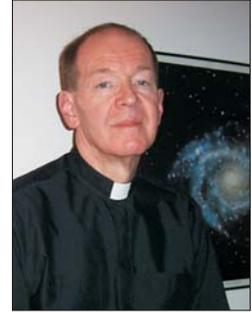


Kenosis and the Biblical Picture of the World

George L. Murphy



George L. Murphy

Some biblical statements about the physical world are out-of-date in light of today's scientific knowledge. The "dome" of heaven and the waters above it in Genesis 1 are well-known instances. St. Paul's belief that biological death of humans is a result of sin is of greater theological significance.

This poses important questions for those who take the authority of scripture seriously. Responses that reject well-established scientific concepts or that try to read them into the biblical text are unsatisfactory. Many theological discussions of scripture recognize that we should not expect to find a modern picture of the universe in the Bible, but they generally do not treat specific issues raised by today's science in any detail.

Philippians 2:7 refers to the kenosis, the self-limitation, of the Son of God involved in becoming human. This concept has been applied to God's work in creation and I suggest here that it is also relevant to inspiration of scripture. As God in the Incarnation accepted the limitations of a human being in a particular culture, so God in inspiring biblical writers accepted the limits of the knowledge of the world in their cultures. This article will focus on issues raised by science in terms of a kenotic understanding of inspiration.

The Problem

Some statements in the Bible about the structure of the world and its processes and history—we may say somewhat anachronistically “about science”—conflict with what we know today.¹ This raises important questions about the inspiration and authority of scripture.

Reports of miraculous events such as the resurrection of Jesus are not in question here. Claims for unique historical phenomena differ from statements about general spatiotemporal features of the world such as those that speak of a dome of the heavens (Gen. 1:6–8) or the waters above it (Gen. 1:7, 7:11; Ps. 148:4). There simply is no such dome and there are no such waters.

Nor is the nonliteral character of some biblical texts at issue. Biblical writers and

their audiences did not confuse metaphor and poetic imagery with realistic description, but they apparently did accept ideas held in Ancient Near Eastern cultures such as heaven as a solid structure with waters above it.² We know today that that is not the way the world is.

George L. Murphy holds a BS from Ohio University and a PhD from Johns Hopkins in physics and an MDiv from Wartburg Seminary. He is a retired ELCA pastor who has served Lutheran and Episcopal congregations and is adjunct faculty at Trinity Lutheran Seminary in Columbus, Ohio. In addition to research papers in physics, he has published numerous articles and books on faith-science issues. His latest book, *Actual Atonement: Talking about Salvation in a Scientific World* is currently in the process of publication by Lutheran University Press. He has also contributed print and internet resources for preachers and for eleven years wrote the “Handiwork” column for the journal *Lutheran Partners* to help church professionals deal with issues of science and technology in ministry.

Article

Kenosis and the Biblical Picture of the World

Our goal here is an adequate theological understanding of the fact that the Bible reflects views of the world that are now outdated. The celestial dome and the cosmic ocean are relatively minor aspects of this, but they provide clear examples of the problem and ways in which it has been addressed. I first focus briefly on the dome to set out the basic facts and to illustrate typical responses.³

The Hebrew word in Gen. 1:6–8 for the sky is *rāqia`*. The root verb *rāqa`* has the sense of stamping out something like metal foil or plates, or stretching something out. Particularly relevant is Job 37:18, where Elihu asks, “Can you, like him [God], spread out [*tar`qia`*, a causative form of *rāqa`*] the skies, hard as a molten mirror?” (NRSV). The Septuagint translated *rāqia`* in Genesis 1 as *steréōma*, something solid or firm. (That Greek word is used once in the New Testament in a figurative sense in Col. 2:5, where the NRSV translates it as “firmness.”) The Vulgate has *firmamentum* in the Genesis passage; the King James, “firmament.” NRSV has “dome,” and Luther’s translation is *eine Veste* (modern spelling *eine Feste*).

So the uses of the Hebrew word group and the history of translation of Gen. 1:6–8 indicate that a covering of solid material was meant. But the scientific facts are quite clear: there is no such dome and never was one. How can this contradiction be dealt with?

First, the claims of modern science could be rejected. Few do that explicitly with the dome or the waters, but the situation is different when the Genesis creation accounts are confronted with biological evolution and the idea that creatures were dying for millions of years before humans came on the scene.

Another possibility is to argue that the biblical statements really are in accord with today’s knowledge. The NASB and NIV translation of *rāqia`* as “expanse,” in accord with the *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*,⁴ is not strictly wrong but is misleadingly incomplete. “Expanse” allows the reader to understand the word as a reference to the atmosphere, but the question “expanse of what?” naturally occurs, and the word itself has connotations of solidity.

Finally, a common response is, “The Bible is not a textbook of science.” That is true but does not get

at the heart of the problem. While the purpose of the writer of Genesis 1 was not to teach about the nature of the sky, it is still the case that an archaic understanding of the sky was used in the text.

If the Bible is really inspired by God, why does it not have a better picture of the way the world is?⁵ More important than the dome and the waters above it, is the fact that the biblical accounts of cosmic and biological origins are, from today’s scientific standpoint, obsolete. There is nothing in scripture about a big bang or biological evolution.⁶ Sensible people will not insist that scripture should contain technical accounts of relativistic cosmology or Darwinian evolution in order for its religious message to be plausible, but they may reasonably wonder why an inspired text could not have an elementary picture of a cosmic explosion and gradual development of living creatures. That is the kind of thing that we present when we talk to children about such matters.

The Word of God

For many Christians, the phrase, “The Word of God,” simply refers to the Bible. But in its most fundamental sense, the Word of God is Jesus Christ, the Second Person of the Trinity made flesh (John 1:1–18). His life, death, and resurrection are the focus of God’s whole revelatory activity that began with Abraham and continues in the apostolic mission of the church. Much of the theology of the past century has been influenced by Karl Barth’s understanding of the threefold form of the Word of God—the Word revealed as Christ, the Word proclaimed, and the Word written.⁷ The scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are the inspired written witness to God’s revelation in Christ.

In a discussion of the role of scripture in systematic theology, Braaten states as a corollary of this view, “All the meanings of the Word of God have one center and norm: the appearance of Jesus Christ in history.”⁸ This is a recovery of the understanding of scripture held by the reformers, as with Luther’s statement that “all of scripture ... is pure Christ.”⁹ The written Word is to be interpreted christologically, and “the medium of [God’s] revelation is completely incarnational.”¹⁰

Scripture is the Word of God in the words of humans—sinful and fallible humans. Because of this, Barth said, those writers “were capable and actually guilty of error in their spoken and written word” in expressing the miracle of God’s Word. To deny this, he argued, would be like saying that the sick who were miraculously healed by Jesus were not really ill.¹¹

Not all Christians will be willing to draw this implication from the human aspect of scripture. Some continue to hold, with Warfield, that the biblical writers were inspired by the Holy Spirit in such a way that “their words were rendered also the words of God, and, therefore, perfectly infallible.”¹² It is the last two words that are at issue here—or more precisely, it is a question of whether they follow from the fact that the words of the writers are indeed the words of God.

Fairly conservative theologians have come to recognize that scripture itself does not commit us to a belief in “inerrancy” in the sense that every statement of scripture, no matter how distantly related to its christological center, is factually correct in all details.¹³ “The true humanity of scripture,” Bloesch says, “involves a vulnerability to error and a limited cultural horizon because the writers lived in a particular time and place in history.”¹⁴ This does not require that every concept of inerrancy be abandoned. Pinnock, for example, defines it to mean “that the Bible can be trusted in what it teaches and affirms” and cites approvingly the fuller statement of Millard Erickson:

The Bible, when correctly interpreted in the light of the level to which culture and the means of communication had developed at the time it was written, and in view of the purposes for which it was given, is fully truthful in all it affirms.¹⁵

In order to appreciate such statements, we need to realize that not everything that is said in the Bible is “teaching” or “affirmation,” a point that James Barr has emphasized.¹⁶ When Jesus told a parable about the growth of the mustard plant (Mark 4:30–32), he was teaching about the kingdom of God, not the relative sizes of seeds. And while there is no reason to doubt Paul’s account of his early relationships with other Christians in Gal. 1:15–2:14, he is surely not “affirming” the details of his encounters with other

apostles in the same sense that he affirms that people are justified by faith in Christ in that letter.

Theologians who believe that inerrancy does not extend to all things in scripture will usually mention matters of science, but their references tend to be quite general. And when Barth says that “there can be no scientific problems, objections, or aids in relation to what Holy Scripture and the Christian church understand by the divine work of creation” or when Bloesch speaks favorably of fundamentalists’ “opposition to the myth of evolution,” we get the definite impression of an unwillingness to take major conclusions of science seriously in doing theology.¹⁷

In addition, emphasis on the human aspect of scripture, while important, does not go deep enough. We get further insight by considering the typical *modus operandi* of the God whose Word encounters us in scripture.

Kenosis

We began with the question of how scripture can truly be inspired by God if it assumes things about the world that we now know to be out-of-date or simply incorrect. We can answer this question adequately only if we know who the God is that we are talking about. General lists of divine attributes will not get us anywhere and may even exacerbate the problem. If God is understood to be omniscient, then God knows about the structure of the heavens and the way in which the universe, the earth, and living things originated.

But God has not made himself known in terms of philosophical attributes. Instead, he revealed himself in Christ Jesus

who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death—even death on a cross. (Phil. 2:6–8)

The one who is “true God from true God” became fully human. That means more than just looking like other humans or having the same biochemical

Article

Kenosis and the Biblical Picture of the World

makeup. To be fully human means to live at a particular time and place, to be a person of a particular country and culture. The Word became male Jewish flesh in Palestine in the time of Pontius Pilate, speaking Aramaic and some Greek, and learning about the world in a Hellenistic Jewish culture under Roman occupation.

“But about that day or hour no one knows, neither the angels in heaven, *nor the Son*, but only the Father” (Mark 13:32, emphasis added). When Jesus said this, he indicated that there were things that he, the incarnate Son of God, did not know. Nor is this so only for recondite matters such as the timing of the parousia. When, in the story of the healing of the woman with an issue of blood, Jesus turns to the crowd following him and asks, “Who touched me?” (Luke 8:45), it was probably because (as C. S. Lewis comments¹⁸) “he really wanted to know.”

Jesus had deeper insight into relationships with the Father, his own and that of other people, than did his contemporaries.

All things have been handed over to me by my Father; and no one knows the Son except the Father; and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him. (Matt. 11:27)

But this does not mean that he knew about the history of hominids in east Africa or electroweak unification. Orthodox christology holds that Jesus had a fully human as well as a divine mind. A model suggested by Thomas Morris of a large (perhaps infinite) computer linked to a smaller and finite one may help in picturing this.¹⁹ In such a situation, there will be information in the large computer which is not, at a given time, accessed by the smaller one. (The knowledge of the risen and ascended Lord Jesus now is not at issue here.)

It is sometimes argued that kenosis is relevant only to the saving work of Christ. In that case, it could be regarded as a temporary stratagem used for a specific purpose and ignored in other contexts. But if Christ is the fullest revelation of God, that view is inadequate. As Gordon Fee put it in commenting on the Philippians text, “in ‘pouring himself out’ and ‘humbling himself to death on the cross’ Christ Jesus has revealed the character of God himself.”²⁰

The concept of kenosis has been valuable in discussions of divine action.²¹ God is at work in all that happens in the world, cooperating with creatures in their actions. But the regularity of natural processes shows that God limits what is done through natural processes to what is in accord with the properties with which he has endowed creatures. From our standpoint, this means that God limits divine action to accord with the laws of physics—which themselves are God’s creation.

Different authors use the concept of kenosis in different ways; therefore, it is important to clarify what I mean by it. Paul’s use of the word in the Philippians passage implies that in becoming human, the Son of God limited himself to the human condition. But it is clear from the totality of Paul’s writings that he did not think that God was absent or inactive in the Christ event. In fact, he insists that “God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself” (2 Cor. 5:19).

So when we speak of a kenotic aspect of divine action, we should mean that God is indeed present and active in the world but that God limits divine action to the capacities of creatures. This means also that kenosis cannot provide the sole model for divine action. It says, after all, what God does *not* do—act beyond the capacities of creatures—rather than what God does do. Kenosis only makes sense in conjunction with something like the concept of God’s cooperation with creatures in their actions.²²

This limitation of divine action should also be understood as something that God *chooses*. It is not a necessity imposed upon God by the God-world relationship, as in process theology.

Kenotic divine action means that God’s work in the world is concealed from scientific investigation. But this is not simply a way of protecting religious belief from science. It is demanded by the theology of the cross, and means that God’s ongoing creative work has a cruciform pattern.

The Kenosis of the Spirit

2 Timothy 3:16 says that “all scripture is inspired by God.” The Greek word used there, *theopneustos*,

literally “God-breathed,” points to the activity of the *hagios pneuma*, the Holy Spirit. In accord with this, the Nicene Creed says that the Holy Spirit “spoke through the prophets.” Christians have taken this to mean that not only the speeches of prophets in a narrow sense but also the writers and redactors of the whole of scripture were moved to those activities by the Third Person of the Trinity.

All three persons of the Trinity are involved in everything God does in the world, though particular activities may be especially associated with one or another of them. “The external works of the Trinity are undivided” (*Opera Trinitatis ad extra indivisa sunt*) is the old formula. If kenosis is a fundamental aspect of the divine character and the way God acts toward creation, then we should expect to find it in the distinctive works of the Holy Spirit. Simmons has discussed this in connection with Pannenberg’s idea of the Spirit as field, and the concept may be important in dealing with some aspects of evolution, for the Spirit is also said in the creed to be “Lord and giver of life.”²³

It is natural then to suggest that kenosis also characterized the Spirit’s work in moving the biblical writers. In fact, that is an implication of the parallel that we have noted between the Incarnation of the eternal Word and the inspiration of the written Word. Luther wrote that “Holy scripture is God’s word, written and (I may say) lettered and formed in letters, just as Christ is the eternal Word of God wrapped in humanity,” and this close parallel between inspiration and incarnation has recently been emphasized by Enns.²⁴ As the Son of God limited himself to the conditions of a human being in a particular culture and as God in his ongoing work in the world limits divine activity to what is within the capacities of creatures, so the Holy Spirit communicated to the biblical writers and redactors within the limitations of their times and cultures.

Our Bible was written within a period two to three thousand years ago in the cultures of the Ancient Near East and the Roman Empire of the first century. The knowledge of the physical world and human history in those cultures was much more limited than our knowledge of those matters today. Not everyone in those cultures was stupid or gullible in accepting ideas that we now see as incorrect. To say

that would be like criticizing Galileo because he did not discover quantum mechanics. There were people in the Ancient Near East who were interested in understanding the world around them, and while studies of mathematics and astronomy did not prosper in Israel as they did in Egypt and Babylon, the wisdom literature of Israel shows respect for such pursuits. (See, e.g., *Wisd. of Sol.* 7:15–22.) But people of that time simply did not know as much about the world as we do today.

The message of the first creation account in Genesis is that the God of Israel is the sovereign creator of the entire universe, that all creatures are fundamentally good, and that among them humans are given special privileges and responsibilities. It is a statement about God and the world’s relationship with God that is as true today as it was twenty-five hundred years ago. But in inspiring it, the Holy Spirit was apparently willing for the world itself to be pictured as people in Middle Eastern cultures of the time understood it.

The idea that some biblical texts are “accommodated” or “condescend” to the limited knowledge of readers has a long history. It goes back at least to Origen in the third century and was appealed to by, among others, Calvin.²⁵ It is important to be clear about who is doing the accommodating. There is no reason to think that the writer of Genesis 1 knew about biological evolution but condescended to the level of a less informed audience by speaking about special creations of living things. It is rather the Holy Spirit who limited the form of the divine message to the understanding of both the human writer and his audience. The term “accommodation” is not entirely adequate, however, because it suggests a mere temporary tactic. To speak of a kenotic aspect of inspiration is to recognize that this is one example of a general feature of God’s activity in the world.

Some might argue that truly “God-breathed” texts would communicate an up-to-date understanding of the world. But what should have replaced the waters above the heavens that are called upon to praise God in Ps. 148:4? For Christians in 1900, the aether resounding with God’s praises would have been up-to-date, but then Einstein made the aether superfluous. Today we might want to have tiny

Article

Kenosis and the Biblical Picture of the World

strings vibrating with the worship of their creator, but some theorists are now arguing that string theory is overrated. Those who want an up-to-date picture of the world may be asked “up to whose date?”

Calvin’s statement that “the Holy Spirit had no intention to teach astronomy”²⁶ has a corollary: God expected us to use our brains and our senses to figure out such things ourselves. God’s self-limitation is a gift that enables us to understand the world and live in it as responsible adults rather than as lazy students who want to look up the answers in the back of the book. By limiting divine action to accord with the true laws of physics and accommodating inspiration to cultural understandings of the world, God challenges us to gain better and better approximations to those laws. When we understand that, we will be thankful that the Bible does not freeze our knowledge of the world to that of the time of the biblical writers, that of Newton, or of today.

The Truth of Scripture

Christians may wonder how culturally conditioned and perhaps erroneous statements in scripture can be distinguished from theologically important truths. If the Holy Spirit did not mean to teach astronomy, how do we know what other things in the Bible are ones about which the Spirit did not intend to teach us?

A person who accepts Christ with a living faith will recognize the authority of the scriptures that bear witness to him. But that authority has to do with the purpose of the scriptures, not with biblical statements viewed apart from that purpose. Arguments such as “If we can’t believe that Jonah was swallowed by a big fish, why should we believe that Jesus rose from the dead?” are simply *non sequiturs*. Christian faith is not a matter of believing that Jesus is risen simply because it says that in the Bible.

But it is not always easy to disentangle the essential theological content in scripture from other material. That can be done fairly simply with the ideas about the structure of the heavens in Genesis 1, because what is said there about God and God’s relationship with the world does not depend on those ideas. God is the creator of the sky, however

the sky is understood. But some biblical statements raise more difficult problems.

It is tempting to think that we can make a sharp distinction to separate the theologically significant wheat from culturally conditioned chaff, but matters are not so simple. To begin with, not all the Bible’s culturally conditioned ideas about the world are wrong. More importantly, *everything* that is said there, things of great religious import and also those of no obvious theological significance, was to some extent influenced by the cultures in which the writers were raised and by their individual histories. To say that is simply to recognize that the people who were “moved by the Holy Spirit” (2 Pet. 1:21) were human beings.

Setting out general principles for making the necessary distinctions would require an extensive treatment—if it is even possible. Instead of attempting that here, let us consider a way of dealing with one problem that is especially difficult for many Christians, the issue of “death before the Fall.”

“Sin came into the world through one man, and death came through sin,” Paul says (Rom. 5:12), and “As all die in Adam, so all will be made alive in Christ” (1 Cor. 15:22). It seems clear that Paul believed that the physical death of humans is due to the sin of our first parents. In this, he shared the ideas of other Jews of his time, as we can see from, e.g., Wisd. of Sol. 1:16; 2:23–24.

We know, however, that creatures, including our hominid ancestors, had been dying for millions of years before those represented by Adam and Eve came on the scene. How can we take seriously the theological claim that Paul is making about sin and its consequences in light of what modern research into the history of life on Earth has told us?

When Paul said that death came through sin, he had the ending of biological life in view. But in our present condition, biological death cannot be separated from spiritual death, for biological death has powerful affects that we cannot avoid. Jonathan Edwards expressed this starkly.

Death temporal is a shadow of eternal death. The agonies, the pains, the groans and gasps of death, the pale, horrid, ghastly appearance of the corps, its being laid in the dark and silent grave, there

putrifying and rotting and becoming exceeding loathsome and being eaten with worms (Isa. 66:24), is an image of the misery of hell. And the body's continuing in the grave, and never rising more in this world, is to shadow forth the eternity of the misery of hell.²⁷

We can, however, consider the possibility that death would not have to be that way – that biological death could be seen simply as a transition to a future life. C. S. Lewis's picture of the deaths of the unfallen Martians in *Out of the Silent Planet* is worth noting here.²⁸

For Christians, the most serious aspect of death is the threat of separation from God, which is sin. It is finally sin that makes death terrible, "the last enemy." Death produces not just the affects that have been mentioned but also fear of judgment and loss of God. Those who live biologically but without God already partake of death in an important sense. Ephesians 2:1-5 is a classic statement of this theme. It is this condition that can be referred to as "spiritual death."

We look back over the history of life on earth as people who have lived our whole lives in an atmosphere pervaded by sin. We see the dying that has taken place in evolutionary history, and especially that of humans, as more than just stopping of biological machinery. It is not possible, especially for those who have been confronted and convinced by God's word, to see it as a purely physical phenomenon, separated from spiritual death.

In other words, sin gives new meaning to death that occurred from the beginnings of humanity and even before that. The present can change the *meaning* of the past, just as the American Civil War affects the meaning of much of the country's previous history.²⁹ Human sin did not kill the dinosaurs but it causes us to view their demise differently than we would in a sin-free world.

When Paul spoke about death as a consequence of sin he meant death as a totality – biological death with all the fears we have of it and in light of the separation from God that is sin. It was biological plus spiritual death that he had in view, although he did not separate the two concepts. He was wrong about biological death *simpliciter* being a consequence of human sin but right in seeing that it is sin

that makes death an enemy (1 Cor. 15:26), a threat that can be averted only by God. And in inspiring his writings, the Holy Spirit was apparently willing to accommodate to the incorrect aspect of his belief. The bottom line is that Paul expresses the important link between sin and spiritual death.

Taking Kenosis Seriously

Finally, I want to take note of Montgomery's recent criticisms of a review by Lamoureux in connection with our topic.³⁰ The previous section of this article has already addressed his first two criticisms and here I focus on the third. This begins with the claim that "accommodationist approaches to Scripture are never justified by an appeal to *kenosis*." Montgomery continues, "Of course, in becoming man, God took on human characteristics." That is, however, an inadequate statement of the matter. Jesus did not simply take on "human characteristics" but became fully human. That means, as I emphasized earlier, not just having our physical makeup or appearance but being born and growing up as a member of a particular human culture.

Montgomery argues that everything Jesus said was without error so that the parallel between Incarnation and inspiration cannot be used to deal with putative errors in scripture. Jesus, he argues, did not "simply accommodate[d] himself to the fallible spiritual ideas of his time." Neither Lamoureux nor I think that Jesus's ministry can be understood "simply" as accommodation, and fallible *spiritual* ideas are not at issue here.

A more serious problem with this argument is that there is good reason to think that some of Jesus's sayings *were* accommodated to fallible cultural ideas. Attribution of texts in Torah to Moses is the most obvious example.³¹ By the time of Jesus, it was common Jewish belief that the whole of Torah was written by Moses. Since Jesus's human understanding was limited, it would have been natural for him to accept that traditional idea. But modern critical scholarship and just alert reading without preconceptions about authorship³² make it quite doubtful that the whole of Torah in its present form comes directly from Moses.

Some Christians will recoil from the suggestion that Jesus could be mistaken about anything. "If he

Article

Kenosis and the Biblical Picture of the World

is really the Son of God," they may ask, "how could he deceive us?" Very simply, he did not. Deception involves a deliberate attempt to mislead or misinform someone. Making an erroneous statement is not in itself deception. Confusion between these two concepts is what lies behind many arguments for the absolute inerrancy of scripture.³³

"Does this mean that Jesus taught error?" No, we have already referred to the question about what is "taught" in scripture. When Jesus referred to Moses as the author of the law on divorce (Mark 10:2-9), he was not "teaching" about the authorship of Deuteronomy but about God's intention for marriage. (And *en passant*, his argument about divorce is that God accommodated his law to human weakness!) The mention of Moses was simply a way of referring to an authoritative text on the matter. A classical scholar today who refers to something in the Iliad as being from "Homer" is not "teaching" that it was actually written by an ancient Greek who bore that name.

One can, of course, argue that Moses did write all of the Pentateuch, and many of the dominant claims of modern biblical scholarship are not as certain as scientific knowledge about the big bang or evolution. But we have to deal honestly with the data. Most Christian arguments for Mosaic authorship will at some point appeal to the idea that Jesus "taught" it, thus making circular any attempt to argue that he was never mistaken in connection with the texts in question.

The fundamental point in all of this is not one or another statement about the natural sciences or human history. It is rather that the inspiration of scripture, like the Incarnation and God's ongoing work in creation, is kenotic. The Bible is both fully human writing and the Word of God, just as Jesus is both fully human and fully divine. The scientific and historical limitations of scripture should not be seen as embarrassments which must be explained away but as a consequence of the fullness with which God enters into the history of our world. ✕

Notes

¹This is a revised and expanded version of a paper, "Kenosis and the Inspiration of Scripture," presented at the annual meeting of the American Scientific Affiliation in Naperville, Illinois, in 2011. I am grateful to Denis Lamoureux for

discussions and suggestions on the topic and to reviewers of an earlier draft of this article for this journal.

²For illustrations of ancient near eastern cosmology, see Denis O. Lamoureux, *Evolutionary Creation* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2008), 109; Peter Enns, *Inspiration and Incarnation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2005), 54.

³For a fuller discussion of this and other aspects of ancient science in the Bible, see Lamoureux, *Evolutionary Creation*, chap. 4. The brief remarks on "Myth and Science" in Kenton L. Sparks, *Ancient Texts for the Study of the Hebrew Bible* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2005), 337, are also helpful.

⁴R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer, Jr., and Bruce Waltke, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, vol. 2 (Chicago, IL: Moody, 1980), s.v. רָאָה (*rāqā*).

⁵George L. Murphy, "Couldn't God Get It Right?," <http://archive.elca.org/faithandscience/covalence/story/content/06-03-15-murphy.pdf>

⁶Evidence for these theories and a theological context is presented in Keith B. Miller, ed., *Perspectives on an Evolving Creation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2003).

⁷Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics* I.1 and I.2 (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1935 and 1956). Pages 457-740 of I.2, "Holy Scripture," is particularly relevant for our discussion.

⁸Carl E. Braaten, "Prolegomena to Christian Dogmatics" in Carl E. Braaten and Robert W. Jenson, eds., *Christian Dogmatics*, vol. 1 (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1984), 75.

⁹Martin Luther, "Treatise on the Last Words of David" in *Luther's Works*, vol.15 (St. Louis, MO: Concordia, 1972), 339. For a discussion of Luther's position, see, e.g., G. C. Berkouwer, *Holy Scripture* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1975), 93-7.

¹⁰Braaten, "Prolegomena to Christian Dogmatics," 75. This does not mean that God is personally united with the Bible as he is with human nature in Christ. Cf. Robert Preus, *The Inspiration of Scripture* (Mankato, MN: Lutheran Synod, 1955), 201-5.

¹¹Barth, *Church Dogmatics* I.2, 528-9.

¹²Benjamin B. Warfield, *The Inspiration and Authority of the Bible* (Philadelphia, PA: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1948), 420. A useful survey and critique of the views of Warfield and other evangelicals, as well as those of the Roman Catholic Karl Rahner, is Kern Robert Trembath, *Evangelical Theories of Biblical Inspiration: A Review and Proposal* (New York: Oxford, 1987).

¹³E.g., Clark H. Pinnock, *The Scripture Principle* (San Francisco, CA: Harper & Row, 1984) and Donald G. Bloesch, *Holy Scripture: Revelation, Inspiration and Interpretation* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1984).

¹⁴Bloesch, *Holy Scripture*, 39.

¹⁵Pinnock, *The Scripture Principle*, 78-9.

¹⁶James Barr, *Fundamentalism* (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster, 1978), 72-9.

¹⁷Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics* III.1 (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1958), ix; Bloesch, *Holy Scripture*, 98.

¹⁸C. S. Lewis, "The World's Last Night" in *Fern-Seed and Elephants* (Glasgow: William Collins Sons, 1975), 72. Lewis's fuller statement is germane:

It would be difficult, and, to me, repellent, to suppose that Jesus never asked a genuine question, that is, a question to which he did not know the

answer. That would make of his humanity something so unlike ours as scarcely to deserve the name. I find it easier to believe that when he said "Who touched me?" (Luke 8:45) he really wanted to know.

As the title of the essay suggests, Lewis addresses in it Jesus's ignorance of the time of the parousia.

¹⁹Thomas V. Morris, *The Logic of God Incarnate* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell, 1986), 88–107 and 153–62.

²⁰Gordon D. Fee, *Paul's Letter to the Philippians* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1995), 196.

²¹George L. Murphy, *The Cosmos in the Light of the Cross* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 2003), especially chap. 6.

²²Ibid.

²³Ernest L. Simmons, "Toward a Kenotic Pneumatology: Quantum Field Theory and the Theology of the Cross," *CTNS Bulletin* 19, no. 2 (1999): 10–16; Murphy, *The Cosmos in the Light of the Cross*, 119–20.

²⁴*Die Heilige Schrift ist Gottes wort, geschrieben und (das ich so rede) gebuchstabet und in buchstaben gebildet, Gleich wie Christus ist das ewige Gottes wort, in die menscheit verhullet.* Martin Luther, *D. Martin Luthers Werke: Kritische Gesamtausgabe*, 48. Band (Weimar: Hermann Böhlau, 1927), spelling is from 1927 edition, 31; Enns, *Inspiration and Incarnation*.

²⁵Bruce Vawter, *Biblical Inspiration* (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster, 1972), 40–2; Ford Lewis Battles, "God was

Accommodating Himself to Human Capacity," *Interpretation* 31 (1977): 19–38; Paul H. Seely, "The Date of the Tower of Babel and Some Theological Implications," *Westminster Theological Journal* 63 (2001): 15–38.

²⁶John Calvin, *Commentary on the Psalms*, ed. James Anderson (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1981), 184.

²⁷Jonathan Edwards, *Images or Shadows of Divine Things*, ed. Perry Miller (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1977), 43.

²⁸C. S. Lewis, *Out of the Silent Planet* (New York: Macmillan, 1965), 158–9.

²⁹George L. Murphy, *The Trademark of God* (Wilton, CT: Morehouse-Barlow, 1986), 61–2.

³⁰John Warwick Montgomery, "A Reply to Lamoureux's Review of Beale's *The Erosion of Inerrancy in Evangelicalism*," *Perspectives on Science and Christian Faith* 62, no. 4 (2010): 302–3.

³¹Denis Lamoureux, in "Lamoureux' Response to Montgomery," *Perspectives on Science and Christian Faith* 63, no. 1 (2011): 72, gives further examples.

³²E.g., Gen. 12:6 and 13:7 were apparently written, or at least edited, after the conquest; Num. 22:1 and 32:32 and Deut. 1:1 indicate that the writer was in Canaan, on the west side of the Jordan.

³³Cf. Berkouwer, *Holy Scripture*, 181–3.

ASA Members: Submit comments and questions on this article at www.asa3.org → FORUMS → PSCF DISCUSSION.



The 68th Annual Meeting of the American Scientific Affiliation

In God's Image: Celebrating Creativity in Science and Invention

"You made them rulers over the works of your hands; you put everything under their feet." —Psalm 8:6, NIV

Plenary Speakers:

- **ANDY BOCARSLY**, Professor of Chemistry Princeton University, Founder of Liquid Light Inc.
- **JEFF CORNWALL**, Jack C. Massey Chair in Entrepreneurship and Director of the Center for Entrepreneurship, Belmont University
- **JIM VAN DAM**, Director, Research Division, Fusion Energy Sciences, Office of Energy Sciences, US Department of Energy
- **BRUCE A. VOJAK**, Associate Dean for Administration, College of Engineering, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
- **MARY WAGNER**, Associate Professor of Pharmacy Practice and Administration, Rutgers University



Belmont University

1900 Belmont Blvd
Nashville, TN 37212

July 19–22, 2013

Program Chair: Robert Kaita, Princeton University
Local Arrangements Chair: Todd Lake