



4-22-2014

## Contesting Faith, Truth, and Religious Language at the Creation Museum: A Historical-Theological Reflection

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### Recommended Citation

Hege, Brent A.R. "Contesting Faith, Truth, and Religious Language at the Creation Museum: A Historical-Theological Reflection." *Theology and Science* 12.2 (2014): 142-163. doi: 10.1080/14746700.2014.894730. Available from: [http://digitalcommons.butler.edu/facsch\\_papers/391](http://digitalcommons.butler.edu/facsch_papers/391)

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# Contesting Faith, Truth, and Religious Language at the Creation Museum: A Historical-Theological Reflection

by Brent Hege

## *Abstract*

The Creation Museum in Petersburg, Kentucky, attempts to demonstrate the flaws in contemporary science and to offer an alternative explanation of human origins and biological complexity rooted in a specific reading of the biblical narrative. This effort, however, is paradoxically rooted in the worldview of modern science and the Enlightenment. This article will examine the Creation Museum's definitions of faith, truth, and religious language and will compare these definitions to those of mainline Protestant Christianity to uncover the historical and theological presuppositions of Creationist and mainline Protestant engagements with contemporary science.

As Creationism<sup>1</sup> continues to make news (in late 2012 Georgia Republican Rep. Paul Broun, a licensed physician and member of the House Science Committee, called evolution, embryology, and the Big Bang theory “lies straight from the pit of hell”), one obvious, pressing issue at stake is the effects this movement will have on science literacy and public policy in the United States. In that respect the prospects look quite dim, as a higher percentage of Americans reject human evolution, for example, than citizens of any other developed country.<sup>2</sup> This is a serious issue with far-reaching consequences, and a host of scholars and commentators have addressed this scientific side of the issue.<sup>3</sup> I share these concerns, but the issue that most interests me, as a theologian, is what theological presuppositions and commitments inform and shape Creationism as a way of Christian thinking. More specifically, the theological issues at stake here concern the definitions of faith and truth, how one reads the Bible, and how one seeks to relate scientific and theological claims and commitments.

My own location within Christianity is in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, one of the liberal mainline Protestant denominations in the United States, a category that also includes the Episcopal Church, the Presbyterian Church (USA), the United Methodist Church, and the United Church of Christ, among others. These mainline traditions generally accept the findings of science as compatible with the Christian faith, including such topics as evolution, genetics, and global warming. At the other end of the theological spectrum, many evangelical Christians believe that they must choose between faith and science, that the two spheres are locked in a Manichean battle between good and evil. To experience this battle first-hand I visited the Creation Museum (established in Petersburg, Kentucky, in 2007),<sup>4</sup> a ministry of the apologetics organization Answers in Genesis.<sup>5</sup>

Upon first seeing the Creation Museum, it is surprising just how much it resembles any other museum. Visitors encounter state-of-the-art, meticulously planned and executed exhibits drawing on what Casey Kelly and Kristen Hoerl, in their recent article on the rhetorical strategy of the Creation Museum, call the cultural authority of the nineteenth-century natural history museum.<sup>6</sup> As Kelly and Hoerl point out, there is a certain disingenuousness in naming this space a “museum” because many requirements for a museum, such as original artifacts, peer-reviewed research, and exhibits accredited by the appropriate governing bodies, are lacking at the Creation Museum.<sup>7</sup> Nevertheless, calling the space a “museum” signals to visitors that they are entering a certain type of space and should therefore adopt a particular subject position in response.<sup>8</sup> This rhetorical strategy invites visitors to grant the same authority and credibility to the Creation Museum that they would to any other museum of natural history, the implication being that what is presented has met rigorous standards of scientific review and can be accepted as demonstrated fact.<sup>9</sup> Live exhibits and replicas of fossils, surreally life-like animatronics, stunning reconstructions of Noah’s ark, high-resolution glossy posters, charts and graphs, and computer animated models of various Flood scenarios all signal to the viewer that this is a realm of objective, demonstrated fact that only the willfully blind would refuse to believe.

However, the fossil replicas, animatronics, and charts, graphs, and posters are not in themselves the evidence for the truth of Creationism. Rather, the displays serve as “proof” of a prior supposition—namely the inerrancy of the Bible, especially the first 11 chapters of Genesis. Posters and videos proclaim the absolute authority of the Bible as God’s inerrant Word in every conceivable matter, from faith and morals to science and society. Once this (self-authenticating) claim is accepted, the rest of the museum falls into place as confirmation of biblical truth. And as a series of posters in one room of the museum makes clear, it is only when human reason replaces the Bible as the standard of truth that we fall into the “errors” of accepting Darwinian evolution and an earth that is billions of years old. For example, one poster contrasts Descartes’ famous Cogito (“I think, therefore I am”) with God’s response to Moses’ request for God’s name in Exodus 3:14 (“I am that I am”) to indicate the supposed arrogance of any scientific, theological, or philosophical method that begins from any starting-point other than God’s Word. As a caption on the poster reads:

Philosophies and world religions that use human guesses rather than God’s Word as a starting point are prone to misinterpret the facts around them because their starting point is arbitrary. Every person must make a choice. Individuals must choose God’s Word as the starting point for all their reasoning, or start with their own arbitrary philosophy as the starting point for evaluating everything around them, including how they view the Bible.

The issue here, as is constantly repeated throughout the museum, is one of “starting-points.” When thinking about the natural world and human origins, do we start from the Bible or our own reason? A frequently repeated claim in the displays is that fossils do not come with tags identifying their origin. The evidence is mute and can tell us nothing until we interpret it from our chosen starting-point. For example, one of the first displays in the museum is a replication of

a dinosaur fossil dig with video monitors featuring a secular paleontologist and a Young Earth Creationist both explaining their interpretation of the fossil. The secular paleontologist, utilizing the accepted contemporary methods of paleontology that privilege human reason and the primacy of the concrete evidence, concludes that this particular dinosaur fossil is 100 million years old. Tellingly, *how* he has determined the age of this fossil is never mentioned; but subjunctive verbs like “might” and “could” and qualifiers like “I think” and “perhaps” signal to the visitor that scientists arrive at their conclusions through little more than guess work. On the other hand, the Young Earth Creationist, starting from a hyperliteral reading<sup>10</sup> of Genesis, concludes that this fossil is 4300 years old because that is when the Flood occurred, according to a hyperliteral reading of the Bible. For the Creationist, there is no need to examine the evidence on its own terms because the Bible has already dictated the conclusion that must be reached.

The choice of a dinosaur to illustrate the validity of Young Earth Creationism is no coincidence. Dinosaurs have often been used to illustrate the principles of evolution, especially to children. For the past few decades dinosaurs have been a particularly popular theme in marketing directed towards children and the Creation Museum seeks to counter this secular monopoly on dinosaurs by utilizing them as proof of Young Earth Creationism. For example, dinosaur fossils are often used in the museum as examples of the role of the global Flood in geological stratification and rapid fossilization. Throughout the museum many of the exhibits feature dinosaurs, including an exhibit devoted to the dragon legends of several cultures around the globe as proof that human beings and dinosaurs lived at the same time. Additionally, upon first entering the museum’s lobby and before even beginning the tour visitors encounter a beautiful display of a lush Edenic landscape with two young children playing in a pool teeming with live fish. Just a few feet away, a pair of juvenile Tyrannosaurus Rex placidly munch on vegetation, clearly implying that human beings and dinosaurs cohabitated the earth and lived in harmony before the Fall. Just recently, in October 2013, the Creation Museum announced the donation of an intact Allosaurus skull to the museum. According to Ken Ham, founder of Answers in Genesis and the Creation Museum,

For decades I’ve walked through many leading secular museums, like the Smithsonian in Washington, DC, and have seen their impressive dinosaur skeletons, but they were used for evolution. Now we have one of that class for our museum. [ ...] While evolutionists use dinosaurs more than anything to promote their worldview, especially to young students, our museum uses dinosaurs to help tell the account of history according to the Bible.<sup>11</sup>

The use of dinosaurs in the museum’s first exhibits to call secular paleontology and evolutionary theory into question signals the museum’s intention to attack science at what is presumed to be its strongest point.

As Kelly and Hoerl suggest, the intention of these displays (and of the museum as a whole) is to manufacture a “disingenuous controversy” concerning evolution in particular and the scientific method as a whole.<sup>12</sup> By ignoring the overwhelming consensus on these matters in the scientific community and by exaggerating the legitimate scientific concern for provisional conclusions

open to revision should new evidence arise,<sup>13</sup> the Creation Museum intends to foster doubt and skepticism with respect to the scientific method and to replace that doubt with the absolute certainty of faith in the Bible as God’s inerrant Word.<sup>14</sup> Information about natural phenomena juxtaposed with references to the first 11 chapters of Genesis signal this intention to prove the inerrancy of the Bible in all matters, especially science. Whenever a particular phenomenon—such as dart frogs failing to produce toxins in captivity<sup>15</sup> or the astonishing number and diversity of finches<sup>16</sup>—presents a potential puzzle to scientists (at least according to Creationists), that puzzle is “solved” by appeal to Genesis as a more satisfactory explanation of the evidence.<sup>17</sup>

A series of posters in the wing of the museum devoted to overturning the scientific consensus on evolution focuses on the alternative explanation of “creation of kinds” to explain the amazing diversity of species on our planet. In each poster the two explanations are placed side by side, with the contemporary scientific explanation showing how species evolved over millions of years from simpler organisms to more complex organisms and new species (called the “evolution tree” or “molecules-to-man [*sic*] evolution”) and the Creationist explanation showing how God created various “kinds” (Gen. 1:24–25) or groups of plants and animals—such as the “fungus kind,” the “finch kind,” and the “ape kind”—that were then commanded by God to “be fruitful and multiply” (Gen. 1:28), which explains the diversity of species from a Creationist standpoint (called the “creation orchard”).

This exhibit culminates in a display in the middle of the room featuring two replicas of “Lucy,” the famous fossilized remains of a young female *Australopithecus afarensis*. One replica displays Lucy as a bipedal hominid species combining ape-like and human-like characteristics, while the other replica displays Lucy as a quadrupedal ape. The scientific consensus of Lucy as an important transitional species between ape and human is denigrated as an anti-biblical conspiracy to force the evidence to fit preconceived notions of human evolution. The argument here hinges on whether or not Lucy was bipedal. If she were bipedal, this would represent a serious challenge to Young Earth Creationism because it would be strong evidence for a transitional species. However, as the second replica seeks to make clear, Lucy was not bipedal and therefore cannot represent a transitional species, thus safeguarding the separate creation of apes and humans as recounted in the first chapter of Genesis. Once again, the way the evidence is interpreted finally depends on the chosen epistemological starting-point. Contemporary secular scientists are blamed for choosing the “arbitrary” starting-point of human reason, which leads them to misinterpret the (“incorrect”) evidence for Lucy’s bipedalism as a strong indication of human evolution from earlier primates. On the other hand, Young Earth Creationists, choosing the starting-point of the Bible, force the evidence to fit the biblical narrative of the unique creation of human beings on the sixth day of creation, despite overwhelming empirical evidence to the contrary.<sup>18</sup> What is clear throughout these displays is the urgent effort to reject science’s authority not just as unbiblical and hostile to Christian faith, but even more importantly as arbitrary, arrogant, and ultimately unable to make sense of the evidence.

In addition to these arguments against secular science’s ability to provide adequate explanations for natural phenomena, the museum presents a series of arguments intended to convince visitors

of the inadequacy of science to answer ultimate existential questions. In one room, a series of images depicts disease, death, and existential alienation as results of the Fall. A large poster with the heading “Do different starting points matter in our lives?” poses a series of questions intended to do further damage to science’s credibility in the minds of visitors. These questions include “Why am I here? Am I alone? Why do I suffer? Is there any hope?” and “Why do I have to die?” Each question is accompanied by a stark black-and-white image of suffering, anguish, and despair. Here science is indicted for failing to offer meaningful answers to existential questions, something science, as science, has never intended to provide. Nevertheless, science’s inability to answer questions of ultimate meaning and value is taken to be proof of science’s inadequacy even in its own domain and of the dangers of disregarding the Bible’s inerrant authority in all things, including science.

Informing these and every other exhibit in the museum is a specific definition of faith, truth, and religious language. These definitions are never explicitly presented or defended anywhere in the museum; rather, they are simply taken for granted as the only possible definitions. But, as I hope to show, these definitions are in fact highly contested and emerge not from the historic Christian tradition, but from a modern reactionary departure from that tradition, and one that is thoroughly dependent on the very modernist, scientific assumptions that Young Earth Creationists nominally reject.

In mainline Protestantism, faith is defined primarily as existential commitment and a relational way of life in which individuals commit themselves in trusting love to God and are nurtured in that way of life by the communal liturgical and sacramental life of the church. Faith, in these traditions, is not without a cognitive component; but this cognitive or intellectual component is not the primary mode of faith.<sup>19</sup> For example, the Augsburg Confession of 1530, the normative theological statement of the Lutheran tradition, defines the relationship between faith and knowledge with an appeal to St. Augustine: “Augustine also reminds his readers in this way about the word ‘faith’ and teaches that in the Scriptures the word ‘faith’ is to be understood not as knowledge, such as the ungodly have, but as trust that consoles and encourages terrified minds.”<sup>20</sup> Similarly, Martin Luther, in his exposition of the First Commandment in *The Large Catechism*, emphasizes the trusting, relational character of faith:

To have a god is nothing other than to have trust and faith in that one from the heart ... the trust and faith of the heart alone make both God and idol. If your faith and trust are right, then your God is the true one, and in turn where your trust is false and wrong, there you do not have the true God. For the two belong together, faith and God. Anything on which your heart relies and depends, I say, that is really your god.<sup>21</sup>

The twentieth-century German-American Lutheran theologian Paul Tillich, in *Dynamics of Faith*, defines faith as the “ultimate concern”—as that concern that orders and orients the entire life, to which all other concerns are subordinated. Mirroring Luther’s definition, Tillich suggests that when the object of this concern is truly ultimate, infinite, and unconditional, such faith is genuine faith. But when the object of this concern is finite, conditional, and capable of empirical

verification, such faith is idolatrous faith that inevitably ends in existential disappointment. Genuine faith requires doubt as a necessary element because existential commitment to that which is truly ultimate can demand no proof and therefore requires great risk that must be met with courage. Doubt, therefore, is not something to be overcome but something to be embraced as an indication of the seriousness of the concern and as an acknowledgement of its ultimacy and, therefore, its ultimate incomprehensibility.<sup>22</sup> As Augustine preached in an early fifth-century sermon, “We are talking about God; so why be surprised if you cannot grasp it? [...] If you can grasp it, it isn’t God. Let us rather make a devout confession of ignorance, instead of a brash profession of knowledge.”<sup>23</sup>

A further distinction Tillich makes is between faith and belief. In fact, his motivation for writing *Dynamics of Faith* largely concerns the common misunderstanding of faith and the damage such a misunderstanding has inflicted on religion and society. As he puts it in his preface to the book,

There is hardly a word in the religious language, both theological and popular, which is subject to more misunderstandings, distortions and questionable definitions than the word “faith.” It belongs to those terms which need healing before they can be used for the healing of men [*sic*]. Today the term “faith” is more productive of disease than of health. It confuses, misleads, creates alternately skepticism and fanaticism, intellectual resistance and emotional surrender, rejection of genuine religion and subjection to substitutes. Indeed, one is tempted to suggest that the word “faith” should be dropped completely; but desirable as that may be it is hardly possible. A powerful tradition protects it. And there is as yet no substitute expressing the reality to which the term “faith” points. So, for the time being, the only way of dealing with the problem is to try to reinterpret the word and remove the confusing and distorting connotations, some of which are the heritage of centuries.<sup>24</sup>

According to Tillich, one of the most common errors is to confuse faith with belief or knowledge, so that faith is defined as intellectually accepting something as a fact, even in cases where there is a low degree of evidence or no evidence at all. However, if faith is understood as an ultimate concern and the existential commitment of one’s whole being to ultimate reality, then this common definition of faith is not actually faith, but belief; and a bad belief, at that.<sup>25</sup> As the British philosopher William Clifford put it in his 1877 essay on “The Ethics of Belief,” “It is wrong always, everywhere, and for anyone to believe anything on insufficient evidence.”<sup>26</sup> Belief, then, is primarily cognitive and evidentiary, while faith is primarily existential and relational. But when faith is misunderstood as belief with little or no evidence, one must choose between faith and reason, so that intellectual honesty is sacrificed on the altar of piety. Or to put it more colloquially, one must then check their brains at the church door. However, if faith is defined, not as believing something despite a lack of evidence or in spite of good evidence to the contrary, but rather as ultimate concern and existential commitment to the ultimate, infinite, unconditional reality, then no such conflict need or even can exist and the Christian is then free to accept the findings of science without compromising faith. Here Tillich is advocating something akin to Stephen J. Gould’s “nonoverlapping magisteria” (NOMA)<sup>27</sup>—or what Ian

Barbour labels the “independence model,”<sup>28</sup> in which science and faith occupy completely distinct realms of meaning. As Tillich puts it, “Science can conflict only with science, and faith only with faith; science which remains science cannot conflict with faith which remains faith.”<sup>29</sup>

In addition to the definition of faith, another important feature of the current debates about the relationship between Christianity and science concerns the definition of religious truth. For the mainline Christian traditions, religious truth is understood primarily as that which discloses deeper dimensions of reality, provides meaning, and orients human life toward wholeness and well-being. It is not primarily understood as empirically or rationally demonstrable and verifiable fact. The former notion of truth has a long and venerable history in Western philosophical and theological reflection, going back at least as far as Aristotle, who says in the *Poetics* that “Poetry...is a more philosophical and a higher thing than history, for poetry tends to express the universal, history the particular.”<sup>30</sup> Two millennia later Friedrich Nietzsche famously radicalized this notion by declaring that “facts are just what there aren’t[;] there are only interpretations.”<sup>31</sup>

More recently, the American Roman Catholic philosopher of religion, John Caputo, has employed Augustine’s language of *facere veritatem*—“doing” or “making the truth”—in his own project of constructing what he calls a theo-poetics of the event. Here the correspondence theory of truth, wherein language must correspond to objective reality “out there,” is subordinated to something closer to Søren Kierkegaard’s claim that truth is subjectivity,<sup>32</sup> which Caputo develops as a dynamic, relational, participatory model of truth closer to the ancient biblical and patristic writers and intensified in the work of Kierkegaard, in the early pragmatists such as Charles Sanders Peirce and William James, and above all in Jacques Derrida. As Caputo puts it in *The Weakness of God*,

A poetics is true with the truth of the event; it wants to *become true*, to *make itself true*, to *make itself come true*, to be transformed into truth, so that its truth is a species of truth as *facere veritatem*. [...] Religious discourses are not “verified” like propositions, by finding a fact of the matter out there with which the proposition makes a snug fit, but rather the event they harbor is “testified” to in experience, by being borne out or confirmed in our lives. They give interpretive life and breath to an event, to something that is alive within our sacred names, something going on within us.<sup>33</sup>

The last point to be made here concerns the relationship between faith, truth, and religious language. As might already be clear, in the mainline Christian traditions the Bible is read quite differently than in fundamentalist traditions. Returning again to Tillich, he suggests that because faith has to do with the existential commitment of finite human beings to the ultimate, infinite, unconditional reality, the only language we possess that is capable of expressing this reality is the language of symbol, metaphor, and myth.<sup>34</sup> Because the truth of faith is not correspondent but participatory, the literal, descriptive, propositional language of the sciences, for example, is incapable of expressing the object and content of faith. Instead, this content must be expressed in symbol, metaphor, and myth, which is language drawn from and shaped by our socio-historical context and culturally conditioned experiences of the world and then applied, always partly

inadequately and even somewhat inappropriately, to the object of faith.<sup>35</sup> As long as this language is recognized and accepted for what it is, it remains effective and conducive to shaping and orienting the individuals and communities that use it to talk about their ultimate concern. But when the language is no longer recognized as symbol, metaphor, and myth, but is mistaken for literal propositional statements about empirical reality, the Bible is misunderstood, God becomes something less than God, and faith becomes idolatrous. According to Tillich, “Literalism deprives God of his [*sic*] ultimacy and, religiously speaking, of his majesty. It draws him down to the level of that which is not ultimate, the finite and conditional. [ ... ] Faith, if it takes its symbols literally, becomes idolatrous!”<sup>36</sup> When biblical symbols and myths are taken as literal descriptions of empirical reality so that believing these propositions is what is meant by faith,<sup>37</sup> one must then choose between faith and reason, between what the Bible says and what our own senses and reason tell us about the world around us.

This regrettable consequence was recognized already by Augustine in his fifth-century work *The Literal Meaning of Genesis*, in which he addressed the potential damage to apologetics and evangelism that could result from making Christian claims that so clearly contradict what can be known about the world by what we would today call “science”:

Now, it is a disgraceful and dangerous thing for an infidel to hear a Christian, presumably giving the meaning of Holy Scripture, talking nonsense on these [“scientific”] topics; and we should take all means to prevent such an embarrassing situation, in which people show up vast ignorance in a Christian and laugh it to scorn. [...] If they find a Christian mistaken in a field which they themselves know well and hear him maintaining his foolish opinions about our books, how are they going to believe those books in matters concerning the resurrection of the dead, the hope of eternal life, and the kingdom of heaven, when they think their pages are full of falsehoods on facts which they themselves have learnt from experience and the light of reason?<sup>38</sup>

While Augustine spoke to a context in many ways quite unlike our own, at least in terms of the cultural authority of science, in the early nineteenth century some Protestant theologians were anticipating the effect that period’s scientific developments would have on the Christian faith and the potential conflict that might result from a misidentification of the proper spheres of science and faith. One such theologian was Friedrich Schleiermacher, often hailed as the father of modern liberal Protestant theology. In the following passage, Schleiermacher lays out the stakes of a conflict between Christianity and science that has proved to be remarkably prescient of our own contemporary situation:

There are those who can hack away at science with a sword, fence themselves in with weapons at hand to withstand the assaults of sound research and behind this fence establish as binding a church doctrine that appears to everyone outside as an unreal ghost. [ ... ] Those persons might not allow themselves to be disturbed by the developments in the realm of science. But we cannot do that and do not want that. [ ... ]

Do you nevertheless intend to barricade yourself behind such fortifications and cut yourself off from science? The barrage of ridicule to which you will be subject from time to time causes me no concern, for it will do you little harm once you are resigned to it. But the blockade! The complete starvation from all science, which will follow when, because you have repudiated it, science will be forced to display the flag of unbelief! Shall the tangle of history so unravel that Christianity becomes identified with barbarism and science with unbelief? To be sure, many will make it so. Preparations are already well under way, and already the ground heaves under our feet, as those gloomy creatures who regard as satanic all research beyond the confines of ancient literalism seek to creep forth from their religious enclaves.<sup>39</sup>

In our own contemporary context, in which Creationists feel little more than hostility and disdain toward contemporary science, such dissonance between faith and science is often taken as a sign of sincerity and faithfulness, so that the more firmly one rejects secular science the more faithful one is presumed to be. But as the evangelical church historian Mark Noll suggests, “Millions of evangelicals think they are defending the Bible by defending creation science, but in reality they are giving ultimate authority to the merely temporal, situated, and contextualized interpretations of the Bible that arose from the mania for science of the early nineteenth century.”<sup>40</sup>

Schleiermacher recognized the threat posed by such a conflict between faith and science in the early nineteenth century, when the first rumblings of the modern iteration of that conflict were already being felt. For the sake of the unity of the human personality and the future of Christianity itself, Schleiermacher famously proposed an “eternal covenant between the living Christian faith and completely free, independent scientific inquiry, such that faith does not hinder science and science does not exclude faith.”<sup>41</sup> The subsequent history of the relationship between Christian faith and science has been determined by the division of Christianity into two opposing camps: those who are determined to remain loyal to this covenant as a commitment consistent with their faith,<sup>42</sup> and those who regard this covenant as a pact with the devil, for precisely the same reason.<sup>43</sup>

The fundamentalist presuppositions that provide the theological and philosophical framework for the Creation Museum are of a very different type than what has been discussed so far. While mainline Christian thinking about the relationship between faith, truth and religious language privileges a primarily existential, participatory, poetic perspective that fosters loyalty to Schleiermacher’s eternal covenant, fundamentalist thinking privileges a primarily cognitive, objectivist, hyperliteralist perspective that fosters resistance and hostility to that covenant. The great irony in this is that the fundamentalist perspective, rather than drawing its inspiration from the historic Christian tradition, draws instead, at least in this specific case, from that which it most despises: modern science and the Enlightenment.<sup>44</sup>

The reasons for this chasm separating the two approaches have much to do with the historical development of these two traditions. Mainline Christianity (generally but not always liberal in its basic orientation), developed mostly in Europe from the Protestant Reformations of the sixteenth

century, when many of the first Reformers were university-educated priests and professors. The Lutheran, Reformed, and English Reformations in particular remained closely aligned with the university from their origins throughout their development, which meant that these traditions tended to incorporate (and shape) the best learning of the day, including scientific learning.<sup>45</sup> American evangelicalism (generally but not always conservative in its basic orientation) has a quite different history. Noll notes that American evangelicalism began in a similar healthy relationship with higher learning, as venerable institutions such as Yale, Harvard, and especially Princeton<sup>46</sup> were dominated by evangelicals from their founding to the early nineteenth century. But while European Protestants during this period were engaging the German Aufklärung and Romantic movements, American Protestants, particularly evangelicals, were being shaped by the Scottish Enlightenment with its emphasis on empiricism and “common sense.”<sup>47</sup> Through the Scottish Enlightenment American evangelicals came to equate truth with fact won by inductive reasoning in a way that continental Protestants did not, at least not to the degree that their American counterparts did.<sup>48</sup> Finally, contemporary evangelicalism traces its roots primarily to the Second Great Awakening of the mid-nineteenth century, a movement that privileged individualism, being “born again” in a moment of immediate decision, and a predominantly emotional foundation for faith generally (but not always) opposed to higher learning.<sup>49</sup>

At first this union of evangelicalism with what Noll calls “Baconian science” had felicitous results for the relationship between theology and science, as a basic assumption of nineteenth-century American evangelicals was that God revealed Himself in the “two books” of Scripture and nature. Anyone wishing to understand God and God’s truth could learn from both books and could, and must, use the one to inform and enrich the other. Furthermore, it was a basic presupposition in this period that truth could not contradict truth, which meant that science (properly pursued) could not contradict the Bible, and the Bible (properly interpreted) could not contradict science.<sup>50</sup> Even biblical inerrantists such as Princeton Seminary’s Charles Hodge could affirm that Christians must pay close attention to science, as science is one way that human beings come to know God and behold God’s glory:

Nature is as truly a revelation of God as the Bible; and we only interpret the Word of God by the Word of God when we interpret the Bible by science. [ ... ] Of course, this rule works both ways. If the Bible cannot contradict science, neither can science contradict the Bible. [ ... ] There is a two-fold evil on this subject against which it would be well for Christians to guard. There are some good men [*sic*] who are much too ready to adopt the opinions and theories of scientific men, and to adopt forced and unnatural interpretations of the Bible, to bring it to accord with those opinions. There are others, who not only refuse to admit the opinions of men, but science itself, to have any voice in the interpretation of Scripture. Both of these errors should be avoided.<sup>51</sup>

This passage from Hodge represents the nineteenth-century evangelicals’ desire to permit secular science freedom to pursue truth within the bounds of biblical orthodoxy without sacrificing orthodoxy to science or sacrificing science to orthodoxy. But three important developments occurred around the early twentieth century that pushed many evangelical Christians in a

radically different direction. The first was the secularization of the university and the privileging of the sciences over the study of theology and the Bible (for example, at this time Stanford University and Johns Hopkins University were founded as secular research institutions where the natural sciences displaced theology as the premier academic discipline). The second was the importation of higher biblical criticism from German universities into America.<sup>52</sup> The third, a reaction to the first two, was the publication of *The Fundamentals* from 1910 to 1915,<sup>53</sup> which marks the origin of modern fundamentalist Christianity.<sup>54</sup>

*The Fundamentals* captured and clarified a host of interrelated concerns and fears of many American evangelicals, who came to regard higher learning in general and the new universities in particular as enemies of the Christian faith and forces to be resisted for the sake of that faith. Because the sciences occupied a privileged place in the new universities (themselves modeled after the University of Berlin, founded in 1810, and which, coincidentally, included Schleiermacher among its founders and first faculty<sup>55</sup>), science itself came to be regarded as an enemy of the faith to be resisted at all costs, especially as developments within that field destabilized the earlier evangelical harmony with science. The higher criticism of the Bible that had been firmly established in German Protestant theological faculties for almost a century had made its way to America and prompted similar resistance from many evangelicals, who in turn produced a hyperliteralism rarely before present in the Christian reading and use of Scripture.<sup>56</sup>

One curious vestige of the earlier harmony between science and evangelical Christianity was the insistence on the equation of truth with fact in both science and the Bible, or the “Baconian element” of evangelical thought. But where such an approach had once yielded results largely in sync with the leading science of the day, by the beginning of the twentieth century this approach only widened the gap between fundamentalists and the rest of American society, especially its educated members.<sup>57</sup> All of this came to a head in the famous Scopes Monkey Trial of 1925,<sup>58</sup> which many at the time hailed as the death-knell of fundamentalist Christianity<sup>59</sup>—even though the pro-literalist and anti-science prosecution, led by the nationally renowned orator and three-times-failed Democratic presidential candidate William Jennings Bryan, technically won the case.<sup>60</sup> However, Bryan died five days later, leaving a leadership vacuum on the national level that took decades to fill.<sup>61</sup>

Beginning in the 1970s following the *Roe v. Wade* decision and coalescing around the Moral Majority, founded by Jerry Falwell in 1979, fundamentalist Christianity came roaring back in the wake of the Reagan Revolution, once again asserting its influence in politics, media, and the wider culture.<sup>62</sup> The old commitments remained: a deep distrust of higher learning, a hyperliteral reading of Scripture, and a wholesale rejection of secular science. However, what also remained was the lingering commitment to the Baconian equation of truth with fact and an acknowledgement of science’s cultural authority. In order to present an effective defense of biblical truth as they understood it, fundamentalists concluded that they had to prove the biblical narratives as factually, empirically true. Without that, they believed, all would be lost.

The motto of the Creation Museum, prominently displayed on signs and even on the back of the cargo vests worn by employees, is “Prepare to Believe.” In this motto is distilled the fundamental (and fundamentalist) assumptions that inform the mission of the Creation Museum. At work here are two assumptions that are particularly indicative of fundamentalist theology as it finds expression in Creationism. First, faith is equated with belief—something primarily cognitive and assentive that can be produced when enough convincing evidence is presented. Second, and related to the first, if the Bible is true then it must present incontrovertible evidence to be believed as fact. Each display in the museum confirms these assumptions. Visitors are guided through a carefully arranged progression of “proofs” of biblical truth and its explanatory power, clearly intended to confront visitors with a choice: believe the evidence or reject it.

What lies just beneath the surface of these displays (and of the museum as a whole) is a circular argument *par excellence*, one that was recognized as such at least since Descartes slyly pointed it out in the letter of dedication to his *Meditations*, addressed to the theological faculty of the University of Paris. Descartes notes that in order to accept the authority of the Bible one must first accept the existence of God. At the same time, one must accept the authority of the Bible because it comes from God.<sup>63</sup> The circular argument employed by the Creation Museum is similar: one must accept the evidence for Creationism because it confirms a Creationist notion of the truth of the Bible, but one must first accept this version of the truth of the Bible in order to accept the evidence for Creationism. The museum tacitly acknowledges this with its ubiquitous references to the two “starting- points” of the Bible or science and reason. But instead of faith and science occupying distinct realms of inquiry and meaning, as in mainline Protestantism, in Young Earth Creationism there is a paradoxical equation of faith with science in which the rhetorical appeal of science is retained but shorn of its theoretical bases, methods, and conclusions.

Lurking just behind this paradox is the important question of whether Creationism should be understood primarily as a theological or a scientific movement. In other words, are Creationism and fundamentalism ultimately identical, or do they diverge in important ways? Many current descriptions of Creationism use the language of “Creation science” to distinguish between Creationism as a scientific worldview and fundamentalism as a theological perspective. Taking into account Schleiermacher’s warning of the dangers of theology retreating from science rather than embracing it as well as Tillich’s contention that faith and science, properly understood, cannot conflict with one another, it is important here to ask whether Creationism should be understood as a scientific or theological movement, or if it finally straddles this division.

According to Ted Peters and Martinez Hewlett in their book *Evolution from Creation to New Creation*, fundamentalism and Creationism should be regarded as “siblings, but not identical twins.”<sup>64</sup> Peters and Hewlett contend that Creationism is primarily a scientific endeavor, while fundamentalism is primarily a theological movement. There is significant overlap, but ultimately Creationism presents an alternative scientific worldview to the dominant materialist (and atheistic) worldview of contemporary science, while fundamentalism remains a purely theological movement that refers to the Bible rather than scientific evidence to ground its

claims.<sup>65</sup> The principal argument proffered by scientific Creationists, Peters and Hewlett contend, is not that secular evolutionary science is bad theology, but that it is bad science. The key to this distinction lies in the difference between “biblical Creationism” and “scientific Creationism.” According to Henry Morris and John Morris of the Institute for Creation Research,<sup>66</sup> biblical Creationism and scientific Creationism occupy distinct realms of meaning and application and therefore should not be conflated or confused. As Peters and Hewlett define them, “[Biblical Creationism] appeals directly to what the Bible says, and it treats scripture as authoritative. [Scientific Creationism] appeals to science first, and this in turn supports what the Bible says. The ceding to science a certain level of authority to adjudicate scriptural claims and in principle to risk possible disconfirmation is what earns the label ‘scientific’ in ‘scientific creationism.’”<sup>67</sup> This helps to explain why the Creation Museum invests so much energy in critiquing contemporary science on scientific grounds and why it seeks to cloak its arguments and conclusions in the rhetoric of science.

Interpreting the Creation Museum from this perspective does help to clarify the museum’s criticisms of contemporary scientific methods and conclusions, but after visiting the Creation Museum and studying its exhibits it is clear that, despite its appropriation of the rhetoric and cultural authority of modern science, Young Earth Creationism as it finds expression in the Creation Museum actually straddles this division between “biblical Creationism” and “scientific Creationism.” In some exhibits science is privileged, so that scientific evidence is shown to confirm biblical truth (such as the exhibits of the finches and the poison dart frogs). In other exhibits the Bible is privileged, so that biblical evidence dictates the interpretation of the evidence (such as the exhibits of the dinosaur dig and Lucy). The reason why the Creation Museum straddles this division is ultimately rooted in its theological presuppositions and commitments, such as its definitions of faith, truth, and religious language, and not primarily in its definitions of science itself. The Creation Museum’s definitions of faith, truth, and religious language force it to enter the fray between faith and science because it conflates faith with belief, defines truth as fact, and takes religious language as propositional statements about empirical reality that must be accepted as fact. As Tillich warned, confusing the proper spheres of faith and science will inevitably lead to conflict, and the Creation Museum succumbs to this conflict on both sides. By conflating faith with belief and defining truth as fact, it is forced to compete with scientific explanations of natural phenomena and to substitute scientific statements for the language of faith. By contrast, the mainline Protestant definitions of faith, truth, and religious language preserve the independence of faith and science such that neither sphere ought to impinge on the other, thus remaining true to both Schleiermacher’s and Tillich’s prescription for the unity of the personality and the essential compatibility between science and faith, properly understood.

These important differences between mainline Protestant and Young Earth Creationist ways of defining faith, truth, and religious language help to clarify the presuppositions, arguments, and conclusions on display at the Creation Museum. Because Young Earth Creationists define faith primarily as belief, equate truth with fact, and interpret the Bible as a collection of propositional statements to be read hyperliterally as empirical evidence of natural (and supernatural)

phenomena, the attention to “starting-points” and the preoccupation with presenting empirical evidence to “prove” the Young Earth Creationist position make much more sense. If faith is equated with belief in empirical evidence, then it is obviously necessary to demonstrate the factuality of the biblical creation narrative(s);<sup>68</sup> and this explains the efforts to force the evidence to fit those narratives and to denigrate autonomous human reason and contemporary scientific methods in every display of the museum. This also explains the choice of a “museum” and the rhetoric of science as the preferred tool of apologetics and evangelism. The cultural authority of the museum and of the rhetoric of science is so powerful in contemporary American life that visitors are conditioned to accept the displays as accurate exhibits of empirically verified facts to be accepted and believed as true representations and interpretations of reality. But by mistaking belief for faith and grounding theology in a hyperliteral reading of the Bible, it is inevitable that faith and science will be pitted against one another in a literal life-or-death battle.<sup>69</sup>

To reinforce this point and to show the consequences of failing to accept the evidence just presented, visitors make their way through the final exhibit, a replicated urban wasteland where the Bible’s authority has been rejected. Violence, drug use, pornography, abortion, poverty, moral relativism and existential despair are all traced back to the dethronement of the Bible from modern American life, adding an aggressive moralizing component to the apologetic effort.<sup>70</sup> Graffiti on the crumbling walls of abandoned buildings declare that the “modern world abandons the Bible” and “today man decides truth whatever.” A nearby mural shows a man in a moonlit, windswept cemetery surrounded by tombstones announcing the death of Truth, God’s Word, and Genesis, with the man smoothing out the fresh dirt beneath a tombstone announcing “God is Dead.” Another wall is papered with recent news magazine covers marking society’s rejection of Christian values and teachings, including such headlines as “Is God Dead?” “God vs. Science,” “Lord’s Prayer, Bible Outlawed in Schools,” and “What If There’s No Hell?” The message here is that failing to accept the authority of the Bible in all things is not only an intellectual failure, but also a moral failure that will inevitably end in social collapse.

The last display in this exhibit reinforces this warning of social collapse in the wake of the abandonment of biblical authority. The display features statistics demonstrating declining church attendance and the rejection of belief in absolute truth. To illustrate this point, there is a small video screen showing a family in what is clearly intended to be a mainline Protestant congregation. The pastor off-screen is preaching about the symbolic and metaphorical character of Scripture, encouraging his congregation to use their own reason to harmonize Scripture with what we know of the world through experience informed by the best scientific research. He concludes that it is not necessary to accept every word of the Bible as literally true; all that is necessary is to love Jesus, to accept the redemption he offers, and to be a good person. As he preaches, the children in the family are shown fidgeting, whispering, and tussling with each other. Finally, as the congregation rises to sing a hymn,<sup>71</sup> the elder child slips his headphones into his ears, effectively tuning out Christianity, all because of liberal Protestant vacillations and accommodations. As the accompanying placard warns, “Because many church leaders compromise on the truth of Genesis as written, their moral teachings often don’t even get through to those within the church walls. [ ... ] The family shown in these videos demonstrates

the effects of replacing God's truth with man's [*sic*] fallible ideas." The message here is clear: only a hyperliteral reading of the Bible and an acceptance of Young Earth Creationism will preserve church, family, and society. And upon leaving this last exhibit visitors are guided past the museum's chapel to the Dragon Hall Bookstore, where, after stopping in the chapel to pray, they can arm themselves with books, pamphlets, tracts, videos, homeschool curricula, and other ammunition for this battle against the forces of science and secularism.

The underlying implication here and elsewhere in the museum is that hyperliteral Young Earth Creationism is the default historic Christian position and that mainline Protestant ways of reading the Bible and efforts to incorporate the best contemporary scholarship into Christian thinking are modern, heretical aberrations. However, history tells a different story. Contemporary Young Earth Creationism originated in a 1923 book called *The New Geology*,<sup>72</sup> by the Canadian Seventh-Day Adventist George McCready Price, whom Noll describes as "an armchair geologist with little formal training and almost no field experience,"<sup>73</sup> but who nevertheless published work in which he sought to prove a 6000-year-old Earth and the role of a global flood in forming geological stratification that secular scholars (mis)interpret as evidence of a much older Earth. While Price's work only reached a small audience, in 1961 Creationism made a far larger impact with the publication of *The Genesis Flood*<sup>74</sup> by the Brethren theologian John C. Whitcomb and the Southern Baptist engineer Henry M. Morris. The book saw 29 printings and sold almost a quarter million copies in 20 years; it precipitated a deluge of Creationist books, articles, pamphlets, Sunday School and homeschool curricula, lectures, institutes, and legislative efforts that continue to proliferate today.<sup>75</sup> The Creation Museum is in many ways the crowning achievement of this recent—but extremely aggressive, and in many respects effective full-frontal—assault on science. It taps into deep-seated American anti-intellectualism,<sup>76</sup> fear and resentment of the increasing (perceived) marginalization of Christianity in a rapidly secularizing, pluralistic society,<sup>77</sup> and what is at heart an honest and even laudable desire to take the Bible seriously as a source and norm for orienting Christian life in the world.

Whatever the causes of Creationism's ascendancy and the popularity of the Creation Museum in particular (as of August 2013, it had recorded 1.9 million visitors), it remains to mention briefly what is at stake in this debate. Suffice it to say, our metaphysics, epistemologies and theologies have far-reaching practical consequences. Young Earth Creationism in particular, with its wholesale rejection of the methods, applications, and general worldview of contemporary science, represents a significant obstacle to American progress in terms of education and research. Concerted efforts are needed to improve scientific *and* religious literacy, especially as the United States falls further and further behind the rest of the developed world in scientific literacy, education, research, and funding.<sup>78</sup> We are facing real and formidable challenges in which science must play an important role; and the more success organizations such as Answers in Genesis have in calling the value of science into question, the more difficult it will be to address and successfully overcome those challenges.

What I hope to have shown is that, beyond the obvious scientific problems plaguing Young Earth Creationism, it suffers from significant theological weaknesses as well; but also that Creationism

is not the only—or even the dominant —way of thinking as a Christian in the twenty-first century. The question before us is how effectively mainline Christians will make their case for a Christianity that embraces the best thinking of the day and demonstrates the essential compatibility of Christianity and science.<sup>79</sup> The cultural authority of science is beyond question, and it is incumbent on Christians to reconcile themselves to that reality while also maintaining their commitment to the unique sphere and insights of Christian faith. Christians can continue to fight a rear-guard battle against the scientific worldview and relegate themselves to the margins of civic and intellectual life, thus fulfilling Schleiermacher’s warning of the terrible blockade that results when Christians refuse to engage the best thinking of the day. Or Christians can confidently engage the best thinking of the day with the assurance that to do so does not require a sacrifice of their intellect or a compromise of their theological commitments. Rather, to be a Christian in the twenty-first century means to embrace the many complementary ways by which human beings have come to understand themselves and their world and to remain rooted in the historic Christian tradition while also recognizing with Galileo that the same God who endowed human beings with senses, reason, and intellect has not also intended us to forgo their use.<sup>80</sup> The outcome of this struggle is not yet clear, but what is abundantly clear is that the stakes are high for both science and Christianity.

#### *Endnotes*

1. For a history of Creationism from the nineteenth century to the present, see Ronald L. Numbers, *The Creationists: From Scientific Creationism to Intelligent Design*, expanded ed. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006).
2. “Views on Evolution,” *New Scientist Magazine* 198 (19 April 2008), 31.
3. See, for example, Andrew J. Petto and Laurie R. Godfrey, eds., *Scientists Confront Intelligent Design and Creationism* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2007).
4. <http://www.creationmuseum.org>.
5. <http://www.answersingenesis.org>.
6. Casey Ryan Kelly and Kristen E. Hoerl, “Genesis in Hyperreality: Legitimizing Disingenuous Controversy at the Creation Museum,” *Argumentation and Advocacy* 48 (Winter 2012), 124.
7. This will be changing in 2014, as in October of 2013 the Creation Museum announced the donation of an Allosaurus skull to be used in the museum’s efforts to discredit scientific consensus on evolution; see <http://www.answersingenesis.org/articles/2013/10/18/news-dinosaur-fossil>.
8. Kelly and Hoerl, “Genesis in Hyperreality,” 125–127.
9. For more on the history and methods of museums, see Edward P. Alexander and Mary Alexander, *Museums in Motion: An Introduction to the History and Functions of Museums*, 2nd ed., American Association for State and Local History Book Series (Lanham, MD: AltaMira, 2008).
10. Here I define a “hyperliteral” reading as a hermeneutical strategy that rejects any insights from higher biblical criticism and insists on a literal meaning regardless of the genre or rhetorical intention of the texts—so that, for example, what might have been intended as an

allegory in the text is instead interpreted literally. By contrast, what can be called a “plain sense” reading of the same text would in fact read it allegorically rather than literally. For an evangelical Protestant analysis of Genesis 1 that eschews a hyperliteral reading and instead argues for an allegorical reading of the first creation account, see John H. Walton, *The Lost World of Genesis: Ancient Cosmology and the Origins Debate* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2009). For a mainline Protestant analysis of Genesis 1 that pays particularly close attention to the authors and communities that produced it as the key to appropriate hermeneutical strategies, see Mark S. Smith, *The Priestly Vision of Genesis 1* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2010).

11. <http://blogs.answersingenesis.org/blogs/creation-museum/2013/10/18/world-class-dinosaur-donated-to-the-creation-museum>.
12. Kelly and Hoerl, “Genesis in Hyperreality,” 129–132.
13. This exploitation of legitimate scientific concerns also includes the common Creationist denigration of evolution as “just” a theory, an indication of a basic misunderstanding of scientific terminology and method.
14. The Creationist doctrine of biblical inspiration is spelled out in several signs in the museum that begin with “God wrote down in the Bible ...”—a version of the doctrine that is well outside the bounds even of most evangelical thought.
15. There is evidence that dart frogs do not produce toxins in captivity because the toxins are the product of their diet in the wild; specifically, insects that feed on plants with the specific chemicals needed to develop the toxins. “Poison Dart Frogs,” Smithsonian National Zoological Park (<http://nationalzoo.si.edu/animals/amazonia/facts/fact-poisondartfrog.cfm>). However, a graphic at the Creation Museum suggests that this lack of toxins in captivity is proof that there was no disease or death before the Fall.
16. The use of finches as an example is certainly a subtle jab at Darwin, who developed his theory of evolution by natural selection based on the finches he observed on the Galápagos Islands.
17. This strategy of using the Bible’s inerrant authority to trump science’s inherent tentativeness and openness to revision should new evidence arise is clearly expressed here as a version of the “God of the Gaps.”
18. See, for example, Amy Gibbons, “Lucy Had a Spring in Her Step,” *Science Now* (10 February 2011), <http://news.sciencemag.org/paleontology/2011/02/lucy-had-spring-her-step>.
19. The Lutheran Reformers (and others) distinguished three elements of faith: *notitia* (“knowledge”), *assensus* (“assent”), and *fiducia* (“trust”). One must know something about the content of faith (*notitia*); one must assent to that content as something true (*assensus*); and, most importantly, one must trust in the salvific efficacy of that truth (*fiducia*). Knowledge and assent, while important, are not enough for living, salvific faith. Therefore, for the Lutheran Reformers, *fiducia* was the primary mode of faith because it is the existential commitment to God’s promise of salvation, not simply knowledge of it or assent to its truthfulness.

20. "The Augsburg Confession," in *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*, ed. Robert Kolb and Timothy J. Wengert, trans. Charles Aland et al. (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2000), 56.
21. Martin Luther, "Der große Katechismus," in *Die Bekenntnisschriften der evangelisch-lutherischen Kirche*, 3rd ed. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1956), 560 (my translation).
22. Paul Tillich, *Dynamics of Faith*, Perennial Classics ed. (New York: HarperOne, 2001), 1–34.
23. Augustine, "Sermon 117," in *Essential Sermons*, trans. Edmund Hill, ed. Boniface Ramsey, (Hyde Park, NY: New City, 2007), 197.
24. Tillich, *Dynamics of Faith*, xxi–xxii.
25. *Ibid.*, 35–41.
26. William K. Clifford, "The Ethics of Belief," in *The Ethics of Belief and Other Essays*, Great Books in Philosophy (Amherst, NY: Prometheus, 1999), 77.
27. Stephen J. Gould, "Nonoverlapping Magisteria," *Natural History* 106 (March 1997): 16–22.
28. Ian Barbour, *Religion and Science: Historical and Contemporary Issues*, rev. ed. (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1997), 84–89. The other models Barbour employs are "conflict," "dialogue," and "integration."
29. Tillich, *Dynamics of Faith*, 95. This does not mean that theology cannot learn from science (and vice versa); only that science and faith, when occupying their proper spheres, do not and cannot conflict. For more on the distinction and relationship between science and faith (and religion) from a broadly Tillichian perspective, see Langdon Gilkey, *Creationism on Trial: Evolution and God at Little Rock*, Studies in Religion and Culture (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1998), especially chapter 5, "The Trial: Theological and Philosophical Issues," and chapter 7, "Science and Religion in an Advanced Scientific Culture."
30. *The Poetics of Aristotle*, trans. Samuel Henry Butcher, 2nd ed. (New York: Macmillan, 1898), 35.
31. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Nietzsche: Writings from the Late Notebooks*, ed. Rüdiger Bittner, trans. Kate Sturge, Cambridge Texts in the History of Philosophy (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 139.
32. Søren Kierkegaard, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript to "Philosophical Fragments,"* ed. and trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong, 2 vols., Kierkegaard's Writings 12 (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992).
33. John D. Caputo, *The Weakness of God: A Theology of the Event*, Indiana Series in the Philosophy of Religion (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006), 118 (emphasis in original). For a similar approach to truth from a process theological perspective, see Catherine Keller, *On the Mystery: Discerning Divinity in Process* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2008), especially chapter 2, "Pilate's Shrug: Truth as Process," 27–43.
34. Tillich, *Dynamics of Faith*, 47–62.
35. For more on this aspect of symbol, see Gordon D. Kaufman, *An Essay on Theological Method*, 3rd ed., AAR Reflection and Theory in the Study of Religion 5 (Atlanta: Scholars, 1995); Gordon D. Kaufman, *In Face of Mystery: A Constructive Theology* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995), and Sallie McFague, *Models of God: Theology for an*

*Ecological, Nuclear Age* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1987). Gilkey discusses symbols specifically as they function in both religious and scientific worldviews in *Creationism on Trial*, 209–218.

36. Tillich, *Dynamics of Faith*, 60.
37. Here, Tillich makes an important distinction between valuing the Bible and having unconditional faith in the Bible: “The Christian may believe the Biblical writers, but not unconditionally. He [*sic*] does not have faith in them. He should not even have faith in the Bible. For faith is more than trust in even the most sacred authority.” *Ibid.*, 37–38.
38. Augustine, *The Literal Meaning of Genesis*, trans. John Hammond Taylor, 2 vols. (New York: Newman, 1982), 1: 42–43.
39. Friedrich Schleiermacher, *On the “Glaubenslehre”*: *Two Letters to Dr. Lücke*, trans. James Duke and Francis Fiorenza, AAR Texts and Translations 3 (Atlanta: Scholars, 1981), 60–61.
40. Mark A. Noll, *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1994), 199. Tillich would perhaps go further than Noll and charge that these defenders of Creationism are not merely idolizing particular interpretations of the Bible, but are making an idol out of the Bible itself.
41. Schleiermacher, *On the “Glaubenslehre,”* 64.
42. Andrew Dole notes that there are two conflicting interpretations of Schleiermacher’s “eternal covenant” in the liberal Protestant tradition that continued his work. One wing, represented by Wilhelm Herrmann, interpreted the covenant as a call to construct a secure interiorized space for religion in experience so to safeguard faith from scientific research. Dole calls this the “segregationist” model of the covenant. The other wing, represented by Ernst Troeltsch, interpreted the covenant as a call to engage in dialogue with science so to ensure that faith remained consistent with the best science of the day. Dole calls this the “accommodationist” model of the covenant, and he argues that this model more faithfully represents Schleiermacher’s intention in the *Glaubenslehre*. Andrew C. Dole, *Schleiermacher on Religion and the Natural Order* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 140–147.
43. Ken Ham encourages strong resistance to Schleiermacher’s covenant (without ever naming it) in his book *The Lie: Evolution/Millions of Years*, rev. and exp. 25th ann. ed. (Green Forest, AR: Master Books, 2012).
44. This irony is particularly evident in one display in the museum in which a series of posters contrasts Christian views with those of the Enlightenment. The irony here is that each of these posters seeks to ground the Christian faith in a series of proofs of biblical prophecy and evidence for the factuality of biblical narratives. The fact that this equation of truth with fact is itself a product of the Enlightenment is never acknowledged.
45. For more on the relationship between German Protestantism and the modern university, see Thomas Albert Howard, *Protestant Theology and the Making of the Modern German University* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006).
46. See James H. Moorland, *Princeton Seminary in American Religion and Culture* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2012).
47. For several essays related to this topic, see Alexander Broadie, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to the Scottish Enlightenment* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

David K. Nartonis has sketched the development of this relationship and its dissolution at Harvard University in “How the Philosophy of Science Changed Religion at Nineteenth-Century Harvard,” *Zygon* 43:3 (2008), 639–650.

48. Noll, *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind*, 84–88.
49. For more on the Second Great Awakening and its leading proponent, see Charles E. Hambrick-Stowe, *Charles G. Finney and the Spirit of American Evangelicalism*, Library of Religious Biography (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1996).
50. For a more detailed study of the relationship between evangelical Christianity and science in the early nineteenth century, see Theodore Dwight Bozeman, *Protestants in an Age of Science: The Baconian Ideal and Antebellum American Religious Thought* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1977).
51. Charles Hodge, “The Bible in Science,” *New York Observer* (26 March 1863), 98–99. Here Hodge stakes out something of a middle way between rejecting the Bible on the one hand and science on the other. His middle way should be distinguished from Schleiermacher’s eternal covenant, however, because, as Dole suggests, Schleiermacher was in many respects far more willing than Hodge to accommodate Christian doctrines to scientific consensus. Nevertheless, both Hodge and Schleiermacher insist on granting science a place in theological deliberation.
52. For an overview of the higher criticism with a special focus on the German Protestant tradition, see Roy A. Harrisville and Walter Sundberg, *The Bible in Modern Culture: Baruch Spinoza to Brevard Childs*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2002).
53. A. C. Dixon and R. A. Torrey, eds., *The Fundamentals: A Testimony to the Truth*, 12 vols. (Los Angeles: The Bible Institute of Los Angeles, 1910–1915).
54. For an overview of American fundamentalist Christianity, see George M. Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, new ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006). For a more critical analysis of fundamentalism, particularly its biblical hermeneutics, see James Barr, *Fundamentalism*, 2nd rev. ed. (London: SCM, 2010).
55. See Howard, *Protestant Theology and the Making of the Modern German University*, especially chapter 3, “Theology, Wissenschaft, and the Founding of the University of Berlin,” 130–211.
56. For a collection of essays addressing the rich diversity of Christian interpretations of the Genesis creation narratives before and after Darwin, see Stephen C. Barton and David Wilkinson, eds., *Reading Genesis after Darwin* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009).
57. Noll, *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind*, 186–188. For a history of the fundamentalist crusade against science, particularly in the arena of public education, see Adam Laats, *Fundamentalism and Education in the Scopes Era: God, Darwin, and the Roots of America’s Culture Wars* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).
58. See Jeffrey P. Moran, *The Scopes Trial: A Brief History with Documents*, Bedford Series in History and Culture (New York: Palgrave, 2002).
59. While this was the popular narrative following the trial, the historical reality is rather different, as conservative Christian efforts to pass legislation requiring the teaching of Creationism in public schools actually increased following the Scopes Trial. See Edward J. Larson, “Myth 20: That the Scopes Trial Ended in Defeat for Antievolutionism,” in *Galileo*

- Goes to Jail and Other Myths about Science and Religion*, ed. Ronald L. Numbers (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009), 178–186.
60. The reverse was the case in the next nationally (in)famous Creationism trial, *McLean v. Arkansas Board of Education* (1981), in which a law requiring equal time for “creation science” and “evolution science” in Arkansas public schools was overturned by the US District Court for the Eastern District of Arkansas. For a summary of the trial and its theological and philosophical background and implications, see Gilkey, *Creationism on Trial*. Gilkey was an expert theological witness for the plaintiffs.
  61. For a biography of Bryan that pays particular attention to his religious beliefs, see Lawrence W. Levine, *Defender of the Faith: William Jennings Bryan, the Last Decade, 1915–1925* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1987).
  62. For an interdisciplinary study of the Moral Majority and the resurgent Christian fundamentalism of the late 1970s and early 1980s, see the collection of essays in *The New Christian Right: Mobilization and Legitimation*, ed. Robert C. Liebman and Robert Wuthnow (Hawthorne, NY: Aldine, 1983).
  63. René Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy*, trans. Donald A. Cress, 3rd ed. (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1993), 1.
  64. Ted Peters and Martinez Hewlett, *Evolution from Creation to New Creation: Conflict, Conversation, and Convergence* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 2003), 72.
  65. *Ibid.*, 71.
  66. <http://www.icr.org>.
  67. Peters and Hewlett, *Evolution from Creation to New Creation*, 72.
  68. I say “narrative(s)” here because, despite a hyperliteral reading of Genesis, none of the displays acknowledges that Genesis 1 and Genesis 2 constitute two independent creation narratives that cannot be harmonized without ignoring the plain sense of the texts. A particularly telling example of this conflation of independent narratives is found in the display of Noah’s ark, in which each stable of the ark contains one pair of animals. In fact, the account of Noah’s ark in Genesis 6–7 contains two independent narrative traditions. In one narrative (Gen. 6), God commands Noah to take two of every animal into the ark. But in the second narrative (Gen. 7), the Lord commands Noah to take two of every unclean animal and seven pairs of every clean animal into the ark. In the second narrative Noah is also commanded to offer sacrifices of the clean animals, but in the first narrative no such sacrifice is commanded. Nowhere in the museum’s Noah’s ark display is the presence of two independent narratives in Genesis 6–7 acknowledged, so that only one narrative (two of every kind) is visualized. This is just one example of the inevitable hermeneutical presuppositions informing any reading of the Bible, including the hyperliteral reading practiced by Young Earth Creationists. What is particularly telling in this case is that a truly literal reading would include eight pairs of every animal in the display, because that is what the text “literally” says.
  69. In this regard the Creation Museum, despite its attempts to co-opt the cultural authority and rhetoric of contemporary science to prove the bona fides of Creation science, perfectly illustrates Ian Barbour’s “conflict” model of the relationship between religion and science. See Barbour, *Religion and Science*, 77–83.

70. In another display the acceptance of evolution is conflated with “social Darwinism” and blamed for a variety of evils, including racism, sexism, genocide, and Nazism. This last connection is made quite explicitly as a copy of Darwin’s *The Descent of Man* is placed beside a copy of Hitler’s *Mein Kampf* and assorted Nazi paraphernalia in a display case.
71. The hymn the congregation sings is “All Things Bright and Beautiful,” written in 1848 by Cecil F. Alexander in praise of God’s creation.
72. George McCready Price, *The New Geology: A Textbook for College, Normal Schools, and Training Schools, and for the General Reader* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific, 1923).
73. Noll, *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind*, 189.
74. John C. Whitcomb and Henry M. Morris, *The Genesis Flood: The Biblical Record and Its Scientific Implications*, 50th Anniversary ed. (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2011)
75. Noll, *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind*, 191–192.
76. Richard Hofstadter addresses the evangelical influence on American anti-intellectualism in *Anti-Intellectualism in American Life* (New York: Vintage, 1963).
77. See, for example, S. E. Cupp, *Losing Our Religion: The Liberal Media’s Attack on Christianity* (New York: Threshold, 2010). What makes this book particularly intriguing is that Cupp, a conservative television pundit, is an atheist.
78. The relatively recent attempts to cloak Creationism in the assumedly more neutral and scientific guise of “Intelligent Design”—and, like Creationism, consistently held by courts to violate the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment—indicate the persistence and seriousness of efforts to challenge science in the nation’s public schools. A particularly noteworthy decision against the inclusion of Intelligent Design in public school science curricula was *Kitzmiller v. Dover Area School District* (2005), heard in the US District Court for the Middle District of Pennsylvania. For Judge John E. Jones III’s ruling, see [http://ncse.com/files/pub/legal/kitzmiller/highlights/2005-12-20\\_Kitzmiller\\_decision.pdf](http://ncse.com/files/pub/legal/kitzmiller/highlights/2005-12-20_Kitzmiller_decision.pdf).
79. Popular initiatives like the Clergy Letter Project (<http://www.theclergyletterproject.org>) and scholarly initiatives like the Center for Theology and the Natural Sciences (<http://www.ctns.org>) give cause for hope. Theological scholarship inviting a more fruitful engagement of theology with science is also becoming more common. For a discussion of what theologians and evolutionists can learn from one another, see, for example, John F. Haught, *Making Sense of Evolution: God, Darwin, and the Drama of Life* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2010). Also, for a more academic treatment, Gordon Kaufman, in *In Face of Mystery*, makes evolution the centerpiece of his doctrines of creation, providence, and theological anthropology.
80. Galileo Galilei, “Letter to Madame Christina of Lorraine, Grand Duchess of Tuscany,” in *Discoveries and Opinions of Galileo*, ed. Stillman Drake (New York: Anchor Doubleday, 1957), 173–216.