. 124. Cited in James R. Moore, *The Post-Darwinian Controversies* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979).

<sup>10</sup> Darwin, *On the Origin of Species* (London: John Murray, 1859), p. 280.

<sup>11</sup> Stephen Jay Gould, “Evolution’s Erratic Pace” in *Natural History*, May 1977, p. 14.

scientific notions of how life actually evolves. If ever there was a myth, it is that evolution is a process of constant change.<sup>12</sup>

What does the fossil record suggest? Evolutionists like Gould now support what creationists like Agassiz, Gish, and others have said all along.

The history of most fossil species includes two features particularly inconsistent with gradualism:

1. *Stasis*. Most species exhibit no directional change during their tenure on earth. They appear in the fossil record looking much the same as when they disappear; morphological change is usually limited and directionless.
2. *Sudden appearance*. In any local area, a species does not arise gradually by the steady transformation of its ancestors: it appears all at once and “fully formed.”<sup>13</sup>

The fossil evidence clearly gives a picture of mature, fully functional creatures suddenly appearing and staying very much the same. There is no real indication that one form of life transforms into a completely different form. While these two features seem to invalidate classical evolution, they are somewhat problematic to creationists also.

Some creationists say that the fossil record reflects the debris of the great Flood either because some animals were better able to escape the waters or by hydrodynamic sorting as the remains settled. These scientists are concerned with preserving a young earth on the grounds that they believe in a literal six-day, twenty-four-hour period Creation with no large gaps in the early genealogies of Genesis. Others, known as old earth creationists, hold that the earth need not be only thousands of years old. This group understands the fossil record to show that Creation was accomplished in a series of stages, each new appearance in the geological strata pointing to a new moment of direct creation. Invertebrates appeared first, followed by a long period of nature balancing itself before the next burst of creation. Fish appeared next and then amphibia and so on until man was created. The latter view does agree with the fossil record, but there is no consensus between creationists about the age of the earth. This is a hotly debated issue, but no matter which way it is resolved, they both agree that the existing fossil evidence supports Creation better than evolution.

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### **When Did It All Begin?**

Whether one follows a young earth or an old earth model will determine how you interpret much of the evidence, especially the fossils. The central motivation behind the young earth view is that this is thought to be what the Bible teaches. If the first chapter of Genesis refers to literal twenty-four-hour days, and if the genealogies in chapters 5 and 10 are understood to be closed, then Creation comes out to be around 4000 B.C. Really, only a few young earth advocates care to fix a date like that. They do desire to show that the long spans of time that evolution calls for are neither helpful to evolution nor without presupposition.

Of course, there are many Creationists who argue for an old earth. Biblically, this position that the word for *day* is used for more than twenty-four hours even in Genesis 2:4,

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<sup>12</sup> Niles Eldredge and Ian Tattersall, *The Myths of Human Evolution* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), p. 8.

<sup>13</sup> Gould, *op. cit.* pp. 13–14.

the events of the sixth day surely took more than twenty-four hours, and Hebrews 4:4–5 implies that God is still in His seventh-day rest. If the seventh day can be long, then the others could too. Scientifically, this view does not require any novel theories to explain the evidence. One of the biggest problems for the young earth view is in astronomy. We can see light from stars that took 15 billion years to get here. To say that God created them with the appearance of age does not satisfy the question of how their light reached us. We have watched star explosions that happened billions of years ago, but if the universe is not billions of years old, then we are seeing light from stars that never existed—because they would have died before Creation. Why would God deceive us with the evidence? The old earth view seems to fit the evidence better and causes no problem with the Bible.

Some evolutionists have attempted to deal with the fossil evidence by introducing the idea of punctuated equilibrium. These scientists say that the jumps in the fossil record reflect evolutionary jumps which brought on major changes in shorter times. Hence, evolution is not gradual, but punctuated by sudden leaps from one stage to the next. The theory has been criticized because they cannot produce any evidence for a mechanism of secondary causes which makes these sudden advances possible. Their theory then appears to be based solely on the absence of transitional fossils. Darwin, after all, understood suddenness to be evidence of Creation. If this is true, then it supports what Creationists said all along—the sudden appearance of fully formed animals is evidence of Creation.

Creationists reason that there are real limitations to genetic changes and that this indicates a special creation of each major category of life forms. Each new life form came into being by an act of intelligent intervention specifying its genetic information for its peculiar function. Just as letter sequences make up different words, DNA codes vary and produce different species. If it requires intelligence to create *King Lear* from selecting and sorting the words in a dictionary, then it also requires intelligence to select and sort genetic information to produce a variety of species which work together as a system in nature. The sudden appearance of these life forms only strengthens our case that a supernatural intelligence was at work to accomplish this organization. By the principle of uniformity, this is the most plausible solution to the problem.

## CONCLUSION

Now that we have new evidence about the nature of the universe, the information stored in DNA molecules, and further fossil confirmation, the words of Louis Agassiz resound even more loudly than they did when first written in 1860: “[Darwin] has lost sight of the most striking of the features, and the one which pervades the whole, namely, that there runs throughout Nature unmistakable evidence of thought, corresponding to the mental operations of our own mind, and therefore intelligible to us as thinking beings, and unaccountable on any other basis than that they owe their existence to the working of intelligence; and no theory that overlooks this element can be true to nature.”<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Louis Agassiz, “Contribution to the Natural History of the United States” in *American Journal of Science*, 1860.

There are two views of origins. One says that everything came about by natural causes; the other looks to a supernatural cause. The overwhelming evidence supports the Creationist view.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Norman L. Geisler and Ronald M. Brooks, *When Skeptics Ask* (Wheaton, Ill.: Victor Books, 1990), 211-31.