

Editorial: The Doctrine of Creation Matters

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It is hard to overestimate the importance of the doctrine of creation. In Scripture, God first identifies himself as the sovereign Creator and, thus, the Lord of his universe. Many Christians are naturally interested in the doctrine of salvation, but without the God of creation and providence, there is no Christianity as the Bible describes it. Not only does the storyline of Scripture begin with creation, it also establishes a number of key theological points, not least, who God is and the entire God-world relationship; the proper interpretation and place of human beings in God's world; as well as the goodness of God's original creation (which sets us up for what eventually goes wrong with us in Genesis 3). In this important way, the Bible's doctrine of creation both establishes the beginning of history as well as an entire linear/eschatological presentation of history that unfolds the plan of God in terms of the biblical categories of creation, fall, redemption, and new creation. That is why the theological underpinnings for soteriology (as well as every other doctrine of Christian theology) are first grounded in the fact that the God who is there, the sovereign-personal Triune Lord who has existed from all eternity, at a moment, created this universe, and, as such, everything and everyone is utterly dependent upon him and responsible to him. Without the Bible's presentation of God as Creator and all that affirmation entails, the rationale and foundation for biblical Christianity

is non-existent.

Furthermore, to affirm that God is the Creator, Christian theology stresses at least three truths. First, we are underscoring the fact that God created the universe *ex nihilo*. Scripture begins by affirming that "in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth" (Gen 1:1). Before God began to create the universe, nothing existed except the Triune God himself. However at a moment, the eternal God spoke and brought this space-time universe into existence *ex nihilo*, that is, without the use of any previously existing materials. It is because of this fact that Scripture and Christian theology affirms that matter is not eternal, but only a created reality. Second, we are affirming that God created the universe freely. Scripture never presents God as needing to create out of some kind of necessity either outside of him or internal to him. Rather, he, as the Triune God, who is self-existent and self-sufficient, freely decides to create. In this important sense, God did not have to create a universe. Rather, due to his own sovereign choice and for his own good pleasure, he purposed to create (Rev 4:11). That is why Scripture affirms that God does not need the world, but that the world and all that is in it is absolutely dependent upon him. Third, to say that God is the Creator is to affirm that it is a Triune act. Creation is not only the work of the Father (Gen 1:1; Ps 19:1-2; Isa 40:28; Acts 17:24-25; Rev 4:11), it is also the work of the Son (John 1:1-3; Col 1:15-17; Heb

1:2), and the activity of the Spirit (Gen 1:2; Job 33:4; Ps 104:30). And as an act of the Triune God, the reason for the universe's existence is ultimately and finally for God's own glory.

Given the importance of the doctrine of creation for Scripture and theology, it should not surprise us that it is one of the first doctrinal areas routinely attacked by fallen human beings. Whether it is the ancient, modern, or postmodern world, this reality has not changed. That is why the church must always be vigilant in expounding and defending what the Scripture teaches regarding creation and origins. This is especially the situation in our own day given the fact that the reigning view is the theory of evolution. Ever since 1859 and the advent of Charles Darwin, the great alternative to the doctrine of creation and the Scriptural presentation that human beings are *created* in the image of God has been the metanarrative of evolution. It is certainly not an understatement to say that the evolutionary theory literally changed the way people viewed God, the world, and human beings, and, as such, it has served as a competing worldview set over against orthodox Christianity, even to this very day.

With that in mind, we devote this edition of *SBJT* to the theme of creation and origins. Knowing that the issue is huge, our articles and forum pieces can only begin to nibble away at the edges of the issue, but it is important that we continually provide reflections on this important subject. Kurt Wise, who is trained in the field of science, provides some very helpful reflections on the limitations of science and how Christian theology must interact with such issues as origins and the date of the universe. Jeremy Howard provides an excellent critique of the oft

cited indeterminacy theory which is viewed as support for a chance view of the universe. John Mark Reynolds gives some helpful reflections on the important "Intelligent Design" movement, which constantly is in the news as Christians attempt to critique and penetrate the scientific establishment's endorsement of the evolutionary theory of origins.

In addition to our above articles and forum pieces, we are publishing Greg Beale's surrejoinder to Peter Enns's response to Beale's review of *Inspiration and Incarnation* (Baker, 2005). Over the last year, there have been a number of articles written that have provided a constructive critique and evaluation of Enns's proposals that have direct impact on how we view the OT, its relation to the Ancient Near East (ANE), as well as its use by the NT authors. Many of the issues raised by Enns are directly tied to how Christians should understand and interpret the Genesis creation accounts vis-à-vis other ANE origin stories. Obviously these issues are not new, but Enns has brought them to the forefront once again. Beale's careful critique is must reading for everyone who is concerned to reflect on these important issues from a faithful biblical and theological perspective.

As always, it is our prayer that this edition of *SBJT* will lead us to reflect on these issues better, not only for our own good, but ultimately for the glory of our Triune Creator-Redeemer God, so that we may be found faithful preachers and teachers of God's Word in the generation God has called us to serve.