

CREATION

“Creation” is one of the few terms in theology that not only managed to maintain its presence in everyday language but has also found its way into official legal texts (especially constitutions). The English term “creation” originally applied only to the work of God, but beginning in the eighteenth century it also was used poetically with respect to human work. This poetic use added several connotations to the meaning; namely, the world came to be understood as more than and different from simply material for human use, mastery, and exploitation. These overtones imply the notion of an idealized and unspoiled nature that is not necessarily part of the biblical concepts of “creation.”

Biblical Terminology. The Old Testament does not have a nominal term for “creation.” While it uses the verb *bārāʾ* for divine creation, which is without analogy, the substantive form *beriy’āh* is first attested in the Qumran text CD 4:21 (cf. 12:15) and appears in rabbinic literature. The situation is different in the New Testament, where both the verb *ktizo* (“create”) and the noun *ktitis* (“creation”) appear frequently.

History of Research. The treatment of the topic of creation in theology was strongly impacted by the important discoveries of texts in Mesopotamia in the nineteenth century. The revelation of Akkadian parallels to the biblical creation and flood narratives revealed the traditional and mythological character

of these traditions. The uniqueness of these biblical narratives was empirically refuted, which was judged by some as diminishing their revelatory quality. With more than a century having passed since these discoveries, scholarship has come to understand the relationships between “Babel” and “Bible” as more complex. While the Bible was not written in splendid isolation, pan-Babylonianism does not present an adequate interpretive scheme. Furthermore, the reception and tradition-historical aspects of the Bible have also come to be valued from a theological perspective. The quality of the Bible does not lie in its content being without analogy but rather in its specific formulations of this content.

The rise of the neo-orthodox “dialectic theology” at the beginning of the 1920s also holds great significance for the treatment of the topic of creation in theology. Natural theology—and along with it the topic of creation—was brought into disrepute. Exemplary is Gerhard von Rad’s influential essay “The Theological Problem of the Old Testament Doctrine of Creation” (German original, 1936), which ascribes to the doctrine of creation a handmaid’s role in salvation history.

The topic was first revisited by several peripheral voices in the last third of the twentieth century (cf. Schmid, 1973; Spieckermann, 2003). Along with the ecological crisis that began at the same time, the concept of creation has returned to prominence in the ecclesiastical community. Within the so-called conciliar processes, which began in 1983 at the general assembly of the World Council of Churches in Vancouver, the commitment for justice, freedom, and integrity of creation became quite explicit. Since then theology’s increased interest in the theme of creation has become noticeable.

Creation versus Science. While the debate on the relationship between belief in creation and the natural sciences has garnered only limited attention in central Europe, it remains an issue with considerable political explosiveness in the United States. When viewed in light of the history of interpretation of the Bible as a whole, this discussion takes on different contours. Two historical periods have played decisive roles in determining the relationship be-

tween theology and science—the second and third centuries C.E., when Christian theology essentially adopted Greek philosophical conceptions of divinity, and the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries C.E., when at least Protestant theology chose to follow the path of compatibility or complementarity rather than antagonism between theology and science. This decision implies the foundational freedom accorded to the natural sciences, which—viewed theologically—was not capitulation by theology but rather the result of a conscious decision, albeit at first painful. One might justifiably wonder whether Christianity would continue to be a living religion in the Western world if it had chosen to build different alliances during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

The freedom accorded the natural sciences can also be understood as a consequence of the historical-critical method of biblical interpretation. Once it is recognized that the Bible formulates truth in historically contingent rather than eternal forms, the door is open for the biblical doctrine of creation to be viewed as a historical expression of the knowledge of its time, which could not reflect modern scientific discoveries in its understanding of cosmology. From the perspectives of astrophysics and evolution, the biblical view of cosmology has become outdated, so its theological significance lies in its socially oriented interpretation of the creation as an overarching context for human life.

Creation in the Old Testament. The theme of creation is of central importance for the Old Testament, not only because its first chapters begin with the depiction of God’s creation of world and humanity. This portrayal itself is naturally historically dependent on predecessors in the ancient Near Eastern literature (esp. *Enūma eliš*); however, these predecessors were lost at the end of antiquity and forgotten until their rediscovery through archaeology in the nineteenth century C.E. As a result, the development of the concept of creation in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam is essentially informed by the Old Testament.

The fact that both the Jewish and the Christian Bibles begin with creation is of fundamental theological meaning in that, as a result, both Judaism and

Christianity set their religious traditions—each with its particular historical and content-oriented influences—within a universal horizon. The interpretations within later Jewish and Christian traditions that these religions have universal claims reflect the fundamental importance of these biblical texts for the formation of these later traditions. The Christian Bible as a whole underlines this claim by concluding with the depiction of a new heaven and a new earth in Revelation 21–22.

It should be emphasized that the various biblical treatments of “creation” cannot be combined into a single “doctrine of creation.” The Bible contains narrative and hymnic approaches to creation, but it does not systematize them. This retains an openness and multiplicity appropriate to the interpretation of the world as creation.

Genesis 1. The best-known creation text appears in Genesis 1. Biblical scholars largely agree that this text is part of the Priestly document, one of the originally independent literary sources that was combined to form the Pentateuch. This document likely arose during the early Persian period (in the last several decades of the sixth century B.C.E.), although there is not complete agreement on the date (Pury, [2007] 2010, pp. 37–42). Clear, however, for this most prominent depiction of creation is that it does not belong to the preexilic period of the monarchy, a conclusion supported especially by the transfer of the *topos* of the “image of God,” reserved for royalty in the ancient Near East, to humanity in general (Gen 1:26–28).

There are two fundamental mistakes that often have been made when interpreting Genesis 1. First, Genesis 1 has been interpreted as if it were a self-contained literary unit. As a matter of fact, Genesis 1 was never an independent text but always served as the introduction to a larger literary work: in historical terms, first to the so-called Priestly document and later to the book of Genesis. For this reason, any interpretation of Genesis 1 alone—neglecting the context that follows—is inappropriate. Second, Genesis 1 has often been understood as if it were an ethical appeal: both humans and other animals are vegetarians and live together without conflict; therefore, Genesis 1 tells us to do so accordingly. Indeed,

Genesis 1 does seem to view the killing of humans and other animals as one of the fundamental problems in the world, yet it should not be forgotten that Genesis 1 is a narrative text. It does not include commands addressed to the readers, but rather it is a narrative about the origins of the world.

According to Genesis 1, God creates the world in six days through eight acts. The number of the acts can be recognized easily through the clear and tight structure of the text, especially by the formulaic declaration of divine approval (“and God said that it was good”) that concludes every single act. The eight creative acts are as follows: (1) the separation of light and darkness, which leads to “day” and “night”; (2) the construction of a dome that is then named “sky”; (3) the collection of the water under the dome, which allows for the appearance of “land” and “sea”; (4) the creation of the plants; (5) the creation of the lights in the sky, namely, sun, moon, and stars; (6) the creation of the water animals and the birds; (7) the creation of the land animals; and (8) the creation of human beings. The numeric discrepancy between the six days and eight acts has led a number of interpreters since the early phases of historical biblical criticism to the conclusion that the six-day schema must be secondary in terms of the composition and tradition history of the text and has been superimposed on an original account only reporting the eight acts. It is indeed quite probable that the authors of Genesis 1 drew upon preexisting traditions. The distribution of eight acts into six days did not result from a partially successful integration of a given tradition into Genesis 1, but it is instead deeply meaningful. The

<i>Day</i>	<i>Number of Acts</i>	
1	1	Alternation between day and night
2	1	Dome/sky
3	2	Separation between sea and land Plants
4	1	Heavenly bodies
5	1	Water animals and birds
6	2	Land animals Humans

eight acts do not take place at random but follow a certain progression within the distribution of the six days.

Genesis 1 arranges the eight acts into a rhythm that occurs twice during two periods of three days each. The formal break between the third and fourth days is decisive for the meaning of the text. The content of the second day corresponds to that of the fifth, and the content of the third day, to that of the sixth. On the second day the dome, the “sky,” separating the waters above and below, establishes the biospheres for the water animals and the birds, both created on the fifth day. On the third day the collection of the waters results in the appearance of the dry land that serves as the biosphere for the land animals and the humans, both created on the sixth day.

This correspondence also provides the rationale for the appearance of the plants as early as the third day. The plants are a fundamental part of the creation of the land because the land could not sustain human or other animal life without vegetation. For Genesis 1, therefore, plants are not living beings but belong to the infrastructure of the land.

When discovering that the second and third days prepare the biospheres for the life forms created on the fifth and sixth days, the connection between the first and fourth days becomes clear as well. The separation of light from darkness on the first day creates the structure of the day, allowing for the origin of time. The work of the fourth day is likewise concerned with the structuring of time—the creation of the heavenly bodies to be signs “for seasons and for days and for years” (1:14).

Taken together, the six days of creation comprise eight works that are symmetrically distributed over two three-day periods corresponding to each other both with regard to time and life systems. Thus, Genesis 1 describes the fundamental ordering of time and life that emerges from the nature of the creation of the world.

It is important to see that Genesis 1 does not directly describe the known human and animal world—at that time or now. The world presented in Genesis 1 resembles the actual world in many ways, but it is not identical to it. The actual world develops out of

Genesis 1, which has always been the beginning of a larger narrative. One detail verifies the idea that Genesis 1 is an open, even incomplete text on its own and in fact points forward at least as far as Genesis 9—the blessing motif. It seems that Genesis 1 grants full blessing only to the water animals and the humans; land animals get no blessing at all, and the blessing of the birds remains somewhat unclear. The reason can be found in the overall structure of Genesis 1. Only the water animals have a biosphere all to themselves—the sea. Birds, land animals, and humans must all share the land biosphere.

This situation results in a difficulty regarding the concept of order in Genesis 1: without a separate biosphere for each kind of living species, conflicts can and will arise. Although Genesis 1:31 claims that creation is “very good,” the constellation within the land biosphere shows that there is a certain inherent danger in creation. The absence of a blessing on the land animals and probably on the birds suggests that the author of Genesis 1 was quite aware of this. The humans receive their blessing only at the expense of the land animals and the birds. The costs born by land animals and birds become apparent in Genesis 9: they are given over to humans as food. The original creation is, therefore, “very good” but not completely stable. There is a preprogrammed conflict between human beings, land animals, and birds with regard to their shared biosphere.

The subsequent development of the narrative indeed shows that this conflict broke out and transformed the original, ideal creation into its present shape, which is no longer “very good” but “corrupt” (Gen 6:13) and, thus, no longer “ideal” but now “real.” The reason given for the breach of the original creational order according to Genesis 6:11–13 is the corruption of the earth through violence (*ḥāmās*). The term *ḥāmās* primarily means “violence against life,” especially the shedding of blood (see, e.g., the parallelism in Judg 9:24; Joel 4:19). The term “all flesh” in the Bible includes both humans and other animals. Genesis 6 apparently views the shedding of blood between humans and humans, humans and other animals, and animals and animals as the reason for the transformation of the creation from very good to

completely corrupt. This status eventually led to the divine decision to destroy all life in creation by the Flood, which was carried out but not fully. Noah and the passengers on the ark survived.

The solution to the problem of “violence” appears in a new divine decree after the Flood that is issued to Noah in Genesis 9:1–6. It modifies Genesis 1:28–30 in two ways. The general attitude between humans and other animals changes from dominion to fear and dread, and their diets come to include meat. From now on humans can consume land animals, birds, and fish in addition to plants. The diet of the animals is not explicitly addressed, but meat consumption by animals seems tacitly accepted as well. Only when animals attack humans or when humans turn against other humans and the result is the shedding of human blood is it a matter for capital punishment. It is clear that Genesis 9:1–6 provides fundamental regulations for the emergent problem of violence. Human violence against animals becomes explicitly permitted according to Genesis 9; animal on animal violence seems to be implicitly accepted. Violence against humans, whether perpetrated by humans or by animals, invokes the death penalty.

No cosmological alternations are introduced in the world in any of the texts after Genesis 1. Even during the flood, the dome separating the waters above and below the sky remains in place—only some windows are opened. However, according to the ancient worldview, the world is not simply a cosmological entity; it is also interpreted in terms of its social relationships. Unlike its cosmological shape, this sociomorphic shape of the world unfolds throughout Genesis 1–9, with the process coming to an end only in Genesis 9. Stated pointedly, the biblical creation narrative is not found only in Genesis 1 but extends all the way from Genesis 1 to Genesis 9. Therefore, the entirety of Genesis 1–9 is the biblical creation account.

In view of current debates on evolution versus creation, this observation contains important ramifications. Evolution as a category of thought appears to have already played an important role in ancient attempts to understand the meaning of the world.

Creation versus evolution is not antagonistic to the Bible. Creation is, instead, described in a developmental (evolutionary) manner. This type of description occurs quite frequently in the Bible. Explanation by telling something’s history (etiology) is a central feature of the Bible, and it is, more generally, an essential characteristic of myth. Myths explain the fundamental ways of the world by telling how they came about. It is therefore justified to consider the Bible in terms of “myth,” not in the sense that myths tell stories about gods beyond space and time but in the functional sense that myths tell stories that explain how the world came to be the way it is now.

Regarding its worldview, Genesis 1 draws a clear distinction between the creator and creation. There is nothing mundane about the creator and nothing divine about creation. This is especially remarkable with regard to the heavens, which in the ancient Near Eastern world traditionally belong to the sphere of the divine. Genesis 1 instead demotes the heavens to the status of a mere work of creation. Genesis 1:6–8 makes this very clear, first by describing how the dome in the midst of the waters was established and afterward by simply naming it “heaven” or, to be more precise, “sky.” The sky is no more, but also no less, than a cosmological edifice. This is especially noteworthy in light of the Babylonian tradition assimilated into Genesis 1.

It has long been known that the creation account of Genesis 1 is quite close to the Babylonian epic *Enūma eliš*, one of the most popular myths in Mesopotamia during the first millennium B.C.E. One likely connection is the use of the term *tēhôm* for the “primordial flood” in Genesis 1:2, which seems to recall the name of the goddess *Tiāmtu*, even if it is somewhat unclear whether *tēhôm* and *Tiāmtu* are directly related in terms of etymology. More significantly, like *Enūma eliš*, Genesis 1 conceptualizes the world as a bubble surrounded by water, although *Enūma eliš* posits three levels, rather than only one level, of the heavens. In *Enūma eliš* the three-layered heavens become the places of residence for the deities after their creation, all according to their place in the divine hierarchy. *Enūma eliš* witnesses to a polytheistic matrix in which the sphere of the gods is

hovering above the natural world. Genesis 1 conceives of the cosmos differently. It is a monotheistic text, which apparently also meant the abandonment of the possibility of conceptualizing God as belonging merely to a supernatural level in heaven above the known and perceptible world. Genesis 1 dismisses heaven as a residence for God. Instead, God appears to be somewhat unlocalizable vis-à-vis the creation.

The radical separation of God from the world, of creator from creation, is the result of, in a category proposed by Max Weber, a “disenchantment” of the world. This development in Genesis 1 appears most clearly in the diminution of the stars to simple “lamps.” Genesis 1 appears to avoid the Hebrew terms for “sun” (*šemeš*) and “moon” (*yāreāh*) consciously, speaking instead only of the “greater” and the “lesser” lamps. This terminology may result from efforts to avoid connections to the deities associated with the sun and moon. One could even consider, given the conception of light found in Genesis 1, calling them “reflectors” instead of “lamps” because the heavenly bodies do not even generate their own light. Instead, the light was created by God in Genesis 1:3 and is then only reflected by the stars.

Genesis 2–3. Historical-critical scholarship has concluded since its early days that the second creation narrative (Gen 2–3) was originally independent from the first one in Genesis 1. This second narrative begins with God’s planting of the garden of Eden as well as the creation of the human, who is then placed in this garden. The statement that the human was formed from *‘āpār* (“dust”; Gen 2:7) shows that the human was created mortal from the beginning as “dust” is a typical metaphor for perishability. Two trees stand in the middle of this garden, the Tree of Life and the Tree of the Knowledge of God and Evil. The nature of the Tree of Life is disclosed in Genesis 3:24: whoever eats of it will live forever. The “knowledge of good and evil” means differentiation between life-benefiting and life-diminishing action, which Deuteronomy 1:39–40 and the evidence from Qumran 1QSa 1:10–11 show is a special criterion of adult human life. Children do not possess this awareness yet and, as 2 Samuel 19:36 suggests, the aged no longer do. God provides only a single instruction

concerning the trees of the garden: the human may eat from every tree except the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. This implies, however, that enjoyment of the Tree of Life is permissible at this point. The human could eat of the Tree of Life and thereby become immortal. One may conclude from these observations that the paradise narrative does not concern the loss of original immortality but rather a missed opportunity to acquire immortality (Barr, 1993; Mettinger, 2007, pp. 99–122).

The human, however, through the intervention of the snake and the woman who had been previously created from him, takes from the Tree of Knowledge; and the two humans eat from the Tree of Knowledge and acquire the ability to differentiate between “good and evil.” The trespass is not brought into connection terminologically with the concept of sin. The Hebrew term for sin first appears in Genesis 4:6–7 in relation to the fratricide of Abel. So sin does not come into the world, according to Genesis, with the so-called Fall. Instead, the precondition of sin, the ability to recognize good and evil and the accompanying responsibility, is the focus in Genesis 3. The murder of Abel is the actual Fall, which is also where the corresponding terminology of sin is located. From this perspective the paradise narrative revolves around the human acquisition of necessary and practical knowledge. This acquisition is depicted as the result of the trespassing of a command, but the theological scope of this narrative does not lie in God’s intention to keep the ability to recognize good and evil from humans but rather that the ability to recognize good and evil itself is experienced in such an ambivalent manner that the author of Genesis 2–3 combines it with a necessity of distance from God. The end of the narrative states that the humans have acquired the knowledge of good and evil (Gen 3:22), and for this reason they must be banished from paradise, that is from unmediated proximity to God (3:23–24).

When the paradise narrative is viewed as a whole, it becomes clear that it does not describe the loss of a completely positive primordial condition that gives way to the correspondingly negative situation experienced in the present world. It is rather the exchange

of one ambivalent situation for another ambivalent situation. It is, therefore, not by chance that the life of the first humans in the garden of Eden remains completely schematic and is not described in detail. The only description of the circumstances appears in Genesis 2:25: “and both were naked, the human and his wife, and they were not ashamed” (author’s translation). However, this sentence simply serves as preparation for Genesis 3:7, when the humans recognize their nakedness after eating (that is, the traditional Fall). While the *supralapsarian* (pre-Fall) humans were divine-like, they did not possess the knowledge of good and evil—which is a grave matter because, as can be deduced from the woman’s answer to the snake’s provocation, they had neither eaten from the Tree of Life nor discovered sexuality as a mode of procreation (Gen 2:25). The *postlapsarian* (post-Fall) humans must now live distant from God, but they are now able to procreate (Gen 4:1, 17, 25, etc.) and to develop culture, as seen in agriculture, trades, music, art, etc. (Gen 4:17–24). This is the *telos* of the paradise narrative. It attempts to explain the unresolvable nexus between an independent human lifestyle, which is required de facto every day from each adult human, who must differentiate between good and evil, and the existence of a considerable distance from God. There is no way back to this original state in paradise. One cannot simply forget the knowledge one has acquired, and as Genesis 2–3 displays, the angel stands guard with a sword of fire to make sure that paradise remains barred for eternity.

Psalms. Another important source for views on creation in the Bible is the Psalms. Psalm 8 formulates one prominent perspective. Instead of characterizing God’s creative power as his superiority over the powers of chaos, this psalm expresses God’s power by depicting his attention to his creations and emphasizing his care for the weakest among them. Psalm 8:2 (HB, v. 3) describes the “children and infants” as “power” against God’s enemies. The necessary support for this perspective follows. Psalm 8:4–5 (Heb. 8:3–4) poses a rhetorical question that contrasts humans with the heavens and stars: “What is humanity, that you are mindful of them?” Psalm

8:5 (Heb. 8.6) provides immediate correction to this perspective: “You have made them a little lower than God, and have crowned them with glory and honor.” As a result, every human has a royal quality. God’s detractors may mock powerless and weak people, but Psalm 8 retorts that the presence of the species “human” in and of itself proves the opposite. The anthropology of Psalm 8 is theologically quite similar to Genesis 1:26–28 and is probably familiar with it. Humans are depicted with royal overtones that now apply to the whole species, not only the king.

Also counted among the creation psalms is Psalm 19. It combines two themes, “creation” (vv. 1–6; Heb. vv. 1–7) and “law” (vv. 7–14; Heb. vv. 8–15). Scholarship traditionally emphasizes the break between these two parts of the psalm, often assuming that they were originally two independent psalms. Against this position, recent scholarship attempts to value the psalm as a whole and to understand the internal context of the two parts. It is certainly advisable to see the theme of the psalm in its description of the interplay and correlation between the heavenly and earthly orders. This position is also supported by noting the relationship of the sun metaphor in Psalm 19 to its ancient Near Eastern context. The sun deity is traditionally responsible for law and justice. For example, Babylonian king Hammurabi receives his laws from Shamash, the sun god, who appears in the iconographic depiction on the stela containing Hammurabi’s Code.

A final distinguished member of the family of creation psalms is Psalm 104 (Krüger, 2010; on its close relationship to the *Great Hymn to the Sun*, see pp. 403–422). This psalm is voluminous and a complex attempt to conceive of the world as a whole in terms of a divine “temple.” Verses 1b–4 open the psalm with a description of the heavenly abode of God as well as weather phenomena, interpreted as his “servants.” Then verses 5–9 turn the focus to the earth. Remarkably, the “chaos waters” of Genesis 1:2 also appear, though not as a reality before creation but as a creational work of God himself. Psalm 104 appears to be familiar with Genesis 1 and to develop its position more explicitly: even the “chaos waters” are part of God’s creation. This psalm even takes a further

developmental step in its understanding of the “chaos waters.” Verse 10 adds to verses 5–9 a passage that speaks of the water supply of the earth. This passage gives the impression that the spring waters supplying humans and other animals are nothing other than the “chaos waters” that are removed to the location from which spring waters originate (Krüger, [1993] 1997, pp. 96–99; however, cf. Köckert, 2000, p. 268).

The world that Psalm 104 describes as God’s creation is in no way free from ambivalence. To begin with, verses 20–22 show that night takes on a certain dynamic of its own. The lions, as the embodiment of chaos, become active; they demand their prey from God, and he gives it to them. Verses 27–30 clearly show that God does not always shower his creation with goodness. He can also hide his face. This dialectic means that he not only sustains but also limits and ends life. His presence is both life-giving and life-sustaining, on the one hand, and life-threatening and dangerous on the other (v. 32).

Deutero-Isaiah and Trito-Isaiah (Isa 40–66). Isaiah 40–66 contain the clearest statements of a universalization of the God of Israel. God takes on the world domination exercised by the Persians, ruling the world in similar fashion (Leuenberger, 2010). If there is only a single God, who is, therefore, also the creator and ruler of the world, then God’s action in the world must be conceived of differently from what is described in the older texts of the Old Testament. Deutero-Isaiah basically qualifies all divine action as creational activity. This point of view is especially explicit in the hymns of deutero-Isaiah, which, at key points in the book, praise the God of creation. These hymns frame even acts of judgment as creational activity (cf. Isa 44:23; 45:8).

The third part of the book of Isaiah—traditionally called trito-Isaiah (Isa 56–66)—accentuates the creation theology even more. Against the typical opinion, this block of texts does not originate from oral prophecy within a “deutero-Isaianic school.” It is instead scribal exegesis of the prophetic texts from Isaiah 40–55 (Steck, 1991). Isaiah 43:16–21 posits a new exodus from Babylon brought about by God as the new act of deliverance to which Israel could look forward, and this theological position proved an en-

during asset. Isaiah 56–66 uses a similar argumentative structure, yet it replaces not the old with the new *exodus* but rather posits that the old *creation* will be surpassed by a new one (Isa 65:17–25). The new creation in Isaiah 65–66 will only be accessible for the pious, while sinners will fall prey to annihilation.

Job. While the book of Job is set in the patriarchal era—Job is depicted similarly to Abraham—its quite developed awareness of theological problems as well as its inner-biblical allusions suggest an origin no earlier than the mid-Persian period (fifth century B.C.E.). Appeals to creation in the book of Job are central, especially in the divine speeches of Job 38–41 (Keel, 1978). The dialogues with the friends are followed by Job’s challenging speech (Job 29–31), in which an oppressed and beaten-down Job clings to his innocence; God then answers Job with a far-reaching arrangement of rhetoric questions. In these questions, God demonstrates the creational order to Job. Job’s fate, which for him cannot be placed within any framework of order, is thereby set within a larger context. Job’s world is not in order, but the world is more than Job’s world. This more comprehensive world is certainly ordered but not in the sense of a static immobilization of an established process.

The relationship between creator and creation is, according to the book of Job, not characterized by a complete determinism but instead takes place with a certain amount of freedom. God himself is even careful to maintain space for “chaotic” elements within the framework of his creation. One example is the motif of the feeding of the lions, representatives *par excellence* of life-threatening chaos, in Job 38:39–40: “Can you hunt the prey for the lion, or satisfy the appetite of the young lions, when they crouch in their dens, or lie in wait in their covert?” (NRSV). Neither is divine activity always to be interpreted as ordered activity, that is, as preservation of the cosmos. God instead presents himself as creator in the sense that the creation possesses a certain inner freedom, which, while regulated by God, will not be eliminated. This understanding also explains the manifold references to the animal world in Job 38–41 (Keel, 1978; Keel and Schroer, 2008, pp. 198–211). God is portrayed in the image of a widely disseminated

motif in ancient Near Eastern iconography, the “lord of the animals” who dominates the chaotic life-threatening powers in the natural world and limits their power (see the Neo-Assyrian cylinder seal drawing in Keel, 1978, p. 115, illustration 57).

The extensive treatment of Behemoth and Leviathan, the hippopotamus and the crocodile, in Job 40–41 (cf. 40:15, 25) is also explained in connection with this motif. They appear frequently in the Egyptian world as representatives of chaos in need of binding (e.g., in the Temple relief from Edfu; Keel, 1978, p. 153, illustration 93).

Ecclesiastes. The book of Ecclesiastes, likely written in the second half of the third century B.C.E., underlines the narrow boundaries of human knowledge, yet it surprisingly develops a particularly practical philosophical approach on this basis. Humans may not be able to understand the world, but they can eat, drink, and experience vitality as divine gifts made available for human enjoyment (see Eccl 3:11–13). Ecclesiastes grounds its arguments in creation theology. The lack of knowledge based in humans’ limited nature as creatures can be compensated for, to a certain degree, through the experience of the regular functioning of creation in terms of provision of sustenance and vitality. These common features make transparent the otherwise hidden activity of God.

Proverbs. Proverbs 8:22–31 puts forth a distinct conception of the purpose of creation. This text develops the notion of a personified “wisdom” (Baumann, 1996; Fox, 2000, pp. 279–289), and wisdom is accorded a special place in creation. While it belongs to the creation, wisdom comes into being before all other entities and is present for their creation (on the wide-ranging discussion concerning *’āmōn* in Prov 8:30, usually rendered as “foreman,” see Fox, 2000, pp. 285–287). Wisdom understands the origins of the rest of creation and, therefore, its meaning and function. The section’s conclusion emphasizes wisdom’s proximity to God: she “plays before him.” The Hebrew term for “play” (*šāḥaq*) also possesses erotic connotations (Keel and Schroer, 2008, pp. 220–224). As a result, creation cannot be reduced to its usefulness or technical efficiency. It is portrayed as grounded in love and play. Christian theology later applies the

statements in Proverbs 8:22 on the “preexistence” of wisdom to Christ (cf. John 1; Col 1:15–17), thereby giving expression to the cosmic importance of Christology (Leuenberger, 2008).

Apocalypticism. A new perspective on the creation theme arises in apocalyptic literature, especially in texts from after 70 C.E. (in particular *4 Ezra* and *2 Baruch*). This conception expects a step-by-step withdrawal of God’s salvific activity from events in the present world and an end of this world that will be followed by the in-breaking of a new epoch that only the righteous and the pious may enter. It has in view a particular space–time conception of a new creation. There can be no doubt that this second eon was created in the very beginning (cf. *4 Ezra* 7:50: *Propter hoc non fecit Altissimus unum saeculum sed duo* [“The Most High therefore creation not one eon, but two”]). The new eon is not, therefore, a corrective action that became necessary as time went on but rather part of the divine intention of creation from the very beginning. The *sub specie contrario* of hidden *creatio continua* in the present eon is replaced by the notion of a double *creatio prima*. God gives up on the world of human experience, but life in the coming eon has been prepared for the righteous since the very beginning.

Creation in the New Testament. Creation is not a prominent topic in the New Testament, which should, however, be understood more as the self-evident nature of creation rather than the unimportance of the idea. All New Testament texts unquestionably assume that the world is God’s creation. Aspects based fundamentally on creation theology appear most frequently in the preaching of Jesus: the Sermon on the Mount, the Lord’s Prayer drawing on the elementary conditions of life of creation (“Give us our daily bread”), and the proclamation of the Kingdom of God using creation–theological conceptions (Matt 5–7; cf. Luke 6:17–49). The Christological formulations of the New Testament especially draw forth decisive reformulations. The fundamental New Testament combination of God with the revelation in Jesus Christ is expressed with regard to creation in the declaration of Christ’s mediatory role (Col 1:15–20). This traditional statement about wisdom (cf. Prov 8:22–31) is now related to Christ (cf. John 1).

However, the treatment of the topic of creation in Isaiah 40–55 influences this theological formulation as well. Just as Isaiah 40–55 views creation completely from the perspective of Israel and Zion (such that creation comes into existence for Israel and Zion and creation's completion is found in their deliverance), the hymn of Colossians 1 similarly formulates creation in relation to Christ. Creation being created in, through, and for Christ declares that God's self-humiliation has shaped the world thoroughly from origin to its completion. The nature of the world is, to a certain degree, to be explained Christologically. God's presence in the world can be related to creation's groaning and sighing (Rom 8:18–39) and its upside-down nature (Rom 1:18–32), which will one day be overcome.

[See also Adam (Primeval History); Blessings and Curses; Eden; Good and Evil; Heaven and Earth; Image of God; and Light and Darkness.]

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Konrad Schmid

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