What Have the Galapagos to do with Jerusalem?
Scientific Knowledge in Theological Context
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Abstract

How did everything happen and what does it mean? Famous scientists are lining up to tell us. But their scientifically inspired theories of everything almost never treat God as Christians do, so science seems to threaten the Christian master story. Christians respond to this situation in many ways, few of which really work. What do the things that science studies have to do with the things theology studies? Scientific knowledge and apocalyptic knowledge are related forms of wisdom. The “full gospel” of Pentecostal and charismatic faith is an “obscure framework” that supports science and other kinds of ordinary learning. Its power to relate theology and the sciences fruitfully allows each discipline to strengthen the other – giving Christians and especially Pentecostals a fuller understanding of salvation and embrace of science, and giving science a firmer hope, a greater framework, and a more appropriate focus.
I. What have the Galapagos Islands to do with Jerusalem?

I did some unusual Easter reading not long ago. Preparing for my next week’s classes, I read two assigned books by so-called “oracles of science”: “the ‘public intellectuals’ of this generation,” Karl Giberson and Mariano Artigas call them, who are “bringing science to the reading public in a way that engages them.”\(^1\) Daniel Dennett’s *Breaking the Spell: Religion as a Natural Phenomenon\(^2\)* and Michael Shermer’s *How We Believe: Science, Skepticism, and the Search for God\(^3\)* both develop spiritual implications of the popular neo-Darwinian thesis that we are who we are because genes, traditions, species, groups, and ecosystems all interact in a “struggle” to replicate and thus “survive.” Christians are not likely to find their arguments affirming. As Dennett puts it:

> Everything we value – from sugar and sex and money to music and love and religion – we value for reasons. Lying behind, and distinct from, our reasons are evolutionary reasons, free-floating rationales that have been endorsed by natural selection.\(^4\)

The slate of evolutionary master narratives is an intriguing recent entry in more than a century’s worth of scientifically inspired theories of everything. These generally extrapolate from the findings of physical sciences, life sciences, and social sciences to draw out an overarching account of cosmic history, terrestrial history, biological history, and human history.

Many theorists-of-everything take the fundamental logic of their field of expertise and use it (some would say force it) to tell the whole cosmic story. For instance, a physicist might search for the smallest and most basic units of matter and energy, time and space, catalog their

\(^{1}\) Karl Giberson and Mariano Artigas, *Oracles of Science: Celebrity Scientists versus God and Religion* (Oxford 2007), 6-7. Only some oracles of science are themselves practicing scientists. Among the figures prominent in this chapter, E.O. Wilson is, while Daniel Dennett, Michael Shermer, and George Johnson are not.

\(^{2}\) New York: Viking, 2006. Dennett is a philosopher at Tufts University who informs his work on the philosophy of mind from the conventions and insights of certain schools of evolutionary biology. An enthusiastic atheist, he treats religions of all kinds as being the by-products of once-useful human evolutionary adaptations.

\(^{3}\) 2d ed. (New York: Holt, 2003). Shermer is a columnist for *Scientific American* who is fascinated by human religious belief. An adolescent Christian whose faith in God ended in college, he subsequently founded *Skeptic* magazine and has turned his scientific training on the question of why human beings are religious.

\(^{4}\) Dennett, 93.
behaviors, and understand the complex ways they interact so that it becomes theoretically possible to learn everything. A sociologist might do the same with sociology’s basic unit, the human group, and determine that reality is socially constructed or politically determined. A biologist might take natural selection as the one dynamic that drives all life, and the inanimate matter of which it is made, and even the thoughts (including the religious thoughts) of its species. Other theorists will develop more sophisticated accounts that respect the apparently irreducible complexity of different scientific disciplines. These scientifically inspired cosmologies are displacing the old metaphysical cosmologies of ancient, medieval, and modern philosophers not only in intellectual circles but increasingly in popular imaginations. They are also continuing the displacement of God that has been going on for several centuries among the learned of our culture.

Natural selection is not what we were celebrating at my church that Easter morning. Yet its paradigms surrounded us anyway, whispering dissents from inside my head as I sang in my Pentecostal church. And not only mine; evolutionary paradigms now inform basic convictions of even their most vociferous “creationist” opponents: their economics, their political theory, their marriage and family practices, their medicine, and even their theology. In fact, I believe they comprise the most formidable intellectual challenge to Christian faith in our time. If the thirteenth century found university faculties torn between following Aristotle and following Jesus, “between Athens and Jerusalem” in the early church father Tertullian’s famous contrast, in the twenty-first century our cars feature Darwin fish and Jesus fish. Whether we are picking educational curricula, bumper stickers, Sunday reading, or gods and lords, we face this defining

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6 Consider for example the Christian bumper-sticker in which an “ichthus” or “Jesus-fish” labeled “truth” devours a smaller “Darwin fish” – an unintentionally ironic embodiment of Darwin’s principle of survival of the fittest. See Brad J. Kallenberg, *Live to Tell: Evangelism in a Postmodern Age* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2002), 49.
intellectual question: What have the Galapagos Islands to do with Jerusalem? What do the scientific and the theological fields of learning mean for one another? Contemporary Christians have responded to the challenge of relating the two in a variety of ways. This chapter surveys the common answers to that question, then draws on Christian and scientific learning to offer its own.

First, a warning: Some readers will insist on reading the following list as a typology of ways of relating “God and creation” or “theology and science.” I mean it more narrowly: as a specific catalog of common western Christian responses to the rise of scientifically inspired cosmologies. The distinction is important: the task of science as such is very different from the more ambitious, and ultimately transcientific, task of recounting a story of everything. Likewise, Christian responses to that transcientific task are narrower projects than the general task of theology, which is to explore the wider implications of the good news of Jesus Christ; and both are of course distinct from the Christian faith in general, let alone God himself.

Battle. Many American fundamentalists assert the primacy of the biblical story against all varieties of Darwinism. They are rarely anti-science; indeed, they usually make room in their cosmologies for a particularly narrow view of scientific method (usually science as practiced in experimental physics) and the findings they can assimilate. Yet, as if sensing the shift in the past century’s intellectual winds, they have stopped worrying nearly as much about schools teaching subversive philosophies such as existentialism and socialism and rallied to resist a worldview in which life might have come into being without the creative assistance of an intelligent agent. They are similarly defensive against astronomy with its old universe, geology with its old earth, anthropology with its prehistoric humanity and pre-human hominid behaviors, history with its biblical criticism, psychology with its materialistic view of the human “soul,” and sociology with
its paradoxical commitments to progressivism and cultural relativism. In this view, Daniel Dennett and his kind are theologically wrong and thus scientifically wrong too. Jerusalem and the Galapagos are kingdoms at war: divine light battling humanistic darkness.\textsuperscript{7}

\textit{Compartmentalization and neglect.} The constant ideological battles against these and other enemies of the faith are energizing for some, but others manage the tension by compartmentalizing their worlds into “Christian” and “secular” realms with their own rules. In biology they read DNA, in church Genesis. They relate the two “non-overlapping magisteria” with vague and facile dichotomies such as the claim that science tells the “how,” religion the “why” of things. They consider religion private, subjective, and transcendent and science public, objective, and empirical. Many Christians agree with Stephen Jay Gould that “science tries to record and explain the factual character of the natural world, whereas religion struggles with spiritual and ethical questions about the meaning and proper conduct of our lives.”\textsuperscript{8} Dennett is then not so much wrong as out of his depth, like all who yield to the temptation to speak beyond their circles of competence.

Others compartmentalize by simply ignoring the unknown. As many scientific materialists are just not interested in knowing what Christians think, many Christians do not care what scientists think. They are not necessarily hostile; it is just that their curiosity ends well short of the place where other disciplines seem to matter to what they do care about.

The trouble with these forms of segregation, of course, is that both sides still keep stepping on one another’s territory \textit{even while minding their own business.} There is not so much

\textsuperscript{7} These fundamentalists’ secular counterparts are “the new atheists” such as Dennett, Richard Dawkins, and Christopher Hitchens who show unbridled contempt for any belief in God.
\textsuperscript{8} Stephen Jay Gould, \textit{The Hedgehog, the Fox, and the Magister’s Pox: Mending the Gap between Science and the Humanities} (New York: Harmony, 2003), 87, quoted in Giberson and Artigas, 80.
a natural boundary between theological and scientific cosmologies as a demilitarized zone, and an often violated one at that.

Imperialism and domestication. Another common way to relate the Galapagos to Jerusalem is to take one to be the center of an empire in which the other is a mere client state. Christians have long drawn selectively on other traditions – whether scientific, theological, or otherwise – to strengthen ours. Augustine called classical rhetoric “Egyptian gold” to plunder for the Church’s mission to preach. He reasoned that since (as some say today) “all truth is God’s truth,” it is only right to use all these resources to benefit God’s people and serve the Kingdom. Likewise, American Pentecostals made use of Social Darwinian capitalism (an ideology of trade in which economic “might makes right”) and modern broadcasting technologies to get the word out. These interlopers often treat the spiritual as more important than the material and thus the scientific. Why would anyone study religion scientifically instead of being a missionary? In concerning themselves with the things of this world, Dennett and company are preoccupied with the wrong things.

Other believers invert these priorities and submit the Christian tradition to the governance of the scientific tradition. Science seems firm enough, objective enough, and above all familiar enough to be trustworthy. So if scientists learn, say, that “religious feeling” emanates from a certain part of the brain when it is stimulated, these Christians will accept those results and try to adjust their views of God to fit. If physics trades Newton’s mechanistic causes and effects for Einstein’s deterministic space-time and then Bohr’s probabilistic quanta, theology will recast God’s relationship with the world obligingly.

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In both of these last two responses, one story effectively occupies the other. Either theology’s Jerusalem domesticates science’s Galapagos, or else science reduces theology to “religion” and religion to “a natural phenomenon” that is really best studied through the sciences.

The real trouble with both is not just insurgents on each side who refuse to bow down to the other side’s emperor, who refuse to be assimilated, but populations that simply cannot be assimilated. Literalistic creation science must disregard or distort the credible evidence that the Bible’s creation accounts are not literal chronologies. Intelligent Design theory, already unattractive to scientists as a “science stopper,” cannot match its rivals’ elegance and explanatory power. Likewise, naturalistic accounts of “religion” misrepresent traditions such as historic Christianity that do not fit their scientific paradigms. Dennett’s and Shermer’s learned speculations on the rise of religious ideas and experiences uncannily ignore two thousand years of insistent Christian testimony that the bedrock of our tradition is not some mystical experience, archetypical figure, or compelling idea, but simply the apostles’ testimony to Jesus’ death and resurrection and the powerful outpouring of his Holy Spirit. Neither side can really afford to take the other side’s evidence seriously. Both these camps of imperialists are fighting for what all empires treasure: a vision of reality, whose most stubborn enemy is not disbelievers but reality itself.

Pragmatism. The most common western attitude toward Christianity and science is pragmatism, which claims the fruits of both these traditions without their disciplinary baggage.

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10 I read Genesis 1 and Genesis 2-3 as historical in the sense that they describe a real past, but their literary genres suggest to me that they are not attempting to portray it literally. From the lattice-like structure of Genesis 1’s first six days to figural details in Genesis 2-3, these accounts do not reproduce the more literal forms of historical reporting that one finds elsewhere in the Old Testament. That neither of their sequences is confirmed by scientific evidence (no scientific field finds plant life to predate the sun, moon, and stars, or finds humanity to have arisen before trees or animals) reinforces my impression that we misread these stories when we take them as literal scientific or historical chronologies.

We widely appreciate benefits of religion that we call “spirituality,” and we even more widely appreciate benefits of scientific discoveries through what we call “technology.” So the Galapagos and Jerusalem become trade partners and vacation destinations. This is the style of the consumer, the business, and the university: not really to respect the grand claims of the humanities, the arts, or the sciences, but to arrange them in ways that seem pleasing and useful for some other end. Pragmatists can read Dennett, Shermer, and the Bible for that matter to glean information to use in the marketplace, the cocktail circuit, at home, or in the study – but not to learn the Truth.

There are even more ways to relate the Galapagos and Jerusalem: merging them (syncretists), isolating them as mere opinions (pluralists and relativists), and condemning both as probing mysteries better left alone (skeptics). We live in a world where scientific cosmologies jostle more and more with Christian convictions, and Christians do not agree on what to do about it. The casualties of our inadequate responses – lost faith, strained relationships, impoverished educations, and missed opportunities – all suggest an urgent need for further thinking.

Here the Pentecostal tradition offers key resources for a cosmology in which both science and theology find more hospitable and fruitful places.

That claim will surprise some who think of Pentecostalism as a theological and intellectual backwater. Seeing the Pentecostal and charismatic tradition (I will usually treat the two as interchangeable) as a contributor to understanding in a scientific age will mean setting aside some stereotypes. For instance, Pentecostals are usually lumped in with fundamentalists, despite our different history and divergent instincts. We are often called anti-intellectual; and we certainly distrust intellectual culture, but not intelligence or learning as such. Our outlook is called otherworldly, but Pentecostals have been adept businesspeople and strategic missionaries
and have become a powerful political force worldwide. Misunderstandings like these indicate that the movement’s inner logic is not widely grasped.

II. Theology’s obscure framework

The Pentecostal movement’s center is an experience: of the powerful presence of the Holy Spirit, in a way reminiscent of the young Church in the book of Acts, yielding spiritual gifts for making disciples of all nations.\(^{12}\)

Of course, Pentecostals are not alone in appreciating the Spirit in this way. Eastern Orthodox Christians, Roman Catholics, and Protestants of all stripes embrace the same language for how they understand and experience the Spirit. An account of how Pentecostals can contribute to Christian understanding in a scientific age must begin on the ecumenical ground they share with others who confess together that

> I believe in God the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth. … I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting.

The Christian experience or knowledge of God is interpersonal in a way that makes the most natural form of Christian confession a narrative. The God we know is our beginning and our end, our creating Father and our indwelling Holy Spirit.

The center of the Scriptures and the creeds is the story of Jesus. His good news is not a subplot or another narrative alongside others; it is the same story of the Triune God. He too is Alpha and Omega: only-begotten before all worlds, set to return at the end of the age. The Son’s eternal Father receives at the end as well as sending at the beginning; Jesus’ eternal Spirit broods and breathes life in the beginning as well as flowing from Christ’s body at the end; by the eternal Son all things were made, and his kingdom will have no end. There is nothing exclusively

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Pentecostal or charismatic about this story. It is the deep structure of Christian theology. It is also the framework in which all life and learning have their place.

Science is a way of learning, and it is a form of life. As a way of learning, science senses consistencies in the universe that can be discovered: isolated, identified, and even explained in terms of consistencies that are already known. As a form of life, science trains us to think scientifically: to become familiar with these consistencies, with consistency’s wonder and beauty and the elegance of the simplicity that underlies it, to be trained to expect to learn and explain more, and to be equipped in the practices of intuition, experimentation, conclusion, and communication that generate and sustain scientific knowledge.

These activities suit God’s orderly and purposeful creation in which human beings have unique relationships and responsibilities. Science is a form of wisdom, one variety of proverbial insight into the workings of everyday life:

> God gave Solomon wisdom and understanding beyond measure, and largeness of mind like the sand on the seashore…. He spoke of trees, from the cedar that is in Lebanon to the hyssop that grows out of the wall; he spoke also of beasts, and of birds, and of reptiles, and of fish (1 Kings 4:29-33).

However, when science is pursued apart from those covenantal relationships and responsibilities, its knowledge is radically incomplete and even distortive. An episode in Jesus’ life shows how:

> To test him they asked him to show them a sign from heaven. He answered them, “When it is evening, you say ‘It will be fair weather; for the sky is red.’ And in the morning, ‘It will be stormy today, for the sky is red and threatening.’ You know how to interpret the appearance of the sky, but you cannot interpret the signs of the times” (Matthew 16:1-3).

This is a basic and consistently biblical assertion about how forms of learning properly relate. Jesus juxtaposes two ancient traditions of learning: not “science and religion,” nor “science and theology” – let alone sciences and humanities! – but science and apocalypse.
These two things are easily mischaracterized. To us, scientific knowledge seems to be natural reason and apocalyptic knowledge divine revelation. Protestants may add that the reasoning is an achievement and the revelation a gift. Modernists will construe the reasoning as objective, public knowledge and the revelation as subjective, private faith. But how then could Jesus treat meteorology and eschatology as analogous, and shame his opponents by comparing them?

Relating science to apocalypse recalls the struggle to relate the Galapagos and Jerusalem. Is it a battle where Christian faith defeats secular book-learning? Is it a hierarchy in which only the love of Christ is worth our whole attention? No, Jesus’ apocalyptic framework is friendlier to science than either of those strategies. Because both traditions offer wisdom, Jesus sees the “worldly wise” as better positioned to appreciate him and to judge those who do not: “The queen of the South will arise at the judgment with this generation and condemn it, for she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon, and behold, something greater than Solomon is here” (Matthew 12:42). What qualifies the Queen of Sheba to judge is not anti-intellectualism but zeal for and openness to every kind of wisdom.

Yet materialists and pragmatists who will not find much support here for privileging Solomon’s style of wisdom. The history of God in Jesus Christ supplies inside information that the world’s learned do not even know to look for.

Not even the world’s spiritually learned. Jesus is not comparing reason to faith, the secular to the sacred, or the physical to the spiritual. If he were, this surprising parallel contrast would not make sense: “The men of Nineveh will arise at the judgment with this generation and condemn it; for they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and behold, something greater than Jonah is here” (Matthew 12:41). Jesus’ audiences do not dichotomize reason and faith, secular
and sacred, or physical and spiritual as modern westerners do. They simply want signs from above, from within the conventional “scientific” and “religious” categories that already make sense to them. Instead of confining his revelation of the Kingdom to either of these traditions, Jesus promises a perversive unveiling from below that transcends both: “An evil and adulterous generation seeks for a sign, but no sign will be given to it except the sign of Jonah” (Matthew 16:4). That apocalyptic sign, his death and resurrection, reveals “the plan [οἰκονομία] of the mystery hidden for ages in God who created all things, that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known” (Ephesians 3:9-10). The revelation of God in Christ does not set aside wisdom; it is wisdom. But not Solomon’s or even Jonah’s kind.

The apostolic faith juxtaposes scientific knowledge and apocalyptic knowledge not as we usually do, as two independent realms of knowledge or styles of learning, but as two distinct and intrinsically related forms of discovery. The apocalyptic wisdom of God “is greater than” the scientific wisdom of Solomon. The sign of the Son of Man “is greater than” the repentance that Jonah preaches. The hidden oikonomia or “economy” of God, meaning what God has done in Jesus Christ, is in some sense greater than the everyday economy of creation. The unveiling of God in Christ is greater than the unveiling of creation through all ordinary inquiry, including scientific and ethical inquiry.

Greater in what sense? Not in any of the ways Jerusalem jostles with the Galapagos as rival cosmologies. Rather, Solomon’s-and-Jonah’s “lesser” economy is old (protological, regarding the first things) and the Son of Man’s greater one is new and climactic (eschatological, regarding the last things). Science usually helps describe an age that is truly significant but passing away. The lesser economy is continuous and the greater discontinuous; science pertains to the predictable which was brought into being and is being remade in acts of sheer creation.
God’s presence is indirect in the lesser and direct in the greater (“something greater is here”). These qualities make the lesser order of knowledge familiar but the greater one strange (so it is ‘outsiders’ who respond, as the Gentiles from Sheba and Nineveh had). The lesser economy is also one of powers and principalities, so that its teachers mistake Jesus’ power as demonic (Matthew 12:22-24), while the greater economy is of the Spirit of God (Matthew 12:28-32).

These analogies reveal the greater *oikonomia* to be ultimate: it frames the lesser economy. We know consistencies of natural and social creation only because there is a creation, and we know natural and social patterns of grace only because God redeemed it.

At the same time, the greater *oikonomia* is obscure: it is interpersonal, revolutionary, and unpredictable. Here it contrasts not only with Solomon’s wisdom but even with Jonah’s preaching. God’s message disappointed Jonah because love of Israel’s enemies was consistent with God’s compassion (Jonah 4:1-2). But the gospel *keeps* shocking us even after decades. Though frustrated students appeal too quickly to its mystery when struggling to understand something new, they are still right to use the term. The Lord’s mercies are new every morning.

Both creation’s lesser economy and God’s greater *oikonomia* are fields for learned traditions. However, science is unlike theology in that it explores things that do not depend in the same way on the Spirit’s disclosure. Its buried treasure is in principle open for anyone to uncover: “general revelation” if you will. What is special about “special revelation” is that the Spirit discloses the eschatological: the *telos* or end of all things that is hidden in the depths of the Father’s thoughts and displayed in his Christ. This Christological location of theological knowledge is what gives theological tradition its comprehensive scope that frames all other traditions, including scientific traditions.
These qualities set limits on how well training for one discipline will apply to the other. I sometimes jest that “theology is about everything,” but it isn’t really. Christian theology specializes in God’s wisdom and is often painfully ignorant of Solomon’s. Likewise, scientific training can be a poor tutor for the Kingdom’s scribes when it tempts them to capture the unfamiliar in the familiar. Particle physicist-turned-Anglican clergyman John Polkinghorne develops a marvelous account of divine interaction with the universe at the quantum level; but his proposals for reconciling contemporary science with Christian faith are less helpful as they move away from the field of expertise that informs his fundamental vision and toward the level of human moral agents with our miracles, prayer, and prophecy.\textsuperscript{13} The \textit{oikonomia}’s obscure framework \textit{remains} more obscure than its counterpart. So all properly interpreted experience must honor the ultimacy and the obscurity of the good news, as well as the penultimacy and the blatancy of scientific and other ordinary knowledge.

\textbf{III. The evolutionary epic and the Pentecostal cosmic narrative}

Christ’s apocalyptic framework for common wisdom sheds new light on science’s and theology’s usual stances toward one another. It appreciates the strengths of our conventional ways of relating the Galapagos and Jerusalem, diagnoses their weaknesses, and suggests more fruitful approaches. Consider how it contrasts with my Easter reading from Daniel Dennett and Michael Shermer, along with some of their fellow cosmic storytellers.

Shermer turns the evolutionary paradigm into a cosmic myth when he claims that “we are a fluke of nature, a quirk of evolution, a \textit{glorious contingency}.”\textsuperscript{14} The cosmos thrills him because


\textsuperscript{14} Shermer, 231. This is the kind of leap from expertise to cosmological speculation that Giberson and Artigas complain about among “oracles of science.”
it has no point other than its own twists and turns. He shares E.O. Wilson’s regard for what he calls “the evolutionary epic” as “probably the best myth we will ever have.” Yet Wilson’s own storytelling has a teleological edge. He sounds progressive, triumphalistic, even apocalyptic (a tone he may have picked up as a young Southern Baptist in Alabama) when he claims that humanity has evolved an unprecedented capacity to transcend ourselves and should act on it. George Johnson considers both Wilson’s progressivism and Shermer’s anti-progressivism unwarranted inferences from inconclusive data (though his ending to Fire in the Mind shows that he wants Wilson to be right).

For all their differences, all three are empires of the Galapagos. They all strive to colonize or even defeat Jerusalem with an all-encompassing scientifically inspired framework. Indeed, they suffer from the same logical flaw, one that is endemic in cosmologies grounded in the evolutionary epic: the genetic fallacy. They confuse a thing’s origin with its meaning. Dennett’s elaborate speculations on the rise of belief in God are shot through with the same genetic fallacy. His “best current version of the story science can tell about how religions have become what they are” is, at best, educated guesswork that aims to inspire future research. Its assessment of the human condition, bleaker than Shermer’s yet striving like Wilson’s, reads rather like Ecclesiastes’ wise observations on ordinary life. But Ecclesiastes makes for a poor canon-within-the-canon. Its weary insight into commonalities does not supply the energy of Israel’s Scriptures or even wisdom literature, let alone the explosive New Testament.

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17 This is a particularly ironic failure in light of the Neo-Darwinian insight into biological “cooption” and “exaptation,” evolutionary phenomena in which a trait originally useful in one way ends up serving a different purpose. A more consistent application of the principle would be more open to ways in which the biological origins of forces involved in Christian faith could differ radically from their eschatological roles in the kingdom of God. As tail feathers on male peacocks are no longer for flying but for demonstrating reproductive fitness, so the singing voices of human beings may no longer be primarily for demonstrating reproductive fitness but for praising our Triune redeemer.
18 Dennett, 103.
Easter is not a time for Ecclesiastes. On that Sunday morning on which I read Dennett and Shermer, our sermon centered elsewhere, on Romans 8:11: “If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies also, through his Spirit that dwells in you.” This is clearly a different epic than Shermer’s, Wilson’s, Johnson’s, and Dennett’s evolutionary ones, not least for its note of hope.

The resurrection – not a scientific event, but a solid historical one – is the crowning of the Christian master narrative. It grounds the joyful Church’s Spirit and its hopeful life. Christian pneumatology supplies the decisive clue connecting “nature,” mortal creation (which the Creator Spirit brings to life in Genesis 1-2), with “eternity,” immortal creation (which the Savior Spirit inaugurates in raising Jesus from the dead), in our lives and imaginations (which the Perfector Spirit bequeaths as “the mind of Christ” that searches and shares his mysteries). Ordinary life and the cosmic oikonomia, current things and ultimate things, meet definitively in the life, anointing, death, and resurrection of the homo sapiens sapiens Jesus of Nazareth.

Peter Hocken, a charismatic Catholic priest, articulates the pneumatological and eschatological orientation of Pentecostal experience:

The basic link between the experience of spiritual renewal and the awakening of hope for the second coming of Jesus lies in the gift of the Holy Spirit. … As the Holy Spirit makes the Church more eschatological, the Spirit is restoring the fullness of the New Testament hope. This hope is of total salvation, the deliverance of all creation from its bondage to decay, the establishment of the new heavens and the new earth, our resurrection in glorified spiritual bodies, in which there will be total communion with all the saints and angels in the perfect harmony and eternal life of the Most Holy Trinity.¹⁹

My Foursquare church would never speak in quite this way, but that Easter we were effectively agreeing with Hocken’s rich description of the majestic unity of Pentecostal eschatology. Its disposition orients all Pentecostal worship.²⁰

²⁰ W.K. Kay, in Kay and Dyer, 27.
Because Pentecostal sensibilities are especially tuned to the last things rather than the first things, Pentecostals are well positioned to criticize the dysteleological features of cosmologies like Shermer’s, the false progress of Wilson’s evolutionary trajectory, and the latent deism in Johnson. What is in the universe is immensely significant for the doctrine of creation; but what is determinative is what the universe is becoming as the new creation approaches, led by the Spirit, and arrives in the midst of the old.

Pentecostalism has a distinctive respect for divine action. It sees the Holy Spirit’s powerful indwelling in the Church as the current center (though not the exclusive terrain) of God’s eschatological work, focused in baptism in the Holy Spirit – an “empowerment for Christian service” that is more like the Catholic sacrament of holy orders than baptism or confirmation. This doctrine is integral to a distinctive Christology that confesses Jesus as Savior, Spirit Baptizer, Healer, and Coming King. The specifically Pentecostal vision of Christ as healer and Spirit baptizer funds more than the common Christian conviction that God acts supernaturally. It knows the Holy Spirit as realizing God’s desire for new creation through the apostolic fellowship’s normal exercise of his transforming power in signs and wonders.

Other Christian traditions acknowledge these as the Spirit’s work, but make them exceptional. Some relegate them to an apostolic age now past or to a subpopulation of saints. Some restrict them to a liturgy in which God’s normal presence is now sacramental in the Eucharistic host, kerygmatic in the Word of God preached, or communal in the gathering of two or three in Jesus’ name. Even where Pentecostals share these sensibilities, they still resist all exceptionalism because “Jesus Christ the same yesterday, today, and forever” (Hebrews 13:8).

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22 Donald W. Dayton, Theological Roots of Pentecostalism (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1988), quoted in Welker, 112 n. 4.
Acts 2 makes it clear that every disciple, *all flesh*, should be Spirit-baptized for powerful and even miraculous service (cf. 1 Cor 14:5). So “signs and wonders analogous to those described in pre-modern biblical accounts are expected as normal occurrences in the lives of believers.”

Doesn’t this make Pentecostalism a theology of anti-nature rather than nature? There are quite understandable reasons to think so – including the words of Pentecostals themselves, such as Alexander Boddy, faith healer and founder of British Pentecostalism, in 1910:

Imagine now that a very bad cold is coming on. The old symptoms tell us that it will go through the inevitable stages unless something unusual happens. But you know now that *Christ is your life*. You know that you are a new creature in Christ Jesus. … You are sure that this cold is not the will of God. It can in no way bring glory to Him, whereas deliverance from it will be a help to others and may induce them to trust Him also. You recognize that this cold is from Satan. … You hold on to the truth that you are whole because you are in Jesus Christ, and you show your belief by really ‘praising God’ for victory. As you do this unflinchingly you will find that Satan has to go. Perhaps instantaneously, perhaps gradually, the whole thing vanishes, and the unbelievers around will say, “It is really strange how such an one gets rid of a cold.” Satan is beaten!

Identifying Satan as the universal pathogen for humanity (and other species too?) is not going to produce first-rate epidemiology. It dichotomizes God and nature and forces dilemmas on disciples who want to serve God with their gifts. Consider Harold Horton’s dichotomy between modern medicine and the Church’s mission, in 1934:

… we must most emphatically state that modern medicine is not the legitimate fulfillment of Jesus’ command to “heal the sick.” Rather is it the negation, the neglect, if not the positive denial of it. And this is equally true of genuinely born-again “Christian doctors.” The only “Christian physicians” acknowledged in the Scriptures are those ordinary believers who heal miraculously…. God’s way, the only way revealed in the Word, is healing by supernatural divine power.

Relegating Solomon’s wisdom to “the world” denies the divinity of the Wisdom through whom creation came to be (Proverbs 8) and through whose flesh creation was renewed (John 1). Such

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an attitude drives an anti-empiricism that subordinates the senses to “faith,” articulated here by healing evangelist T.L. Osborn:

> Your natural senses have nothing to do with faith and true faith must ignore them. If you walk by faith, you cannot walk by sight. If you are to consider the Word of God as true, then you cannot always consider the evidences of your senses as true.\(^{26}\)

So much for laboratories and scientific observation! This Pentecostal Jerusalem has little to offer the sciences but disdain.

Spiritualism and anti-naturalism are persistent Pentecostal temptations. However, many Pentecostals have learned to resist them – not by betraying the charismatic tradition, but by appealing to it. Oral Roberts founded a Pentecostal university with both a prayer center and a medical school because

> God teaches He alone is the Source of our total supply: “But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus” (Phil. 4:19); and “I am the LORD that healeth thee” (Exod. 15:26). Our total supply most certainly includes our deliverance from sickness and disease. Therefore, both healing coming through supernatural intervention, through believing the gospel and the prayer of faith, and healing coming through medicine or surgery really come through God our Source.\(^{27}\)

The anti-naturalism of the first generations of Pentecostals was in part a fundamentalistic reaction against the prevailing naturalism of modern secularism and liberal Christianity. Later generations of Pentecostals moved away from it by appealing to the supernatural to restore respect for the natural as a means, not just an object, of grace.

Similarly, practitioners of spiritual warfare have nurtured the movement’s appreciations for psychological health\(^{28}\) and social justice.\(^{29}\) Tongues were originally understood as being a

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\(^{26}\) T.L. Osborn, “Healing the Sick,” in Kay and Dyer, 70.

\(^{27}\) Oral Roberts, “Expect a Miracle: My Life and Ministry,” in Kay and Dyer, 80.


gift from God to empower cross-cultural mission to peoples of other languages,\textsuperscript{30} and charismatic liturgy has led the worldwide inculturation of Christianity.\textsuperscript{31} Pentecostalism has addressed its tendency toward anti-naturalism with a more sophisticated respect for nature in light of the Kingdom’s normal signs and wonders. Rapid sociological transformations of Pentecostals from the margins toward the center of their cultures demonstrates the same capacity to honor the normality of the Spirit’s powerful presence in the still natural order.

These Pentecostal qualities have worked powerfully in my own life. I can testify to the difference that robust Pentecostal pneumatology made to my own understanding of God’s involvement in the world. As a college senior, someone introduced me to charismatic Christianity with a copy of Pat Robertson’s \textit{Shout It from the Housetops}.\textsuperscript{32} Further (and higher quality) reading and visiting a charismatic Bible study on campus provided my first real appreciation of the Holy Spirit as both personal and eschatological. This was crucial in healing the breach that had opened up between the scientific, Deistic, even neo-Darwinian world of my secular education and the religious world of my new, mildly Reformed Premillennial faith. Pentecostal theology transformed my understanding of God in the world. It resolved discontinuities that had held my knowledge of science, history, and the like aloof from my emerging evangelical faith. In effect it began the restoration of my intellectual wholeness and put me on a course that has led to a career professing theology at an evangelical liberal arts college.

\textbf{IV. A scientific and spiritual gift exchange}

Pentecostal sensibility embraces the natural and the supernatural, the accessible wisdom “of Solomon” and the obscure wisdom of God. These realms of human knowledge are

\begin{footnotes}
\item[31] Amos Yong, \textit{The Spirit Poured Out on All Flesh: Pentecostalism and the Possibility of Global Theology} (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005).
\item[32] Virginia Beach: CBN, 1986.
\end{footnotes}
differently focused, relatively autonomous, and radically open to one another in ways that point to eschatological resolution. The wisdom of God creates, encloses, and judges ordinary wisdom as its wellspring and destination; the knowledge of ordinary things anticipates, entertains, and may receive the divine oikonomia as its salvation and healing. Their harmony is promising for Pentecostal theology and contemporary science in several ways.

First, though Pentecostals often suffer from their own Jerusalemite imperialism, which manifests itself in an overly narrow vision of salvation and an anti-intellectual attitude toward science, in fact our eschatology supports the opposite. The indwelling Spirit does not avoid, contradict, or negate nature, rendering our life in the Spirit dualistic or gnostic. The Spirit embraces human nature in ways that make Christian life wholistic and even, in a peculiarly Pentecostal way, sacramental.

Pentecostalism’s truly Trinitarian grasp of God’s oikonomia can underwrite an embrace of the natural sciences, the social sciences, and other traditions of human learning about nature that is freer and more theologically anticipatory than many Christian alternatives. It opens communications between the wisdom of God and human wisdom. It insists on the clarity miracles bring to the overarching framework in which ordinary processes have their place. And its appreciation of the normativity of the Spirit’s actions in the world through his indwelt Church lends much-needed scientific qualities such as explanatory power, predictive power, and falsifiability to eschatological proposals.

The Pentecostal quest for holiness can also benefit from scientific and even evolutionary insights. Christians have struggled forever against vices of “the flesh” – passions and habits that stubbornly resist the Kingdom. Charismatics have often blamed the devil and sought supernatural remedies for what the New Testament tends to treat with practical asceticism and
pastoral good sense. This reductive spiritualism leads to psychological damage, shattered faith, and disrespect. Without denying the reality of the demonic, Pentecostals might draw on natural and social sciences for a robust teleological account of human qualities that may simply have outlived their usefulness in the last days. Unconditional family loyalty or human aggression might not be the devil prowling for prey, but a good gift from God that once sustained life until a community of hominids could be appointed imago dei and become theologically and biologically human. If “the flesh” is in part a throwback to fading or obsolete contexts from bygone times of human origins as well as the old order that Christ’s kingdom entered and conquered, then we should not try to cast devils out of ourselves as if they were foreign objects, or revile it and thus impugn our Creator, but simply leave it behind as we press onward toward our goal in Christ Jesus (cf. Philippians 3:13-14).

Science can also inform Pentecostal supernaturalism. When methodologically valid studies fail to identify statistically significant rates of miracles, the lesson may not be that such studies are flawed or sinful but that miracles are rare. Indeed, they may always have been, even during the charismatic heyday of Acts 2-5. It takes many fewer signs and wonders for God to make an unforgettable point, for Luke to weave a narrative, and for the Galatians to recognize the Spirit among them (Galatians 3:5) than it takes to establish statistically significant rates of, say, supernatural healing at a 95% confidence interval. The Spirit’s activity seems to be normal but occasional, falling between grandiose Pentecostal claims that collapse under scrutiny and categorical cessationist denials that credible evidence contradicts. If so, Pentecostalism’s moderating over the last century could be a healthier respect for “charismatic normalcy.”

If the Spirit sovereignly but rarely works miracles, then the methods best suited to studying them may not belong to the social or natural sciences but historiography. It is

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33 Cross-reference Jamie Smith’s chapter?
methodologically open to apocalypse and to these two intersecting economies in ways that science is not: narrative in shape, accessible to both scientists and theologians, already prestigious and influential in both disciplines, and intuitive to outsiders.

Second, theological resources have a place in the sciences that bear upon humanity’s future. The faith, hope, and love of Christ will not displace epidemiology in the biological sciences! But if Jesus’ human life really is paradigmatic for our future, then they ought to inform anthropology and the other social sciences.

A third promising avenue for future interaction between Pentecostal theology and contemporary science is ecclesiological. Every interdisciplinary study of pneumatology and nature has to wrestle with the awkward fact that detailed theological information on the Spirit overwhelmingly speaks at the level of the personal and interpersonal, and specifically the level of the Church. Yet this is as it should be. Recall the Apostles’ Creed: it ends in the fellowship of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. By contrast, biblical testimony to the Spirit’s role in and over natural creation is sparse, scattered, and vague. Any fully Christian doctrine of creation, any accurate catalog of the various God-world relationships, and thus any proper philosophy of science must focus on Israel, Jesus Christ, and the eternal Church. Otherwise, contemporary theories of divine action such as emergence, supervenience, and downward/upward causation do not themselves say enough about creation’s goal to give a properly Christian description of the universe, though they could certainly contribute to one.

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34 See Nancey Murphy, Anglo-American Postmodernity: Philosophical Perspectives on Science, Religion, and Ethics (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1997).
35 I am not qualified to write such a narrative, but I have sketched the very beginning of one in Telford Work, Ain’t Too Proud to Beg: Living through the Lord’s Prayer (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 33-45.
scientifically appealing alternatives to the ambiguous (Shermer, Johnson), dysteleological (Dennett), and falsely optimistic (Wilson) analyses that dominate our imaginations.

These possibilities leave us who are at these intersecting economies’ crossroads somewhere else than the warring fiefdoms of Jerusalem and the Galapagos – at an unlikely place that is perhaps like that little mission in Los Angeles in which “the very atmosphere of heaven had descended” to restore a nearly forgotten reality which soon swept the world.
**Recommended Reading**


