

as a part of God's good creation. The author differentiates between physical and spiritual death but makes the theological assumption that physical death is always a result of sin. There are Christians who challenge this perspective, and recognizing this—even if the author disagrees—would seem to fit the purpose of this volume. Finally, there are important figures missing that would fill out the spectrum of theological perspectives. For example, there is no entry for Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, whose work has influenced scholars such as Ilia Delio to creatively explore the connections between incarnation and evolution. There is also no entry for Elizabeth Johnson, who brings a feminist hermeneutic to bear on ecological issues in her recent work *Ask the Beasts: Darwin and the Love of God*. While one might respond by pointing out the impossibility of including everything in one volume, which I recognize, there seems to be a glaring omission of Christian scholars who are pursuing what might be considered a more progressive approach to questions related to science and faith. Regardless of the target audience, any volume that uses the word “definitive” in the subtitle needs to include individuals and ideas that represent the broad spectrum of perspectives.

The authors in this volume represent a variety of conservative theological traditions and perspectives that correlate with the variety of beliefs that evangelical Christians tend to hold. Laudably, this volume represents a constructive example of dialogue that allows the reader to better understand why Christians hold particular beliefs, which makes it an important contribution to the discussion.

The *Dictionary of Christianity and Science* is an excellent resource for students, pastors, teachers, and anyone interested in learning more about issues related to Christian faith and science.

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RIGHTING AMERICA AT THE CREATION MUSEUM
by Susan L. Trollinger and William Vance Trollinger Jr.
Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2016.
327 pages. Hardcover; \$26.95. ISBN: 9781421419510.

Answers in Genesis (AiG) opened its much-anticipated, 27-million-dollar Creation Museum in rural northern Kentucky at the end of May 2007, drawing more than half a million people in the first sixteen months and more than three million in the first ten years. Those are impressive numbers. By comparison, the nearby Cincinnati Museum Center, located in the heart of a major Midwestern city, covering a much larger range of subjects in three separate museums, boasting an OMNIMAX theater, and targeting a much broader demographic than just conservative Protestants, had about 1.45 million visitors in 2015. With 20% as much traffic as its much larger secular neighbor, AiG's

museum has proved to be a commercial success. Like the YEC ideas that it embodies, the Creation Museum is here to stay.

One reason for this is the high production values evident throughout. I saw this for myself, when I visited the Museum scarcely more than three months after it opened. Terry Mortenson of AiG kindly gave me a tour of the operation behind the scenes afterwards, but mostly I walked through the exhibits unaccompanied, attended a well-organized presentation by astronomer Jason Lisle in the technically impressive planetarium, and formed my own conclusions about the methods and the message of the Creation Museum. What struck me most is the way in which visitors are shown the YEC view and evolution as separate but equal sets of assumptions, with the scientific evidence impotent to determine which approach actually provides a better explanation. That is best seen in the Dinosaur Dig Site, a big sand box in which two paleontologists, one secular and one a creationist, uncover the same bones with the same techniques but draw very different conclusions about the implications.

As with many other cultural phenomena of comparable impact, the Creation Museum has attracted significant attention from scholars in a variety of disciplines, but to the best of my knowledge this is the first full-length scholarly book about it. The authors are devout Roman Catholic professors from the University of Dayton, rhetorician Susan L. Trollinger and historian William (Bill) Vance Trollinger Jr. A former colleague of mine at Messiah College, Bill Trollinger has written extensively on fundamentalism, including a book about William Bell Riley, a Baptist minister from the Twin Cities who founded the World Christian Fundamentals Association, an organization that combatted evolution after the Great War. (Riley was the person who persuaded William Jennings Bryan to assist the prosecution at the Scopes trial.) Susan Trollinger is best known for her book, *Selling the Amish*. Between them, the Trollingers bring expertise in anti-evolutionism and visual rhetoric to bear on the Creation Museum. *Righting America at the Creation Museum* combines analysis of the museum as a visual argument with analysis of the ideas on display, giving readers a broad and sometimes deep understanding of creationism as a phenomenon.

I entirely agree with their central thesis:

the museum exists and thrives ... because it represents and speaks to the religious and political commitments of a large swath of the American population, [seeking to] arm millions of American Christians as uncompromising and fearless warriors for what it understands to be the ongoing culture war in America. (p. 2)

The key words are “uncompromising” and “culture war,” core aspects of young-earth creationism that are well documented in the book.

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The Trollingers describe the Creation Museum, a long-time dream of Ken Ham, as the “crown jewel of the AiG apologetics enterprise” that shows Christians how to understand our role in the highly secular modern world (p. 13). It may come as a surprise to learn that the primary message of the museum is not actually about the age of the Earth or evolution per se, but the need to preach a particular version of the gospel to unbelievers. What is that gospel? The authors answer this by examining the 16-minute film, *The Last Adam*, which visitors view right at the end of the Bible Walkthrough Experience that contains most of the exhibits. They find that “only thirty-two seconds are devoted to Jesus’s ministry and teachings,” while “three minutes and forty-five seconds are given to his flogging and execution.” The brief portion about his ministry includes the statement that Jesus “preached good news to the poor, and told the people that the Kingdom of God was at hand.” As the authors point out, the film does not spell out “what ‘good news’ was given to those in poverty,” or “what Jesus meant by the ‘Kingdom of God.’” Viewers are left to speculate, and the Trollingers suggest that, “perhaps viewers are to infer” that the poor “will suffer on Earth” but “eventually end up in Heaven,” and that the Kingdom of God refers to “the afterlife.”

In their opinion, viewers “learn that Jesus performed miracles but apparently had nothing to teach us about how we should live our lives.” They also note that a further “one minute, thirty-five seconds” is devoted to “an extrabiblical story about the youthful Mary and her family viewing the annual sacrifice of a lamb. Given the commitment to the inerrant word of God, it might seem strange to forego all the available material on the life of Jesus” in the four gospels “for a story that does not actually appear in the Bible” (p. 105).

In short, the film depicts Jesus almost solely as the Lamb of God, not the bringer of good news to the poor, and Jesus is a relatively minor player elsewhere in the museum. He is infrequently quoted, and the traditional Christian message of love and grace is not emphasized. Rather, “the essential continuity presented” at the museum is this: “God gives the Word; humans disobey it; God is obliged to punish them” (p. 49). The present world simply reiterates the sins of the past, and the whole museum presents this gospel as rooted in the true history found in the literal Bible.

What about science? The authors explain the standard creationist distinction between historical (subjective) science versus observational (objective) science. Creationists employ this to keep the conclusions of natural history from refuting their interpretation of Genesis, but the authors apply it cleverly to critique some of the pro-YEC information on display in the Museum. For example, the room devoted to Flood Geology features some facts from observational science about the deposition of detritus by river floods, using

“a small catastrophe in the present ... as a mini-analogy for a global one in the distant past.” Is that analogy valid, given that “the very first placard visitors encounter” in that room *denies* Charles Lyell’s dictum that the present is the key to the past? (pp. 90–91). It is a very good question.

The museum certainly emphasizes the primacy of the Bible, a classic Protestant theme, yet it also promotes a narrow biblicism that bears little resemblance to the Reformation idea of *sola Scriptura*. Indeed, Ham’s organization places the Bible above all other sources of knowledge, often to the point of denying their legitimacy in the name of the alleged “plain reading” of a given biblical text. According to AiG’s Statement of Faith (<https://answersingenesis.org/about/faith/>),

By definition, no apparent, perceived or claimed evidence in any field, including history and chronology, can be valid if it contradicts the scriptural record. Of primary importance is the fact that evidence is always subject to interpretation by fallible people who do not possess all information.

However, citing Alister E. McGrath’s book, *Christianity’s Dangerous Idea* (2008), the Trollingers point out that the Reformation actually “yielded an endless variety of theologies and practices,” in spite of Martin Luther’s rock bottom belief that the Bible speaks clearly to all who read it. Each group claims to have “the true word of God,” but “none has been able to control the proliferation of its meaning.” Nevertheless, “this has not stopped efforts to arrest the flow of interpretations, to freeze for all time the One True Interpretation. Enter young Earth creationism, and the Creation Museum” (p.111). Ham and his Museum “cannot acknowledge they are presenting an interpretation, nor can they consider the possibility that other interpretations—including other conservative Protestant interpretations—of Genesis might be correct” (p. 136).

I resonate with this conclusion. AiG and their museum are about providing answers for hard questions to very conservative Christians. The answers they offer can be authoritative for their audience only if *all other answers*, based on different interpretations of the Bible, are illegitimate. Otherwise, their cultural agenda collapses like a house of cards. The Trollingers fully understand this.

At the heart of the Creation Museum is a radical binary in which the visitor is confronted with two sets of tightly linked terms that are unequivocally opposed to each other, Bible-young Earth-Eden-truth-heaven versus human reason-evolution and old Earth-sin-corruption-hell. (p. 149)

They also understand the significance of this rhetorical strategy: “The binary is cosmic. The stakes could not be higher.” We find “no space for dissent, not even from fellow Christians” in this “culture war with eter-

nal implications." All dissenters are "the opponents of Truth. They are the Enemy" (p. 149).

The museum sends this message primarily through fear. Visitors pass through rooms called *Graffiti Alley*, where headlines show "how society has gone awry in our world after the Bible lost its place in the public square," and *Culture in Crisis*, about the disintegration of families and churches as a result of accepting "millions of years" of Earth history. Welcome to culture wars. We have "The Answer" for you: throw modern science in the garbage and go back to the Bible, even if it means that Cain found a wife by incestuously marrying a sister or another close relative, as the museum tells us on "a large placard entitled, 'Where Did Cain Get His Wife?'" I have to agree with the Trollingers: "Even in the context of the Creation Museum, this is one strange placard" (p. 177).

While I usually agree with the authors' analyses and conclusions, at one point their language might unintentionally mislead readers about an important aspect of the Galileo affair. Immediately after a paragraph containing a brief summary of the Galileo affair, they ask,

So what was the biblical cosmology that Copernicus and Galileo were contradicting? Put simply it was the cosmology of ancient Near Eastern cultures ... [which] consisted of a three-tiered universe with the Earth in the middle, the heavens above, and the "netherworld" below. (p. 103)

I agree that the biblical authors accepted the ANE world picture, but Catholic officials of Galileo's time did not. The three-tiered universe was irrelevant to his collision with Rome. The contested issue involved moving the spherical Earth around the Sun, not denying that the Sun passes under the flat, disc-shaped Earth every night. The authors understand this, but some readers might draw the wrong conclusion—as I did myself, before corresponding with them about it.

At the same time, the authors properly point out that the museum actually treats the solar system as if it—rather than the three-tiered universe—were the true biblical view. The visitor looks in vain for any depiction of the actual cosmology of the biblical authors. Thus, at least in this instance, modern science takes precedence over a literal Bible! When it comes to astronomy, the museum's science is not "the Bible's science" (p. 105). Here we find one of the most important conclusions in the whole book.

I also partly dissent from the way in which the authors narrate the rise of the Christian right in America—a theme directly related to the title of their book—particularly in relation to racism. They acknowledge that Ham and his museum unambiguously oppose racism and blame evolution for advancing it. They also see that particular stance as somewhat out of step with

the otherwise (in their view) very conservative political stance of the rest of the museum. So far, so good. However, in the context of their larger narrative, they seem to imply that Ham's opposition to racism is just trendy, part of a relatively recent change of heart among American evangelicals, who increasingly disown racial prejudice. They also endorse Randall Balmer's questionable view

that the origins of the Christian Right are not to be found in *Roe versus Wade*, but in the anger over the Internal Revenue Service's efforts to remove tax-exempt status from Christian schools that discriminated on the basis of race. (p. 187)

Yes, some segregationists used religion in their cause, but there was much more to that story than the authors indicate. Many other Christians totally opposed to segregation were concerned about the possibility of inappropriate government intrusion into other religious beliefs unrelated to racial prejudice, simply on the basis that they were inconsistent with public policy. This book gives readers the impression that the religious right is all about defending racism, as if Francis Schaeffer had never written *How Should We Then Live?* (1976), a powerful proclamation of the dangers posed to human dignity by abortion and dehumanization that galvanized evangelicals to political action.

In fact, Ham's longstanding opposition to those who use the Bible or science to support racism is a matter of public record—for which I applaud him. He deserves more credit than this book gives him. For example, in the pamphlet, "Where Did the 'Races' Come From?" (1999), Ken Ham, Carl Wieland, and Don Batten state predictably that "Darwinian evolution was (and still is) inherently a racist philosophy" (p. 2), but they also draw on science and the Bible to contest traditional creationist teachings about human "races." Quoting a paper given at the American Association for the Advancement of Science, they affirm, "Race is a social construct derived mainly from perceptions conditioned by events of recorded history, and it has no basic biological reality." Since the Bible "describe[s] all human beings as being of 'one blood'" (Acts 17:26), we are all related as "descendants of the first man Adam" (1 Cor. 15:45), so Christ died for all of us (pp. 3, 5). All three authors were born in Australia, which certainly has a sordid history of its own relative to racism, especially with regard to the indigenous population. Perhaps with some irony, they note that "a significant number" of American Christians believe that so-called "'inter-racial marriages' violate God's principles in the Bible," but they decisively reject that teaching. They also deny the related view, preached by the late Jerry Falwell (among many others) and found historically among some Jews and Muslims as well, that "the skin color of black people is a result of a curse on Ham and his descendants" (pp. 31, 40).

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Nevertheless, the Trollingers quite properly point out that AiG and the museum do not really come clean on the Bible and slavery. The room devoted to racism quotes Acts 17:26, but only the first part about how God “hath made of one blood all nations of men,” leaving out the part where God determined “the bounds of their habitation.” The authors emphasize that those words at the end of the verse were quoted by segregationists more often than any other biblical text, yet they are not on display in the museum, and visitors will have no idea that the Bible was widely used to defend slavery, or that the Bible does not directly condemn it. Indeed (as the authors state), AiG tries hard to distinguish between “slavery under the Mosaic covenant” from the “harsh slavery” imposed on blacks in America, in order not to raise unanswerable questions about their approach to the Bible. It would be far better, if they were more forthright about such things, like the newly opened Museum of the Bible, which I have also seen. There we find, side by side, historically important writings advocating for and against black slavery in the United States, both citing the Bible profusely. That is quite a contrast with the Creation Museum, whose motto is “Prepare to Believe,” not “What Actually Happened.”

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SOCIAL SCIENCE

RELIGION: What It Is, How It Works, and Why It Matters by Christian Smith. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2017. 296 pages, including notes, references and index. Hardcover; \$35.00. ISBN: 9780691175416.

The sociology of religion is conventionally characterized as composed primarily of two competing schools of thought, the old, cultural perspective advanced by Max Weber, and the new, rational choice perspective advanced by Rodney Stark. In this scholarly work, Christian Smith rejects the positivist assumptions underlying both schools, but nevertheless offers a theory of religion that “can embrace and capitalize upon the contributions of both” (p. 254) in a “more complicated and realistic theory” (p. 255) that “takes very seriously causal multiplicity, complexity, interactions, and contingency” (p. 259).

Smith is Professor of Sociology and Director of the Center for the Study of Religion and Society at the University of Notre Dame, and is arguably the leading Christian sociologist of religion today. He is perhaps best known beyond sociological circles as director of the massive National Study of Youth and Religion (2001–2015).

A trilogy of Smith’s previous works serves as prologue to *Religion*, whose intended readership “includes

not only academic scholars of religion, but also ... the educated reading public” (p. ix). First, *Moral, Believing Animals: Human Personhood and Culture* (2003) introduced his theory of personhood and applied it to religion. *What Is a Person? Rethinking Humanity, Social Life, and the Moral Good from the Person Up* (2011) furthered his personalism and introduced his commitment to critical realism. Finally, *To Flourish or Destruct: A Personalist Theory of Human Goods, Motivations, Failure, and Evil* (2015) examined the motivations intrinsic to subjective experience and to realizing natural human goods. Smith’s forthcoming work on *Atheist Overreach* (2018) may well serve as epilogue to *Religion*.

Smith’s self-identified theoretical influences are (a) substantive definitions of religion that identify what religion is, in contrast to functional definitions that identify what it does; (b) the critical realist philosophy of science that combines ontological realism, epistemic perspectivalism, and judgmental rationality; and (c) the social theory of personalism, which argues that “humans have a particular nature that is defined by our biologically grounded yet emergently real personal being and its features” (p. 12). In keeping with the “methodological agnosticism” of science (not “methodological atheism”), he states flatly that

nothing in this book either directly endorses or invalidates the truth claims of any religious tradition ...

The social sciences are constitutionally incompetent to make judgments about religion’s metaphysical claims about superhuman powers. (pp. 17–18)

Cue Smith’s definition of religion: “a complex of culturally prescribed practices, based on premises about the existence and nature of superhuman powers, whether personal or impersonal, which seek to help practitioners gain access to and communicate or align themselves with these powers, in hopes of realizing human goods and avoiding things bad” (p. 22). Most notable “is the dual emphasis on prescribed practices and superhuman powers” (p. 3). Contra Weber, “religion is not most fundamentally a cognitive or existential meaning system. Rather it is essentially a set of practices ... ‘making meaning’ is not the heart of religion” (p. 41).

Smith anticipates and refutes the charge that his account of religion is reductionistic. Regarding explanatory reductionism, he notes that such an account of religion “would especially surprise readers who know that I have spent my career criticizing utilitarian-based rational choice theory ... and exchange-based views of social relationships” (p. 62). Yet he has self-descriptively moved from the definition of religion he gave in *Moral, Believing Animals*. His definition now “prioritizes practices over beliefs and symbols, it centers on the superhuman instead of the superempirical, it replaces ‘orders’ with ‘powers,’ and it shifts the purpose of religion away from moral order toward deliverance and blessings” (p. 75).