



Digital Continent

A CATHOLIC THEOLOGICAL QUARTERLY

January 2023

It falls, in particular, to young people, who have an almost spontaneous affinity for the new means of communication, to take on the responsibility for the evangelization of this 'digital continent.'

*Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI
January 24, 2009
World Communications Day*

Who We Are

We are Catholic Distance University, the global, online learning community. CDU offers bachelor's and master's degrees in theology as well as continuing education for students all over the world. At CDU you will gain a highly respected degree as well as knowledge that will enhance your spiritual life and loving service to others.



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About This Quarterly

Digital Continent is a web-based magazine dedicated to CDU students pursuing master's degrees and their noteworthy efforts at theological scholarship. The theses published in these pages are the culmination of years of careful study of the Word of God and the sources of Sacred Tradition. Please take time to peruse this work and share it with others.

Editor's Note

January 2023

A common principle of Catholic intellectual tradition is “both-and.” The Catholic intellectual tradition strives to see things in their natures, which can help avoid needless conflict about things that might appear contradictory on the surface. Few issues have involved more acrimonious public conflict, and belief that two approaches--in this case, physical sciences and Divine revelation--are contradictory, than the origin of human beings.

Lawrence Buklis's master's degree thesis, “Toward a Catholic Understanding of Evolution in the Way of Joseph Ratzinger/Benedict XVI,” draws upon the work of the late theologian-Pontiff to show how Catholic faith, reason about God, and physical sciences can work in harmony to show how both God and nature work in human origins. Creation and evolution, in Ratzinger's view, are complementary aspects of the same process. God's promise in the covenant of creation and the Wisdom literature are brought to fulfillment in the Gospel of John creation account. Second, Fr. Robert Spitzer's metaphysical demonstration of God's existence offers a way to demonstrate God's activity in the world while sidestepping the controverted point of causality. Darwin's work of discovering the evolutionary mechanism by which human beings' physical aspect develops, harmonizes with Divine revelation which tells us that we are persons made in God's image, bearing the breath of God within us.

Buklis's thesis is a masterpiece of study, construction, and writing. From the initial topic to the final thesis, Buklis has done solid research and integrated directorial suggestions well. His writing is exceptional in its simplicity and clarity. Readers who find long, convoluted sentences difficult to read will find Buklis's short sentences and clearly following paragraphs easy to read--for a profound and difficult subject! Buklis consistently shows the highest level of clarity, manifest for me in ease of reading.

Buklis has consistently developed both the scientific and theological aspects of the topic to a great degree of completeness and harmony. Examples include his discussion of the marriage aspect of creation, drawing from the work of Scott Hahn, and clearly distinguishing the cosmological and metaphysical aspects of Aquinas, drawing upon the work of Edward Feser. These items help complete the related arguments and moved the thesis to the next steps. Buklis neatly integrates Robert Spitzer's contemporary demonstration of God's existence that sidesteps the need to further develop the theme of causality beyond the very suitable discussion of it in his treatment of Aquinas's five ways. In addition, Buklis makes use of an especially helpful phrase for summarizing a materialist view of the origins of the cosmos--“unmade matter.” The phrase states the materialist view briefly, and makes the reader want to learn more.

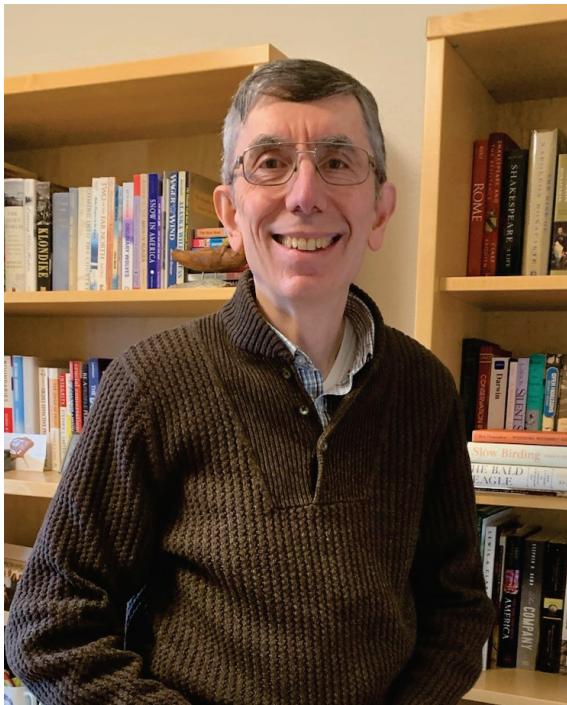
The thesis consistently uses an appropriate level of detail, avoiding going “into the weeds” of excessive detail. For instance, the level of discussion of developments in physics and mathematics is suitable for a master's degree in theology--demonstrates their applicability but stays within the realm of theology. Spitzer's book is of course in the bibliography, so a reader who wishes to read more about the Penrose number or Big Bang cosmology may do so. Buklis's tables neatly summarize key material in a visually helpful way without excessive detail. Similarly, he discusses interpretations of the creation theme in John in suitable but not excessive detail.

In addition, Buklis uses sources on this theme in John in a judicious way. He assesses the sources with attention to theological themes, showing caution towards Moore's expansive view of creation references, but going further than Siliezar's very limited view, while acknowledging complementarity at the same time. The discussion of both covenant and the Wisdom literature as a bridge beyond the creation account in Genesis is fascinating and informative. I am pleased to recommend this fine work for the reading of Catholic Distance University and broader community.

James C. Kruggel, Ph.D.
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About the Author

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Lawrence Steven Buklis lives with his wife, Wendy, in Camas, Washington, along the Columbia River immediately east of Vancouver. They have an adult son and a daughter. Steven and his family live in Anchorage, Alaska. Teresa lives in Portland, Oregon. Larry and Wendy are members of Saint Thomas Aquinas Parish in Camas.

Larry holds a B.S. in biology from Loyola University of Chicago and an M.S. in fisheries from the University of Alaska. He was a biologist with the Alaska Department of Fish and Game, and a biologist and administrator with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in Alaska and the Pacific Northwest, for over 40 years before retiring in the fall of 2020. Early in his career, he managed field crews on salmon spawning streams along the Yukon River. In later years he worked on subsistence hunting and fishing regulations, resource monitoring plans, public information requests and grant management.

Larry's two favorite courses as an undergraduate were Evolution, in his major field, and Old Testament. His lived experience as a Catholic and a biologist led him to seek further study through Catholic Distance University. He is intrigued by the interface of faith and reason, especially in the realm of biological evolution. Coursework towards the degree at CDU helped him to strengthen his theological and philosophical foundation. The thesis project was an opportunity to explore more deeply the notion of a Catholic understanding of evolution, with the thought of Joseph Ratzinger/Benedict XVI proving to be the key. Looking forward, Larry would like to volunteer writing or editing services to a Catholic university, institute, or publication.

Catholic Distance University

**Toward a Catholic Understanding of Evolution
in the Way of Joseph Ratzinger/Benedict XVI**

A Thesis Submitted to
the Faculty in Candidacy for the Degree of
Master of Arts
Theology

by

Lawrence Steven Buklis

Charles Town, West Virginia

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In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God...all things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made.

– John 1:1, 3

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Introduction

The Either/Or Legacy of Darwin's Evolution

Charles Darwin was a ministry student at Christ's College, Cambridge, but in accepting an offer after graduation in 1831 to serve as naturalist on HMS *Beagle*, his life took a very different path. He went on to publish the definitive theory of evolution. Other naturalists were unable to fully conceptualize the origin of new species, invoking a Creator to fill in gaps in theoretical processes. Although many refinements have since been contributed, Darwin's theory was, for its time, complete in itself. The ministry graduate became an agnostic.¹

In retrospect, had Darwin's work remained within its domain of competency in science², the outcome could have been interpreted for what it in fact was, an insight into a mechanism of creation. Instead, his findings were cast as a zero-sum counter to creation. In *The Descent of Man*, he claimed:

But we are not here concerned with hopes or fears, only with the truth as far as our reason permits us to discover it; and I have given the evidence to the best of my ability. We must, however, acknowledge, as it seems to me, that man with all his noble qualities, with sympathy which feels for the most debased, with benevolence which extends not only to other men but to the humblest living creature, with his god-like intellect which has penetrated into the movements and constitution of the solar system – with all these exalted powers – Man still bears in his bodily frame the indelible stamp of his lowly origin.³

Part of Darwin's legacy is the long-running debate within an either/or framework hinging on whether a Creator is held to exist (Positions 2 and 3 in **Figure 1**). Darwin's work was not

¹ Philip Appleman, *Darwin: A Norton Critical Edition*, 1st ed. (New York: Norton, 1970), xiii-xiv.

² "Science" is an ordered form of inquiry encompassing a broad range of study. The three primary branches are the natural sciences such as chemistry and biology with their experimental method for testing hypotheses; the mathematical sciences, such as algebra and calculus; and the divine sciences, such as theology and philosophy. To conform to prevailing use of the term and minimize confusion, however, "science" as used in this thesis should be understood as the natural sciences unless specified otherwise.

³ Appleman, 276.

only characteristic of the materialism of the age, but his theory of evolution contributed to a second wave of that philosophy. It was thought materialism was the natural conclusion to be drawn from Darwin's work, with the origin and development of man seen as just part of the general process, thus supplanting the need for a Creator. That there was in fact no direct connection between the scientific content of Darwin's work and the philosophy of materialism did not seem to matter to those engaged in the creation debate, even though some realized this was the case.⁴

	Creator – No	Creator – Yes
Biological Evolution – No	1. Neither faith in a Creator nor acceptance of evolution	3. Faith in a Creator but rejection of evolution
Biological Evolution – Yes	2. Acceptance of evolution but rejection of a Creator	4. Both faith in a Creator and acceptance of evolution

Figure 1. Model of the interface of faith in a Creator and acceptance of biological evolution in an either/or framework.

In his 1986 encyclical *Dominum et Vivificantem*, Pope Saint John Paul II characterized materialism as a system of thought which radically excludes God, who is spirit, in the world and in man. This philosophy is atheistic, reading the whole of reality as "matter." It speaks of the "spirit" only to the extent that it considers it derived from matter (epiphenomena), as matter is

⁴ Frederick Copleston, S.J., *A History of Philosophy*, Book Three: Vols. VII, VIII, and IX (Garden City: Image Books, 1985), Vol. VII, 354.

understood as the only form of being. According to this system, religion is an illusion to be fought in order to eliminate it from society and from the individual.⁵

In 1968, a German priest and theology professor by the name of Joseph Ratzinger said “anthropogenesis is the rise of the spirit, which cannot be excavated with a shovel. The theory of evolution does not invalidate the faith, nor does it corroborate it.”⁶ Ratzinger makes clear in his discussion surrounding use of the term “anthropogenesis” that he means the rise of being with the capacity to form thought of God, to be in relationship with God, not by chance, but as willed by God. In his view, spirit is created rather than just a development of matter.⁷ Over the next 40 years he would go on to become a Cardinal, and Pope Benedict XVI, with more to say about faith and evolution.

Recognizing the biological mechanisms of evolution as a presupposition, the attention of this thesis will be directed to exploring the both/and possibility of Position 4 in **Figure 1**. After taking into account the limited extent of formal Catholic doctrine on evolution, the thought of

⁵ John Paul II, *Dominum et Vivificantem: Encyclical Letter, May 18, 1986* (Papal Archive, The Holy See), 56.

⁶ Joseph Ratzinger, “Schopfungsglaube und Evolutionstheorie”, in H.J. Schulz, ed., *Wer ist das eigentlich – Gott?* (Munich, 1969), 232-45, quoted in Stephan Otto Horn, S.D.S. and Siegfried Wiedenhofer, *Creation and Evolution: A Conference with Pope Benedict XVI at Castel Gandolfo*, trans. Michael J. Miller (San Francisco: Ignatius, 2008), 16.

⁷ Since the term “anthropogenesis” is readily associated with the controversial theologian and paleontologist Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, S.J., its use here may raise questions about the view of Ratzinger/Benedict XVI concerning the thought of Teilhard. On the one hand, in the source cited in note 6, he credits Teilhard with ingenuity discerning between materialism and a spiritually defined view of the world. On the other hand, he characterizes Teilhard’s philosophical and theological concepts as unsatisfactorily developed while crediting his attempt to unite the natural sciences with a theological view of man (Horn and Wiedenhofer, 9). Thus, it can be said Ratzinger/Benedict XVI recognizes intent and contribution by Teilhard in the realm of faith and evolution, but he does so with qualification. For more on anthropogenesis in the scheme of Teilhard, see Laura Eloe, “Loosing the Bound: Pierre Teilhard de Chardin’s Analogical Imagination in the Post-Euclidean Tradition” (PhD diss., University of Dayton, 2019), 336-337.

Ratzinger/Benedict XVI will be considered in the search for a Catholic understanding of evolution.

The central question of this thesis and its corollary are:

- (1) Does the thought of Ratzinger/Benedict XVI provide a both/and approach toward a Catholic understanding of evolution?
- (2) If it does, how might such an approach be employed?

Chapter 1

Church Doctrine on Evolution

Formal Church doctrine explicitly addressing evolution is limited. However, in his 1950 encyclical *Humani Generis*, Pope Pius XII directly addressed evolution (paragraph 36), human origin (37), and interpretation of the associated scriptural accounts in Genesis (38).⁸ As to evolution, research and discussion between science and theology is not forbidden to the extent that such discussion explores the origin of the human body from pre-existing living matter. A line is drawn, though, as regards the human soul and evolutionary processes. The Catholic faithful are obliged to hold that human souls are immediately created by God. As to human origin, a line is drawn against polygenism, that is, the view that either after Adam there were people who did not take their origin from him, or Adam is only meant to be representative. As to scriptural accounts, it is conceded the sacred writers were not employing scholarly Greek or Latin historical methods, drawing as they did from popular contemporaneous narratives. But being divinely inspired, their writing conveys truths necessary for salvation.

In the final weeks before the opening of the Second Vatican Council in 1962, seven draft schemas were sent for review by the Preparatory Theological Commission headed by Alfredo Cardinal Ottaviani. The schema on defending the deposit of faith included among its ten chapters a two-page chapter on creation and evolution. Also circulated at that time was a schema on the sources of revelation. Fr. Gerald O'Collins provides insight into the dynamics of the review process.⁹ Ratzinger, at the time an influential member of the *ressourcement* movement and *peritus* to Josef Cardinal Frings of Cologne, advised that the Sources of Revelation schema

⁸ Pius XII, *Humani Generis: Encyclical Letter, August 12, 1950* (Papal Archive, The Holy See), 36-38.

⁹ Gerald O'Collins, S.J., *The Second Vatican Council: Message and Meaning* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2014), 8-10.

be reworked to take into account the human faith aspect of revelation. He further advised Frings that the Deposit of Faith schema, which included chapters on revelation, be put aside. Pieter Smulders, S.J., advising Archbishop Giuseppe Beltrami, papal nuncio to the Hague, strongly opposed the Deposit of Faith schema for not sufficiently recognizing the role of divine works, along with words, in revelation. Ultimately, the Sources of Revelation material was reworked through a multi-year process and issued as the Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation, *Dei Verbum*, while the Deposit of Faith schema died as a draft, and the chapter on creation and evolution along with it. This was likely collateral to the concerns surrounding the treatment of revelation, not with intent as to the issue of creation and evolution.

Although it has no standing, it is of interest to note the chapter on creation and evolution in the Deposit of Faith schema defined “materialistic evolutionism” as the view most opposed to the doctrine of faith that the world was created by God out of nothing. It holds instead that the world “did not take its origin from God and is not governed by him and that in its progress all that happens is that unmade matter continually changes and that out of it are brought forth new and more perfect structures that were, therefore, already in some way pre-contained in unmade matter.”¹⁰ The chapter goes on to note that while science conducted responsibly does not harm and may even help illuminate the doctrine of faith, some aspects of evolution are to be approached with great caution. It is asserted that God created the world out of nothing, man is spirit and matter, each human soul is created by God out of nothing, and the origin of the first parents needs to be considered not only by the natural sciences, but by philosophy and in light of divine revelation as well.

¹⁰ Joseph Komonchak, trans., *Draft of a Dogmatic Constitution Defending Intact the Deposit of Faith, Chapter III The Creation and Evolution of the World*, Preparatory Theological Commission for the Second Vatican Council, Alfredo Cardinal Ottaviani Commission Head, 1962. Translated 2012.

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC)* is an authoritative source of Church doctrine for direct access by the faithful. It was produced during the papacy of John Paul II, following up on the outcomes of the Second Vatican Council. Then-Cardinal Ratzinger was charged to lead the commission responsible for producing the *CCC*. Christoph Cardinal Schönborn, Archbishop of Vienna and a member of Ratzinger/Benedict XVI's *Schulerkreis* ("school circle") of former graduate students, has noted the substantial treatment given to creation (paragraphs 279-384). While acknowledging criticism that evolution is not explicitly addressed, he finds it to be spoken to in paragraphs 283-285.¹¹ Taken together, these three paragraphs of the *CCC* credit science for enriching human knowledge of the origins of the world and of man, find such study to be stimulated by a search for meaning which exceeds the scope of the natural sciences, and describe responses contrary to the faith, including materialism, which is said to be a rejection of any transcendent origin for the world, seeing it as only "the interplay of matter that has always existed".¹²

¹¹ Horn and Wiedenhofer, 17.

¹² *Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC)*, 2nd ed. (Vatican: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2018), 283-285.

Chapter 2

The Thought of Joseph Ratzinger/Benedict XVI on Evolution

In his examination of the relationship between the Church and evolutionary theory, Gereon Wolters finds that John Paul II strategically removed the Church from direct conflict on scientific aspects outside of the Church's expertise.¹³ This is said to be evidenced by John Paul II's October 1996 letter to the Pontifical Academy of Sciences, in which he states "the theory of evolution is more than a hypothesis."¹⁴ Wolters perceives in John Paul II's successor a cooperative approach, as evidenced in Ratzinger/Benedict XVI's discussion with his former students, in which he speaks for the cooperation of the various dimensions of reason concerning creation and evolution.¹⁵ Withdrawal from direct conflict within the domain of the natural sciences, on the one hand, and openness to a more cooperative exercise of the various dimensions of reason, on the other, are not to suggest a change in position on matters which remain inviolate to the Church, namely humanity's monogenetic origin and God's direct creation of each individual human soul.¹⁶

The thought of Ratzinger/Benedict XVI on evolution may be suggested from the treatment given in the *CCC* for which he had a leadership role, as was discussed earlier, but it is made more evident from two other sources. The first is a collection of four Lenten homilies on creation then-Cardinal Ratzinger delivered in the cathedral of Munich in 1981.¹⁷ The second is

¹³ Gereon Wolters, "The Catholic Church and Evolutionary Theory: A Conflict Model," *Scientific Insights into the Evolution of the Universe and of Life*, Pontifical Academy of Sciences, Acta 20 (2009), 461.

¹⁴ John Paul II, "Message to the Pontifical Academy of Sciences, October 22, 1996," *Quarterly Review of Biology*, 72, no. 4 (December, 1997).

¹⁵ Wolters, 451.

¹⁶ Ibid., 461.

¹⁷ Joseph Ratzinger, *In the Beginning: A Catholic Understanding of the Story of Creation and the Fall*, trans. Boniface Ramsey, O.P. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1995).

documentation of Pope Benedict XVI's *Schulerkreis* symposium on Creation and Evolution held in 2006 with a group of his former graduate students at Castel Gandolfo, the papal summer residence, and associated historical material.¹⁸

Key statements by Ratzinger/Benedict XVI regarding faith and evolution, spanning the 38 year period from 1968 to 2006, have been assembled in **Table 1**. Two overarching themes emerge.

First, faith may engage cooperatively with the science of evolution, but in doing so, one needs to bring an understanding of creation which goes beyond Genesis, drawing on the full creation account in Scripture. His statements suggest two pathways beyond Genesis. One is covenant, as he has taught that "Only when creation and covenant come together can either creation or covenant be realistically discussed – the one presupposes the other."¹⁹ The other is to cross the bridge of the Wisdom literature from the Old Testament to the "conclusive and normative"²⁰ creation account to be found in the New Testament, specifically in the Prologue of the Gospel of John.

Supporting the foregoing discernment of these two paths beyond Genesis in consideration of creation, the *CCC* brings together in one paragraph creation, covenant, and the Wisdom literature by asserting that

...the revelation of creation is inseparable from the revelation and forging of the covenant of the one God with his People. Creation is revealed as the first step toward this covenant, the first and universal witness to God's all-powerful love. And so, the truth of creation is also expressed with growing vigor in the message of the prophets, the prayer of the psalms and the liturgy, and in the wisdom sayings of the Chosen People.²¹

¹⁸ Horn and Wiedenhofer.

¹⁹ Ratzinger, *In the Beginning*, 85.

²⁰ Ibid., 15.

²¹ *CCC*, 288.

Table 1. Key statements by Ratzinger/Benedict XVI regarding faith and evolution.

Year	Ratzinger/Benedict XVI Statement	Source
1968	“To believe in creation means to understand, in faith, the world of becoming revealed by science as a meaningful world that comes from a creative mind.”	#1, p 13
1968	“[A]nthropogenesis is the rise of the spirit, which cannot be excavated with a shovel. The theory of evolution does not invalidate the faith, nor does it corroborate it.”	#1, p 16
1981	“In fact, a theologian said not long ago that creation has now become an unreal concept. If one is to be intellectually honest one ought to speak no longer of creation but rather of mutation and selection.”	#2, p 3-4
1981	“Thus we can see how the Bible itself constantly readapts its images to a continually developing way of thinking, how it changes time and again in order to bear witness, time and again, to the <i>one</i> thing that has come to it, in truth, from God’s Word, which is the message of his creating act.”	#2, p 15
1981	“Creation is oriented to the sabbath, which is the sign of the covenant between God and humankind.”	#2, p 27
1981	“Only when creation and covenant come together can either creation or covenant be realistically discussed – the one presupposes the other.”	#2, p 85
1981	“The Old Testament is not the end of the road. What is worked out in the so-called Wisdom literature is the final bridge on a long road that leads to the message of Jesus Christ and to the New Testament. Only there do we find the conclusive and normative scriptural creation account... (John 1:1, 3).”	#2, p 15
1981	“We cannot say: creation <i>or</i> evolution, inasmuch as these two things respond to two different realities...we are faced here with two complimentary – rather than mutually exclusive – realities.”	#2, p 50
1981	“[T]he progress of thought in the last two decades helps us to grasp anew the inner unity of creation and evolution and of faith and reason.”	#2, p 50

– Continued –

Source Notes:

#1 Joseph Ratzinger, “Schopfungsglaube und Evolutionstheorie”, in H.J. Schulz, ed., *Wer ist das eigentlich – Gott?* (Munich, 1969), 232-45, quoted in Stephan Otto Horn, S.D.S. and Siegfried Wiedenhofer, *Creation and Evolution: A Conference with Pope Benedict XVI at Castel Gandolfo*, trans. Michael J. Miller (San Francisco: Ignatius, 2008).

#2 Joseph Ratzinger, *In the Beginning: A Catholic Understanding of the Story of Creation and the Fall*, trans. Boniface Ramsey, O.P. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1995).

Table 1. Continued.

Year	Ratzinger/Benedict XVI Statement	Source
1986	“Today a new stage of the debate has been reached, inasmuch as ‘evolution’ has been exalted above and beyond its scientific content and made into an intellectual model that claims to explain the whole of reality and thus has become a sort of ‘first philosophy’.”	#3, p 9
1986	“Whereas faith today no longer has any difficulty in allowing the scientific hypothesis of evolution to develop in peace according to its own methods, the absolute claim of the philosophical explanatory model ‘evolution’ is an all the more radical challenge to faith and theology.”	#3, p 10
1986	“The real level of discourse is that of philosophical thought: when natural science becomes a philosophy, it is up to philosophy to grapple with it. Only in that way is the contentious issue framed correctly; only then does it remain clear what we are dealing with: a rational, philosophical debate that aims at the objectivity of rational knowledge, and not a protest of faith against reason.”	#3, p 10-11
1999	“The theory of evolution has increasingly emerged as the way to make metaphysics disappear, to make the ‘hypothesis of God’ (Laplace) superfluous, and to formulate a strictly ‘scientific’ explanation of the world.”	#4, p 17
2000	“The Christian picture of the world is this, that the world in its details is the product of a long process of evolution but that at the most profound level it comes from the <i>Logos</i> . Thus it carries rationality within itself.”	#5, p 22
2006	“...it is not a question of deciding either for a creationism that is closed off from science as a matter of principle, or else for a theory of evolution that has its own gaps and yet overplays its hand and is willing to look at the questions that go beyond the methodological possibilities of the natural sciences. Rather, it is a question precisely of this <i>interplay</i> of the various dimensions of reason, in which the path to faith opens up as well. If between <i>ratio</i> and <i>fides</i> you emphasize <i>scientia</i> or <i>philosophia</i> , then what is fundamentally at stake is regaining a dimension of reason that we have lost. Without that dimension, faith would be confined to a ghetto and thus lose its significance for the whole of reality and of human existence.”	#3, p 161

Source Notes:

#3 Horn and Wiedenhofer, 2008.

#4 Joseph Ratzinger, *Truth and Tolerance: Christian Belief and World Religions*, trans. Henry Taylor (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2004), 178-83, quoted in Horn and Wiedenhofer, 2008.

#5 Joseph Ratzinger, *God and the World*, trans. Henry Taylor (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2002), 139, quoted in Horn and Wiedenhofer, 2008.

Second, reason must be exercised to counter the philosophy of evolutionism. It is critical to see the landscape clearly and direct energies accordingly. While faith (theology) may engage cooperatively with the science of evolution, reason (philosophy) must counter the philosophy of evolutionism (**Figure 2**). Such an approach harmonizes with the characterization of faith and reason by John Paul II in *Fides et Ratio* as “two wings on which the human spirit rises to the contemplation of truth.”²²

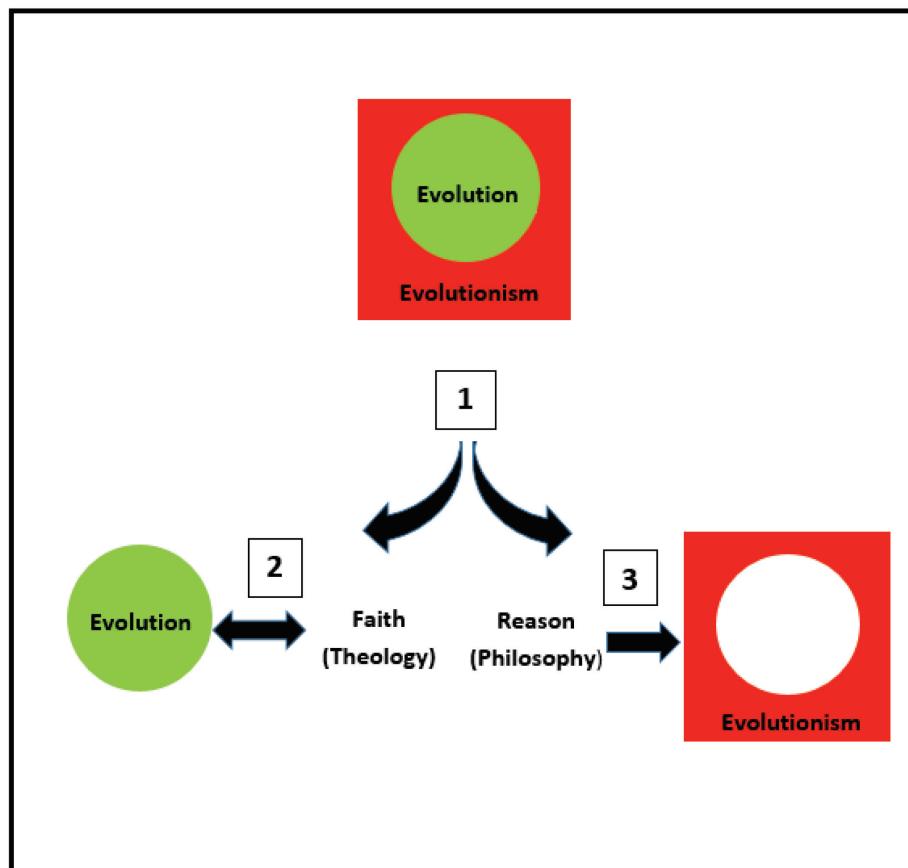


Figure 2. Depiction of a Catholic approach to evolution following the thought of Ratzinger/Benedict XVI. Recognizing that the science of evolution has become embedded in the philosophy of evolutionism, Ratzinger/Benedict XVI: (1) underscores the importance of distinguishing the two, (2) encourages a cooperative engagement of faith (theology) and evolution science, and (3) urges a counter to evolutionism through reason (philosophy).

²² John Paul II, *Fides et Ratio: Encyclical Letter*, September 14, 1998 (Boston: Pauline, 1998), 7.

Some scholars attempt to defend elements of the creation account in Genesis by drilling down rather than looking more broadly across the Scriptural account, bringing to bear technical approaches adapted from the natural sciences. S. Joshua Swamidass, for example, examines the intersection of evolution and the Garden, based on genealogical rather than genetic ancestry, seeking to make room for both a long human evolutionary timeline as well as the direct creation of Adam and Eve within a nearer-term biblical past.²³ However, the nature of people outside the Garden remains unresolved, and the human soul is not given substantial consideration, especially after *de novo* creation of Adam and Eve. Further, the loss of superadded grace, infused virtues, and the divine indwelling upon the Fall of the first Adam is not brought out. This is an example of an approach not in harmony with the thought of Ratzinger/Benedict XVI.

The forgoing discussion leads to the reasonableness of attributing to Ratzinger/Benedict XVI a both/and approach regarding evolution in terms of science and faith, while at the same time advocating for a counter to evolutionism as a philosophy through reason. If faith concedes reason to science, it will be left a hollowed-out shell, in Ratzinger/Benedict XVI's words, "a ghetto."²⁴

In response to the question with which this thesis began, it can be affirmed that the thought of Ratzinger/Benedict XVI does provide a both/and approach toward a Catholic understanding of evolution. Further, a two-track strategy follows from his thought: faith brings an understanding of creation to cooperative engagement with evolution science, while reason mounts a philosophical counter to evolutionism. Each of these two tracks will now be explored in the two chapters which follow.

²³ S. Joshua Swamidass, *The Genealogical Adam and Eve: The Surprising Science of Universal Ancestry* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Academic Press, 2019), 201.

²⁴ Horn and Wiedenhofer, 161.

Chapter 3

The Understanding of Creation Brought by Faith

This chapter begins with consideration of a creation theme in the Gospel of John before going on to explore covenantal promise and fulfillment, and, more briefly, the Wisdom literature, as pathways beyond Genesis to a fuller understanding of creation. This beginning with the end in mind follows from Ratzinger/Benedict XVI, who has said that “...every individual part [of the Bible] derives its meaning from the whole, and the whole derives its meaning from its end – from Christ.”²⁵ Thus, the explorations which follow later will be enlightened by first considering where they are headed.

Creation Theme in the Gospel of John

It will be argued here that a creation theme can be traced through the Gospel of John. A concise assessment of this theme will be followed by a more detailed examination of one illustrative pericope, the Wedding Feast at Cana (Jn 2:1-11). The theme thus revealed supports several complimentary conclusions as to its purpose.

Assessment of Creation Theme

Study of creation imagery in the Gospel of John was initiated in the modern era with an article by Sir Edwin Clement Hoskyns in 1920, after which only fourteen additional works took up the theme through the time of a monograph by Carlos Raul Sosa Siliezar in 2015.²⁶

Even among those who recognize the presence of creation imagery in John, there is a lack of consensus as to the extent of that imagery and its purpose. Two monographs on the theme

²⁵ Ratzinger, *In the Beginning*, 9.

²⁶ Carlos Raul Sosa Siliezar, *Creation Imagery in the Gospel of John*, Library of New Testament Studies 546 (London: T&T Clark, 2015), 1-7.

characterize the range, with Anthony M. Moore²⁷ finding it to account for the fundamental structure of the Gospel of John with the imagery evident throughout, and Sosa Siliezar²⁸ taking a much narrower and more rigorous approach to interpretation.

Moore finds a direct correspondence between each of seven signs he identifies in the Gospel's Book of Signs (Jn 2-12) with each of the seven days of creation in Genesis, but it must be noted he also finds an eighth sign in the miraculous catch of fish in Jn 21, and another eighth sign in the Resurrection, which is said to represent an octave day, the beginning of a new week in a new creation.²⁹ He identifies dozens of words, termed "creation indicators," which are said to serve as reminders of the theme, primarily located in the Book of Signs and in the High Priestly Prayer of Jesus (Jn 17).³⁰ A garden motif looms large for Moore. He claims an intentional connection by the Evangelist between mention of the garden and gardener in his Passion/Resurrection narrative and the Garden of Eden in Genesis.³¹

Sosa Siliezar employs a three stage, six criteria method which essentially asks whether candidate creation imagery was intended and whether first century readers would have understood it, with "creation imagery" defined as either direct statements about the creation of the world or the use of terms which follow from earlier biblical traditions.³² My use of that term is employed more generally here to describe elements of the theme. Sosa Siliezar does not find support for a creation structure of the text, nor justification for an abundance of allusions to Gen

²⁷ Anthony M. Moore, *Signs of Salvation: The Theme of Creation in John's Gospel* (Cambridge: James Clarke & Company, 2013), E-Pub, 12-13.

²⁸ Sosa Siliezar, 23-24.

²⁹ Moore, 120-121.

³⁰ Ibid., 86.

³¹ Ibid., 64.

³² Sosa Siliezar, 12-21.

1-3, and he challenges the basis for interpreting an intent by John to link the garden and gardener images of Jn 18:1, 26; 19:41; and 20:15 with Gen 2-3.³³

In a shorter article, Jeannine K. Brown takes an approach between that of Moore and Sosa Siliezar, finding allusions to Gen 1-2 to be prominent in the Prologue and chapters 19-20, and the number of seven signs in Jn 1:19-12:50 echoing the seven days of creation, but she stops short of ascribing each sign with a sequential day in the creation story of Genesis.³⁴

Adam Kubis conducted a broad survey of recent scholarship on allusions to Gen 1-3 in the Gospel of John, employing four criteria based on terminology and history of interpretation.³⁵ Distilled for this thesis into **Table 2**, several observations become apparent, enabling common ground to be identified concerning a creation theme.

First, the Prologue is rich in creation imagery [e.g. “In the beginning...” (Jn 1:1 //Gen 1:1); motif of life alongside light, shining, and darkness (Jn 1:4-5//Gen 1-2)]. The strength of the creation imagery in the Prologue is unquestioned across interpreters. Second, four signs in the Book of Signs are widely recognized for their creation imagery [Wedding Feast at Cana (Jn 2); Healing of the Paralytic (Jn 5); Jesus Walking on Water (Jn 6); and Healing of the Man Born Blind (Jn 9)]. Third, elements of the theme in the Book of Glory complete what was begun in the Prologue [“before the world was” (Jn 17:5/Gen 1) and “before the foundation of the world” (Jn 17:24/Gen 1) form a thematic *inclusio* within the High Priestly Prayer; and Breath of the Risen Jesus (Jn 20:22)//Creator breathing life (Gen 2:7)]. Finally, a secondary tier of creation imagery, open to more challenges, includes the number of seven signs and many passages

³³ Ibid., 190-191.

³⁴ Jeannine K. Brown, “Creation’s Renewal in the Gospel of John,” *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 72, no. 2 (April 2010), 287-288.

³⁵ Adam Kubis, “The Creation Theme in the Gospel of John,” *Collectanea Theologica* 90, no. 5 (2020), 377.

Table 2. Summary of creation imagery or sources of imagery in the Gospel of John, with the level of recognition by scholars of the creation theme characterized using a color-coded key developed by this author, drawing from a descriptive review by Kubis.

	Widely Recognized	May Be Warranted	Not Well Supported
	Bible Citation	Page in Kubis	Comments
Prologue			
“In the beginning...”	Jn 1:1 // Gen 1:1	378	
The light and the darkness	Jn 1:4-5 // Gen 1:2-5, 14-18	379	
Word “God said...”	4x in Prologue 9x in Gen 1	379	
Theme of creation	Jn 1:3 and 1:10	379	
“all things” and “become”	Jn 1:3 // Gen 1:1-2:7	379	
Motif of life alongside light, shining, and darkness	Jn 1:4-5 // Gen 1-2	379-380	
“God’s children” and “begotten by God”	Jn 1:12 and Jn 1:13	380	Evokes Adam and Eve in Gen
Structure			
Seven day scheme // First week of creation	Jn 1:19-2:11 // Gen 1-2	382-383	
Entire 4th Gospel echoes 7 days of creation		384-385	
Final week Jesus’ life // First week of creation	Jn 12-20 // Gen 1-2	401-402	
Book of Signs			
Number of 7 signs	Jn 2:1-12:50	385-386	Which are the seven signs varies among interpreters.
Each sign associated with a particular creation day	Jn 2:1-12:50 / Gen 1-2	386	
Works performed by the Father and by Jesus	Many Passages	386	Not direct applications of Gen 1-2, but evident use of creation imagery.
Sign narratives with convincing intertextual dependencies	Jn 2: Cana Wedding Jn 5: Paralytic Healed Jn 6: Walking on Water Jn 9: Man Born Blind	387 (details follow after)	

– Continued –

Source Note: Adam Kubis, “The Creation Theme in the Gospel of John,” *Collectanea Theologica* 90, no. 5 (2020).

Table 2. Continued.

	Bible Citation	Page in Kubis	Comments
Book of Glory			
“before the world was” “before the foundation of the world”	Jn 17:5 / Gen 1 Jn 17:24 / Gen 1	395-396	Thematic <i>inclusio</i> evoking creation, emphasizing Jesus’ close relationship with the Father
Breath of Risen Jesus // Creator breathing life	Jn 20:22 // Gen 2:7	396-397	
Garden motif	Jn 18:1 and 19:41 / Gen 1-3	398-399	Support varies due to Garden/Paradise terminology issue
Less Obvious Allusions (Selected Examples) -Mary addressed “woman” -“It is completed” -Rises 1 st day of new week -Jesus mistaken as gardener	Jn 18-20 / Gen 1-3 Jn 19:26 Jn 19:30 Jn 20:1 Jn 20:15	399-403	-New Eve -Completes creation, God’s works -New creation -New Adam, God plants Eden
Unconvincing Allusions (Selected Examples) -Nameless woman suffering -Pilate’s “Behold the man!” -Crucified between 2 men -“while it was still dark”	Jn 16-20 / Gen 1-3 Jn 16:21 // Gen 2:23 Jn 19:5 Jn 19:18 // Gen 2:9 Jn 20:1	404-406	-In Genesis later identified as Eve -Jesus the anti-type of Adam -Tree of life in middle of Eden -Evokes 1 st day of creation

describing works performed by Jesus in the Book of Signs, and the garden motif and other allusions in the Book of Glory.

It has thus been shown that a creation theme can be traced in the Gospel of John, from the Prologue, through the Book of Signs, culminating in the Book of Glory. This theme is evident even without including suggested allusions which are not widely recognized.

A Pericope Examined: The Wedding Feast at Cana (Jn 2:1-11)

The Story

Jesus and his disciples were invited to a marriage at Cana in Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was also there. The wine runs out, which his mother brings to Jesus’ attention. After a

brief and enigmatic exchange with his mother, Jesus directs the servants to fill six stone jars, holding 20 to 30 gallons each, to the brim with water. He further directs them to take a sampling to the steward, who marvels to the bridegroom that the best wine has been saved until now. A Jewish wedding could be a week-long celebration, with the hosts expected to provide food and wine throughout. Running out of wine would risk major embarrassment.³⁶ This is the setting for the first of the signs, or miracles, by Jesus in the Fourth Gospel.

Creation Imagery

While elements of this pericope may contribute to multiple images or themes, and thus be open to multiple interpretations, this review will focus on the theme of creation.

- (a) “On the third day there was a marriage at Cana in Galilee...” (v 1)

Much has been expressed about “the third day” within a creation theme context, which some combine with an accounting of four days since the Baptism of Jesus to arrive at seven days, and thereby an allusion to the seven days of creation.³⁷ Paul Trudinger argues for the wedding at Cana marking the *sixth* day in a sequence which began with the Baptist in Jn 1:19, linking this to the sixth day in the Genesis account, in which man and woman were created. He believes this verse needs to be read not like a diary entry but with a sensitivity open to what the Spirit is saying.³⁸ Stephen S. Kim, on the other hand, does not support reading “unrestrained allegorisms” into what he considers more simply a literal time indicator.³⁹ The ambiguity in the accounting of days weakens the case for this to be intended creation imagery. However, “the

³⁶ Stephen S. Kim, “The Significance of Jesus’ First Sign-Miracle in John,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 167, no. 666 (2010), 206-207.

³⁷ Francis Martin and William M. Wright IV, *The Gospel of John*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2015), 54.

³⁸ Paul Trudinger, ““On the Third Day There Was a Wedding at Cana”: Reflections on St. John 2, 1-12”, *The Downside Review* 104 (1986), 41-42.

³⁹ Kim, 205.

third day” will be taken up again later as it relates to covenant. The setting being a marriage feast will be taken up in (e) below.

(b) “When the wine failed...” (v 3)

Wine running out suggests exhaustion of the natural order. Bernadeta Jojko notes the Old Testament “frequently uses the image of wine to indicate abundance, the extravagance of God’s blessing and his gifts to man.”⁴⁰ One could reasonably argue that the converse of this, the supply of wine failing, may allude to the depletion of creation, even though Jojko’s comment is in the context of her eschatological emphasis of interpretation. The related discussion under (e) below explores what may be intended by the Evangelist in the response of Jesus to this depletion in the natural order.

(c) “And Jesus said to her, ‘O woman, what have you to do with me?’” (v 4)

Use by Jesus of the title “woman” to address His mother is highly unusual, and widely noted as an allusion to the woman in the Genesis account of creation. Raymond E. Brown pursues this allusion, finding that Jesus may be identifying Mary as the new Eve, the mother of His disciples, as the old Eve was “mother of all the living.”⁴¹ Although none of the allusions in this pericope unambiguously follow from Gen 1-3, such as the phrase “In the beginning” found in the Prologue, the use here of the term “woman” is likely the strongest of the allusions interpreted as creation imagery.

(d) “...six stone jars were standing there...each holding twenty or thirty gallons.” (v 6)

The number of stone jars, six, equals the number of days of creation in Gen 1 before God rested. These jars are intended for ceremonial washing associated with the feast, which explains

⁴⁰ Bernadeta Jojko, “The Hour of Jesus and the Wedding Feast at Cana (John 2:1-11),” *Verbum Vitae* 38, no. 1 (2020), 132.

⁴¹ Raymond E. Brown, S.S., *The Gospel and Epistles of John: A Concise Commentary* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1988), 28-29.

the very large volume they hold relative to the purpose they will be put in holding wine following the sign by Jesus. As an aside, it is noted in v 7 the jars were filled “to the brim,” which makes unambiguous there was only water in these vessels.⁴²

(e) “...the water now become wine...you have kept the good wine until now.” (vv 9-10)

Wine from water is an act of creation. Production of wine occurs through a time-consuming natural process of fermentation, but Jesus has transcended natural and physical laws with this transformation of water into wine, evoking the image of the Creator in Gen 1.⁴³ The superabundance of high-quality wine (120 to 180 gallons) suggests the providential bounty of creation. The new wine may represent new life, the eternal life to be found in Christ,⁴⁴ symbol of a New Covenant in Jesus. Circling back to the first item in this review, the setting of a wedding feast contributes to the interpretation of the creative act of new life, the covenantal aspect of which will be noted in the next subchapter.

(f) “This, the first of his signs...” (v 11)

John has unambiguously identified the action of Jesus at the Wedding Feast at Cana as the first of his signs. Less clear is how many signs are to be accounted for in the Fourth Gospel overall, or which works within the Book of Signs (Jn 2:1-12:50) account for a putative seven signs. Those finding this pericope to be the first of seven signs in the Book of Signs may conclude this to be an allusion to the seven days of creation in Gen 1. Others go further to not only identify seven signs in number, but to associate each of the signs with the corresponding sequential day in the seven days of creation. Both aspects were addressed in the preceding overview of the creation theme.

⁴² Kim, 207.

⁴³ Kubis, 387.

⁴⁴ Kim, 210 and 213.

Purpose of Creation Theme

Having addressed interpretive approaches and resulting assessments from multiple scholars concerning creation imagery in the Gospel of John, and examined one pericope in detail, it remains to conclude as to the purpose of the theme.

Moore, liberally identifying creation imagery and claiming the theme forms the fundamental structure of the Gospel, concludes that while the word of God is spoken in Genesis, Jesus is the Word of God in John, as exhibited by the creative action of His signs, which give life, and the new creation he founded, breathing the life-giving Spirit upon His disciples.⁴⁵

For J. K. Brown, John has Jesus bringing the completion and renewal of creation, which she advocates as a better phrasing than speaking of a new creation, which may suggest a dichotomy between original creation and its replacement.⁴⁶

Among the narrowest of interpreters of the creation theme, Sosa Siliezar finds it playing a supporting, not a primary, role. He perceives limited, strategic placement of creation imagery by John for the purpose of making clear the divine identity of Jesus, underscoring the universality of His message, and portraying Him as the Creator who brings salvation.⁴⁷

These assessments of purpose are complementary to a greater degree than might have been expected, given the wide range in views on interpretation of the imagery. A synthesis of perspectives on the creation theme's purpose is possible, relevant whether the path one is following to the Gospel of John is by way of covenantal promise and fulfillment or the Wisdom literature.

⁴⁵ Moore, 187-191 and 121.

⁴⁶ J.K. Brown, 275.

⁴⁷ Sosa Siliezar, 23-24.

The creation theme in the Gospel of John serves to give witness to the preexistent Word from Genesis becoming flesh in Jesus Christ, who by His signs and saving actions reveals the Father and brings eternal life through the Spirit, a renewal of creation under a New Covenant.

Beyond Genesis: Covenantal Promise and Fulfillment

It will be argued here that there is a Creation covenant in the Book of Genesis. The theological significance of this first covenant between God and man will be examined in its historical context by showing its organic unity with the three other great covenants in the Pentateuch: the Noachian, Abrahamic, and Mosaic. Motifs of Temple/mountain/sacred space, dominion, and rest will be followed through this covenantal progression, leading to the ultimate fulfillment of the Creation covenant in the New Covenant brought by Jesus Christ.

Argument for a Creation Covenant in the Book of Genesis

Not requisite for the word “covenant” to be present

According to William J. Dumbrell, “covenant” can “mean substantially a unilateral vow or a promise.”⁴⁸ Further, a divine covenant does not need to be dependent on human reaction to it or even knowledge of it.⁴⁹ Thus, absence of the word “covenant” in the creation narrative of Gen 1-2 does not, in itself, rule out a unilateral divine promise or vow, a commitment to the purpose of creation, of which the first man and woman may not have been aware. As the Navarre commentary notes concerning Gen 2:4b-4:26, “from the very start God looked after man most lovingly and established a covenant with him.”⁵⁰

⁴⁸ William J. Dumbrell, *Covenant and Creation: A Theology of Old Testament Covenants* (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 1984), 15.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 27.

⁵⁰ University of Navarre, *The Navarre Bible. The Pentateuch: The Books of Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy in the Revised Standard Version and New Vulgate with a Commentary by Members of the Faculty of Theology of the University of Navarre* (Princeton: Scepter, 2018), 45.

Hebrew verb heqîm, rather than karat, used in covenant (Hebrew berith) with Noah

First occurrence of the word “covenant” (Hebrew *berith*) in the Bible is found in Gen 6:18, with God speaking of how He will establish (Hebrew verb *heqîm*, which usually denotes to confirm or renew) a covenant with Noah, repeated in Gen 9:9, when the covenant with Noah is established. The Hebrew verb *karat*, literally to “cut”, would be expected if this was the making of a new covenant, as Dumbrell argues to consistently be the verb usage in such cases throughout the Old Testament.⁵¹ Digging deeper, Pieter de Vries finds that in Exod 6:4-5, God is said to remember the covenant he established (*heqîm*), not made (*karat*), with the patriarchs.⁵² Outweighing this challenge to Dumbrell, however, is the covenantal language with Noah, discussed below, which supports the interpretation here that use of the Hebrew verb *heqîm* indicates the covenant with Noah confirmed or renewed the Creation covenant in Gen 1-2.

Covenantal language with Noah echoes creation narrative

God’s covenantal blessing given to Noah and his son’s in Gen 9:1 repeats the blessing given to the first man and woman in the Garden in Eden (Gen 1:28), and in the context of covenant with Noah, Gen 9:6 reaffirms human beings as created in the image of God, as first revealed in the creation narrative of Gen 1:26-27.⁵³

⁵¹ William J. Dumbrell, “Creation, Covenant and Work,” *Crux* 24, no. 3 (September 1988), 14.

⁵² Pieter de Vries, “Can the Relationship between God and Man/Creation before the Fall be Characterized as a Covenant?” *Mid-America Journal of Theology* 30 (2019), 81.

⁵³ Raymond E. Brown, S.S., Joseph A. Fitzmyer, S.J. (emeritus), and Roland E. Murphy, O.Carm. (emeritus), eds., *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1990), 16.

Parallels between creation accounts and a vassal covenant

Each of the two creation accounts in Genesis is found by de Vries to parallel a vassalage covenant.⁵⁴ In Gen 1:1-2:3, the Creator God may be seen as the suzerain king, and man as the vassal king made in His image, charged as vice-regent to have dominion over God's creation. In Gen 2:4-25, the covenantal name "LORD God" is used, and covenantal elements of promise, duty, sanction, and reward are evident.

Elements of a Creation covenant present in Gen 1-2 sufficient for its circumstance

In blessing man and woman in Gen 1:28, unlike when blessing the fish and birds in v 22, the Creator God becomes immanent, entering into an unmediated personal relationship with human beings.⁵⁵ Considering covenant within this relationship, Craig G. Bartholomew argues the assurance and legalizing elements were not as necessary before the fall as after, and a requisite constitutive element is found in Gen 1-2, that being God's purpose in creating the world and man as He did.⁵⁶ Paul R. Williamson finds this unconvincing,⁵⁷ but Scott W. Hahn characterizes Williamson as unable to acknowledge a Creation covenant, because to do so would risk subordinating creation to covenant in Williamson's schema.⁵⁸ On balance, it can be concluded that elements of a Creation covenant are present in Gen 1-2 sufficient for the stage in the relationship between God and man.

⁵⁴ De Vries, 79-80.

⁵⁵ Nahum M. Sarna, *Genesis, The JPS Torah Commentary* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1989), 17.

⁵⁶ Craig G. Bartholomew, "Covenant and Creation: Covenant Overload or Covenantal Deconstruction," *Calvin Theological Journal* 30 (1995), 30.

⁵⁷ Paul R. Williamson, *Sealed with an Oath: Covenant in God's Unfolding Purpose*, New Studies in Biblical Theology 23 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2007), E-Pub., chap. 2, p. 8.

⁵⁸ Scott W. Hahn, *Kinship by Covenant: A Canonical Approach to the Fulfillment of God's Saving Promises* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 8.

Evidence from the Prophets

Isaiah, speaking of the polluted earth, says its inhabitants have “broken the everlasting covenant” (Is 24:5), an apparent reference to the Creation covenant.⁵⁹ Evidence may also be found in Hosea. Rather than citing Hos 6:7 (“But at Adam they transgressed the covenant”), however, which is open to interpretation as a place name⁶⁰, one can look to Hos 4:1-3. There, following a description of the waywardness of the people in vv 1-2, v 3 states “Therefore, the land mourns, and all who dwell in it languish, and also the beasts of the field, and the birds of the air; and even the fish of the sea are taken away.” The deterioration of creation is thus linked to neglect of covenant, and God’s covenant is understood to extend to the whole of creation through humanity.⁶¹

Affirmation of a Creation covenant found in Church teaching

In his encyclical letter *Redemptor Hominis*, John Paul II cites the fall narrative of Gen 3:6-13 when stating that Jesus Christ satisfied the “love which man in a way rejected by breaking the first Covenant.”⁶² Thus, a papal encyclical understands the prelapsarian state to be one of covenant between God and man.

Summary

The argument has been made for a Creation covenant based on Scriptural exegesis, consideration of the stage in the relationship of the Creator God and humanity, and Church

⁵⁹ Dumbrell, *Covenant and Creation: A Theology of Old Testament Covenants*, 74.

⁶⁰ De Vries, 75, n.8.

⁶¹ Jeffrey H. Hoffmeyer, “Covenant and Creation: Hosea 4:1-3,” *Review and Expositor* 102 (Winter 2005), 144 and 149.

⁶² John Paul II, *Redemptor Hominis: Encyclical Letter, March 4, 1979* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock, 1979), 17.

teaching. Man was created in the image of God (1:27); given a blessing (1:28) and food (1:29); made responsible to till and keep the Garden (2:15); and told to fill, subdue, and have dominion over the earth (1:28). God made to grow in the Garden the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (2:9), the latter not to be eaten of, upon consequence of death (2:17). Capping His work of creation, God blessed and made holy the seventh day, upon which He rested (2:3). The Garden and the Tree of Life may be seen as symbols of the Creation covenant. It remains to describe the organic unity of the Creation covenant to the three other great covenants of the Pentateuch, and to the renewal of creation under the New Covenant in Christ.

Before proceeding, and although not in the direct line of this argument, it should be noted Church doctrine holds that marriage is a covenantal relationship between a man and a woman rooted in the Genesis account of creation⁶³, thereby part of the primal covenant of creation. Marriage was instituted by God as a sign of his covenantal love, and the Old Testament prophets likened the covenantal relationship of God and his people to a marriage.⁶⁴

Organic Unity with the Three Other Great Covenants of the Pentateuch

Eden was the holy mountain of God (Ezek 28:13-14), the Garden a sanctuary in which man offered worship, and from which man was, through his dominion, to extend the harmony within the created order of the Garden to the world beyond.⁶⁵ Man's dominion, expressed as tilling and keeping the Garden (Gen 2:15), can be interpreted in the context of a Temple/sacred space motif when it is realized that “till” (Hebrew *'abôdâ*), with a basic meeting of “work” or “serve,” is used later in the Old Testament as the verb for “worship”, and “keep”

⁶³ CCC, 1601-1605.

⁶⁴ Martin and Wright IV, 61 and 56.

⁶⁵ Dumbrell, “Creation, Covenant and Work,” 19 and 24.

(Hebrew *sāmar*) can be more fully understood as “to take care of” or “to have charge of.”⁶⁶

Sabbath rest is the goal of creation, it is the rest of completion, which indicates God’s acceptance of His creation and desire for fellowship with man, and is the reason for creation’s existence.⁶⁷

Theologically, the Creation covenant intended the completion of God’s purpose for creation, the extension of the sacred space of the Garden to the whole earth. The motifs of Temple/mountain/sacred space, dominion, and rest will now be followed through the organic unity of the Noachian, Abrahamic, and Mosaic covenants, by which the salvation of man and the completion of God’s original purpose were intended.

Noachian

God walked in the Garden, but Adam and Eve hid themselves in shame following the fall (Gen 3:8). Contrary to God’s plan for creation, the earth became corrupt and filled with violence (Gen 6:11). But in Noah, a man who “walked with God” (Gen 6:9), a new “first man” was found with whom the Creation covenant could be continued. The flood was a reset of creation, a new beginning. Noah’s name (Hebrew *nīham*) means to “rest,”⁶⁸ a link in Gen 5:29 to the Sabbath rest of the Garden, suggesting reestablishment of God’s plan for the earth. To the challenge that if God had in fact entered into a Creation covenant, He would not have caused the flood, it can be countered that God provided for the continuation of His creation through Noah and the ark.⁶⁹

The cultural mandate of Gen 1:28, in which man was blessed and given dominion and told to fill the earth, is restated to Noah in Gen 9:1ff. Dominion is expressed as well by God’s directives concerning the gathering of pairs of all the animals and provisions for food for man

⁶⁶ Ibid., 18-19.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 23.

⁶⁸ Terrence E. Fretheim, “The Book of Genesis: The Primeval Story,” in *New Interpreter’s Bible*, edited by Leander E. Keck, vol. 1 (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1994–2004), 380.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 394.

and beast (Gen 6:18-22). The ark may be seen as a continuation of the sacred space motif for creation from the Garden. Specifications from God on how the ark was to be built (Gen 6:14-16) share the sacred space motif with God's later specification of the ark of the Sinai covenant (Exod 25-27). Following the flood, the ark came to rest on the mountains of Ararat (Gen 8:4), continuing the mountain motif from Eden. As in a Temple, Noah built an altar to God and offered sacrifice (Gen 8:20). Adam's original purpose of guarding and keeping the Garden, as Temple, and expanding it to the whole earth, is perpetuated through Noah.

Abrahamic

Noah's drunkenness and sordid conduct (Gen 9:20-22) revealed the inclination toward evil which continued in man following the flood, climaxing in the building of the tower of Babel (Gen 11).⁷⁰ The call to Abraham, which will lead to the making of a new covenant, arises suddenly, the start of an epic voyage, a quest for spiritual truths central to biblical history and a break with those who served other gods.⁷¹ God's plan begins to require an act of obedience, with Abraham's attitude contrasting sharply with the disobedience of Adam and Eve.⁷²

God's everlasting covenant with Abraham brought blessing (Gen 12:2-3) and the promise of land (17:8), many descendants (15:4-6), and nationhood (17:5-6). Abraham's relationship with God involved man's first friendly dialogue with God since Adam (cf. Gen 3:9-12).⁷³ Abraham is a new "first man." The Promised Land is sacred space, a new Eden, a place of rest. A man of prayer, Abraham constructed altars along the way of his journey, which in central

⁷⁰ University of Navarre, *The Pentateuch*, 76-77.

⁷¹ Ephraim A. Speiser, *Genesis: Introduction, Translation, and Notes*. The Anchor Bible, vol. 1 (New York: Doubleday, 1964), 87-88.

⁷² University of Navarre, *The Pentateuch*, 86.

⁷³ Ibid., 95.

Palestine and southward later became shrines.⁷⁴ Moriah, where Abraham was to offer his son Isaac (Gen 22:2), is a Mount of God, later understood to be the Temple Hill in Jerusalem.⁷⁵ The motif of dominion and continuation of the cultural mandate given to Adam and then Noah is exhibited by the promise of being made the father of many nations, the man from whom will come many kings (Gen 17:6).

The Sabbath rest of the Promised Land is exemplified in Abraham. After life as a nomadic herdsman, and his faithful journeying in response to God's covenantal call, Abraham acquired a sepulcher and small plot in the Promised Land of Canaan and was "gathered to his people" after dying "in a good old age" (Gen 25:8), remaining faithful to God absent the waywardness exhibited by Adam and Noah.

Mosaic

The covenant with Moses was made necessary not because of a failing in the Abrahamic covenant, but because a more prescriptive body of law was needed for the emerging people of Israel to live as a nation. The Mosaic covenant is an extension of the covenant with Abraham. In fact, following the apostasy of the golden calf, God sent Moses and the people onwards from Sinai primarily because of the promise He had made to Abraham (Exod 33:1-3).⁷⁶

Text linkage to the Garden is found in Exod 15:25. After three days in the desert without water, God shows Moses a tree which, upon being thrown into the bitter water of Marah, makes it drinkable, functioning as the Tree of Life in the Garden. Exod 2:3 links Moses to Noah, in that

⁷⁴ Ibid., 86-87.

⁷⁵ Speiser, 163, n.2 and n.14.

⁷⁶ University of Navarre, *The Pentateuch*, 383.

the “basket” into which the baby Moses was placed when set upon the reeds of the river Nile is the same term as used for the “ark” of Noah (Gen 6:14).⁷⁷

There is a correspondence between the threefold division of the Tabernacle of the Mosaic covenant and Eden, the Garden, and the earth beyond in the first creation account, as well as between the form of the menorah and the Tree of Life in the Garden.⁷⁸ Horeb/Sinai, the mountain of God, continues the Temple/mountain/sacred space motif, from the call of Moses in the burning bush (Exod 3:2) to his ongoing encounter with God in covenant making (Exod 19:3-6 ff.). The dominion motif is dramatically evident in God’s deliverance of the chosen people from the hands of Pharaoh in Egypt (Exod 6:2-8), and in the vanquishing of outnumbering forces in the quest for the Promised Land (Deut 7:1-5). The Sabbath was to be a perpetual sign of the Sinai covenant (Exod 31:17), which relates back to the creation account (Gen 2:3). In sending Moses and the people out from Sinai to the Promised Land, God promises rest (Exod 33:14). The Deuteronomic concept of occupying the land is bound up with a “rest” which is a return to the purposes of creation, namely a rejoicing before God and enjoying the blessings of creation in His presence.⁷⁹

Fulfillment in Jesus Christ

The prophet Jeremiah foretold a new covenant, unlike the Mosaic covenant which was broken, one in which the law would be written upon the hearts of the people (Jer 31:31-33). The Gospel of John does not speak explicitly of a “new covenant.” However, R. E. Brown finds in the Prologue that “Just as a new creation replaces the old [in Jn 1:12-13], a new covenant replaces the old covenant with Israel on Sinai [in Jn 1:14-18], because the people who were

⁷⁷ Ibid., 250.

⁷⁸ De Vries, 77.

⁷⁹ Dumbrell, *Covenant and Creation: A Theology of Old Testament Covenants*, 121-122.

originally his own rejected Jesus.”⁸⁰ He also notes that describing the God of this new covenant as “full of grace and truth” (v 14) aligns with the frequent characterization of the God of the old covenant as “rich in kindness and mercy.” Further, there are allusions to covenant to be found in the pericope of the Wedding Feast at Cana. Francis Martin and William M. Wright IV note that “the third day” (Jn 2:1) can be associated with the giving of the law at Sinai under the Mosaic covenant; his mother’s “Do whatever he tells you” (Jn 2:5) echoes Israel’s response in Exod 19:8; and the setting of a wedding recalls the covenantal relationship of God and Israel, likened to a marriage in Hos 2:16-25.⁸¹

Fulfillment of the Pentateuchal covenants in Jesus Christ incorporates the motifs which were followed here. An example of each motif will be drawn from the Fourth Gospel.

The Temple/mountain/sacred space motif is evident in the pericope of Jesus driving the moneychangers from the Temple on the mount in Jerusalem (Jn 2:13-19). Referring to His own body, he said “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.” (Jn 2:19)

Dominion over creation is exhibited by Jesus walking three or four miles on the surface of the sea to his disciples in a storm-tossed boat (Jn 6:16-21). In saying “It is I; do not be afraid” (Jn 6:20) Jesus invokes “I am”, the divine name of YHWH, while his walking on the sea is an allusion to the action of YHWH in Job 9:8 of the Wisdom literature, to be taken up next.⁸²

Sabbath rest is central to the pericope of the healing of the paralytic (Jn 5:1-18). Jesus heals the man on the Sabbath, then counters the criticism of Jewish authorities by asserting “My Father is working still, and I am working” (Jn 5:18). This speaks to Jewish awareness that two

⁸⁰ R. E. Brown, S.S., *The Gospel and Epistles of John: A Concise Commentary*, 23.

⁸¹ Martin and Wright IV, 54-56.

⁸² Ibid., 118-119.

of God's activities knew no Sabbath rest: giving life and passing judgment on the dead. By his action Jesus gives life to a paralytic on the Sabbath and makes himself equal to God.⁸³

Beyond Genesis: Wisdom Literature

The creation aspect in the Wisdom literature (Job, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Wisdom, and Sirach) will be considered briefly here sufficient for demonstrating the role claimed for it by Ratzinger/Benedict XVI as a bridge in the creation account from the Old Testament to the New Testament.

A survey of these books provided the explicit citations regarding creation presented in

Table 3. A few general features are apparent. Rather than referencing a sequence of days for the work of creation, or focusing on the setting of a Garden where God walks in the cool of the day, the images are more of spirit, mystery, and relationship. Wisdom is personalized in the feminine and associated with God, but ambiguity remains as to her identity. The characterization is complex, transitional between the mythic character of the Genesis accounts and the testimony of John.

The Navarre commentary brings out several important themes concerning Wisdom in relation to creation, making clear the advanced character of this literature. Acknowledging a close connection between knowledge through faith and knowledge obtained by reason, the progress of Revelation is evident through faith supporting the mind to understand creation. Wisdom resides in God, and has stamped order on creation. All created things have been imbued with Wisdom by God. A distinction is made between soul/spirit and body. The personification of Wisdom is on the one hand a literary device to express a divine attribute, but it is more than this, leading as it does to later associations with Jesus as divine Wisdom incarnate, and

⁸³ Ibid., 100.

Table 3. Survey of citations from the Wisdom literature regarding creation.

Citation	Quotation
Job 9:8-9	who alone stretched out the heavens, and trampled the waves of the sea; who made the Bear and Orion, the Pleiades and the chambers of the south;
Job 10:9	Remember that you have made me of clay; and will you turn me to dust again?
Job 12:10	In his hand is the life of every living thing and the breath of all mankind.
Job 14:15	You would call and I would answer you; you would long for the work of your hands.
Job 28:25-27	When he gave to the wind its weight, and meted out the waters by measure; when he made a decree for the rain, and a way for the lightning of the thunder; then he saw it [wisdom] and declared it; he established it, and searched it out.
Job 38:4a	Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth?
Prov 3:19-20	The LORD by wisdom founded the earth; by understanding he established the heavens; by his knowledge the deeps broke forth, and the clouds drop down the dew.
Prov 8:22-23	The LORD created me [wisdom] at the beginning of his work, the first of his acts of old. Ages ago I was set up, at the first, before the beginning of the earth.
Eccles 11:5	As you do not know how the spirit comes to the bones in the womb of a woman with child, so you do not know the work of God who makes everything.
Eccles 12:1...7	Remember also your Creator in the days of your youth, before the evil days come,...and the spirit returns to God who gave it.
Wis 1:14	For he created all things that they might exist...
Wis 2:23-24	for God created man for incorruption, and made him in the image of his own eternity, but through the devil's envy death entered the world, and those who belong to his party experience it.
Wis 9:1	'O God of my fathers and Lord of mercy, who have made all things by your word,'
Wis 11:17	For your all-powerful hand, which created the world out of formless matter...
Wis 13:5	For from the greatness and beauty of created things comes a corresponding perception of their Creator.
Wis 15:11	because he failed to know the one who formed him and inspired him with an active soul and breathed into him a living spirit.
Wis 16:24	For creation, serving you who have made it...
Wis 19:6	For the whole creation in its nature was fashioned anew, complying with your commands, that your children might be kept unharmed.

– Continued –

Table 3. Continued.

Citation	Quotation
Sir 1:4, 8-9	Wisdom was created before all things, and prudent understanding from eternity....There is One who is wise, the Creator of all, the King greatly to be feared, sitting upon his throne, and ruling as God. The Lord himself created wisdom in the holy spirit; he saw her and apportioned her, he poured her out upon all his works.
Sir 15:14	It was he who created man in the beginning, and he left him in the power of his own inclination.
Sir 16:26	The works of the Lord have existed from the beginning by his creation, and when he made them, he determined their divisions.
Sir 17:1	The Lord created man out of earth, and made him into his own image;
Sir 18:1	He who lives for ever created the whole universe;
Sir 24:3	I [wisdom] came forth from the mouth of the Most High, the first-born before all creatures. I ordained that an unfailing light should arise in the heavens, and I covered the earth like a mist.
Sir 42:15b	By the words of the Lord his works are done.
Sir 43:33	For the Lord has made all things, and to the godly has granted wisdom.

contributing to the development of Trinitarian theology.⁸⁴ Several specific citations from **Table 3** will now be taken up briefly to further illustrate these themes.

Prov 8:22-23 – “The LORD created me [wisdom] at the beginning of his work, the first of his acts of old. Ages ago I was set up, at the first, before the beginning of the earth.”

These verses are part of a larger poem (vv 1-36) conveying the relationship of Wisdom and creation. She is present at creation and delights in her relationship with humanity. This image contributes to later understanding of the Trinity. Similar language is used in the Prologue of the Gospel of John regarding the relationship of God and the Word.⁸⁵

Wis 9:1 – “’O God of my fathers and Lord of mercy, who have made all things by your word,’”

Part of a prayer of a wise king (vv 1-12), this verse captures from Gen 1: 1-27 the Word of God in the work of creation. By personifying the Word, an equivalency is being stated with the Wisdom of God. This also provides precedent for the *Logos* in the Prologue.⁸⁶

Wis 13:5 – “For from the greatness and beauty of created things comes a corresponding perception of their Creator.”

This is a succinct statement regarding analogy of being as an approach to the proof of the existence of God, and the first occurrence in the Old Testament. The Church has drawn upon this and later Scriptural texts to conclude it is possible to come to the knowledge of God’s existence through the use of reason. He is evident by his work of creation.⁸⁷

⁸⁴ University of Navarre, *The Navarre Bible. Wisdom Books: The Books of Job, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes (Qoheleth), the Wisdom of Solomon, and Sirach (Ecclesiasticus)* in the Revised Standard Version and New Vulgate with a Commentary by members of the Faculty of Theology of the University of Navarre (Princeton: Scepter, 2019), 13, 163-165, 304-306, and 389-390.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 189-190.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 336-337.

⁸⁷ Ibid., 352-353.

Sir 1:4, 8-9 – “Wisdom was created before all things, and prudent understanding from eternity....There is One who is wise, the Creator of all, the King greatly to be feared, sitting upon his throne, and ruling as God. The Lord himself created wisdom in the holy spirit; he saw her and apportioned her, he poured her out upon all his works.”

These verses speak of the divine origin of Wisdom. Since Wisdom was poured out upon all of God's works, it follows that the study of God's works is the way to discover wisdom.⁸⁸

Sir 24:3 – “I [wisdom] came forth from the mouth of the Most High, the first-born before all creatures. I ordained that an unfailing light should arise in the heavens, and I covered the earth like a mist.”

This verse is part of a larger introduction (vv 1-34) to treatment of the relationship of wisdom and the Law of the Covenant. Although intimately associated with God, Wisdom is a distinct person. In coming from his mouth, she is his Word. In the Prologue, Wisdom did not end in the Law but became the Word incarnate (Jn 1: 14).⁸⁹

Sir 42:15b – “By the words of the Lord his works are done.” and Sir 43:33 – “For the Lord has made all things, and to the godly has granted wisdom.”

The first of these two verses looks back in alluding to God's work of creation in Gen 1 while leading forward to the Word of God in the Prologue. The second caps the intervening reflection on the glory of God as evident in creation, which is accompanied by an invitation to worship him as he therefore deserves.⁹⁰

⁸⁸ Ibid., 393-397.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 463-466.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 523-525.

Roland E. Murphy notes two aspects of wisdom as related to creation in the faith of the Israelites: the first is creation in the familiar sense of “beginnings,” but the second is the notion of the continuous lived experience of humans. In this latter aspect, wisdom is an ongoing engagement with the created world. She is personified as Lady Wisdom, the voice of the Lord sounding through creation and heard by humanity.⁹¹ This notion of a continuous role for the Creator is noteworthy, and will be taken up in the next chapter.

Earlier, when exploring covenant as a path beyond Genesis to the conclusive creation account in the New Testament, it was noted that both the Prologue and the pericope of the Wedding Feast at Cana included allusions to covenant. Similarly, allusions to Wisdom are also to be found in the Prologue, as has already to some extent been noted, and in the Cana account.

Regarding the Prologue, C.H. Dodd provides a helpful tabular comparison with the Wisdom literature, demonstrating a remarkable series of parallels. His findings have been translated from Greek into English and adapted as presented in **Table 4**. He concludes that the Evangelist’s thinking was aligned with that of the Wisdom school. While the *Logos* has traits characteristic of the Word of God in the Old Testament, it is at the same time a concept similar to that of Wisdom.⁹² The “bridge” from the creation accounts in Genesis to the Prologue, by way of the Wisdom literature, of which Ratzinger/Benedict XVI has spoken, is evident in the compilation by Dodd.

⁹¹ Roland E. Murphy, O. Carm. “Wisdom and Creation,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 104, no. 1 (1985), 5-6, and 9-11.

⁹² C.H. Dodd, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel* (Cambridge University Press, 1970), 275.

Table 4. Similarities between propositions of the Prologue of the Gospel of John and passages in the Wisdom literature.

Prologue	Wisdom Literature
In the beginning was the Word	The LORD created me at the beginning of his work, the first of his acts of old. (Prov 8:22)
the Word was with God	then I was beside him (Prov 8:30)
all things were made through him	The LORD by wisdom founded the earth (Prov 3:19)
In him was life	For he who finds me finds life (Prov 8:35)
the life was the light of men	For she is a reflection of eternal light (Wis 7:26)
The light shines in the darkness	For she is more beautiful than the sun, and excels every constellation of the stars. Compared with the light she is found to be superior, for it is succeeded by the night, but against wisdom evil does not prevail. (Wis 7:29-30)
He was in the world	She reaches mightily from one end of the earth to the other (Wis 8:1)
the world knew him not	Because they hated knowledge (Prov 1:29)
But to all who received him, he gave power to become children of God	in every generation she passes into holy souls and makes them friends of God, and prophets (Wis 7:27)
dwelt among us	the one who created me assigned a place for my tent. And he said, ‘Make your dwelling in Jacob, and in Israel receive your inheritance.’ (Sir 24:8)
glory as of the only-begotten Son from the Father	For she is a breath of the power of God, and a pure emanation of the glory of the Almighty (Wis 7:25)

Source Note: C.H. Dodd, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel* (Cambridge University Press, 1970), 274-275. Translated from Greek and adapted.

Regarding the Cana account, Richard A. Dillon finds the transformation of water into wine is a sign that, unlike the water used for ritual purification according to Torah wisdom, Jesus is the true Wisdom. The belief which arises in his disciples echoes the allegiance expected of the personified Wisdom of the Old Testament. Further, the action of Jesus can be interpreted as preparing the Wine for his eschatological feast, the Wisdom which gives life, exceeding what the old law could offer.⁹³

In Summary: A Synthesis

An effort was undertaken in this chapter, following the thought of Ratzinger/Benedict XVI, to gain an understanding of creation that could be brought by faith to a cooperative engagement with evolution science. Covenantal promise and fulfillment, and the Wisdom literature, were examined as pathways beyond Genesis to the “conclusive and normative” creation account in the Gospel of John.

What has been found is the Scriptural adaptation of images, the unfolding way of thinking, of which Ratzinger/Benedict XVI has spoken. The Creator God of the Seven Days, the Creator God of the Garden, is also the God in ongoing relationship with man and the rest of creation through covenant, the God from whom came Wisdom, who delights in relationship with humanity, the God who is the Word.

The understanding of creation to be brought to a cooperative engagement with evolution science is not dependent upon locating the primeval Garden, or upon tracing the genealogy of Adam and Eve. The understanding needed is gained not by looking back to Genesis, so much as

⁹³ Richard A. Dillon, “Wisdom Tradition and Sacramental Retrospect in the Cana Account (Jn 2, 1-11),” *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 24, no. 3 (1962), 287-288, 291.

looking forward from Genesis,⁹⁴ along the pathways considered here, to the Word who “became flesh and dwelt among us.” (Jn 1:14) To what purpose, to what end? To the end that we “may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing [we] may have life in his name.” (Jn 20: 31) This end, this new life brought by the incarnate Word, this renewal of creation, means the end and the beginning are found to be one and the same, found to be the Word, in that “all things were made through him.” (Jn 1: 3)

Thus, faith brings an understanding of creation to a cooperative engagement with evolution science which recognizes a beginning, before which only God existed, an ongoing relationship between God and creation, and an end which is life in God. It remains to consider how reason may be exercised to counter evolutionism, which denies the existence of God, and thus this understanding of creation.

⁹⁴ Ratzinger, *In the Beginning*, 16-17, has more on reading Biblical text forward rather than backward, which is said to have been the norm until the modern era. Christ gives the truth of the Biblical images.

Chapter 4

Countering Evolutionism with Reason

The *CCC* teaches that neither the world nor man contain within themselves their first principle or final end. Rather, man and the world participate in Being itself, which is without origin or end. Citing the *Summa Theologiae*, I, q. 2, a. 3 of Saint Thomas Aquinas, it is asserted man can come to know that this reality, called ‘God’, which is the first cause and final end of all things, exists.⁹⁵ Thus, the search for a philosophical counter to the atheism of evolutionism will look to Aquinas.

Aquinas and Proof for the Existence of God

Saint Thomas Aquinas, 13th century Scholastic theologian and philosopher, presents his proof for the existence of God in what has come to be known as the Five Ways.⁹⁶ Although widely characterized as “proofs” of God’s existence, the Five Ways are more precisely demonstrations, as Aquinas demonstrates metaphysical truths about God by analogy from observable physical reality. In taking up the work of Aquinas for consideration, however, a lack of consensus becomes immediately apparent. These proofs are generally considered cosmological, in that they draw conclusions from observations in the natural world, and *a posteriori*, as they argue causality from effects to their proper cause. Louis Mackey, for one, argues on the contrary the proofs are ontological and *a priori*. Ontological because “they conclude to God as the condition of the possibility, not just the actuality, of world-as-effect,” and *a priori* because the conclusion of each proof “is a simple extrapolation from a few principles of

⁹⁵ CCC, 34.

⁹⁶ Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* (*ST*), I, q. 2, a. 3.

order known *a priori*.⁹⁷ Thus, even a general characterization of the thought of Aquinas is not without dissent.

The Five Ways are elegant in their simplicity. Each way reasons to God's existence in terms of his relation to Creation: as the Unmoved Mover in the first way, the Uncaused Cause in the second, the Necessary Being in the third, the Highest Being in the fourth, and the Governor of the world in the fifth. Anthony Kenny associates the four causes of Aristotle with the Five Ways of Aquinas, as follows:⁹⁸

Efficient Cause	First Way and Second Way
Material Cause	Third Way
Formal Cause	Fourth Way
Final Cause	Fifth Way

Frederick Copleston, S.J., provides helpful perspective, noting Aquinas concedes perfect knowledge of the cause is unobtainable due to the disproportionality between finite effects and an infinite God, but nonetheless the existence of the cause can come to be known. Aquinas' purpose was to prove the preambles of faith in a summary manner. The first way deals with motion, found in Aristotle, as a reduction of potency to act. The second way is suggested by Aristotle's 2nd book of *Metaphysics*, and hinges on the inability of anything to be the efficient cause of itself, as it would thereby have to exist before itself. The third way concludes there must be a Necessary Being as the reason for the existence of contingent beings. For all three of these proofs, Aquinas rejects an infinite series in the ontological order of dependence, but he is not saying a "horizontal" infinite regress is impossible, such as parents begetting children. The

⁹⁷ Louis Mackey, "Entreatments of God: Reflections on Aquinas' Five Ways," *Franciscan Studies* 37 (1977), 103.

⁹⁸ Anthony Kenny, *The Five Ways: St Thomas Aquinas' Proofs of God's Existence*, Studies in Ethics and the Philosophy of Religion, Vol. V, gen. ed. D.Z. Phillips (New York: Routledge, 2009), E-Pub, 38-39.

fourth way considers degrees of perfection as implying the existence of a best by applying principles from the first three proofs to perfections of Platonic descent, but with the difficulty of showing there really are objective degrees of being and perfection. The fifth way is a teleological proof, with inorganic objects operating for an end indicating intention and a Designer or Governor.⁹⁹

The second way is cited here in its entirety as an example, chosen from among the five because it will later serve an additional purpose:

The second way is from the nature of the efficient cause. In the world of sense we find there is an order of efficient causes. There is no case known (neither is it, indeed, possible) in which a thing is found to be the efficient cause of itself; for so it would be prior to itself, which is impossible. Now in efficient causes following in order, the first is the cause of the intermediate cause, and the intermediate is the cause of the ultimate cause, whether the intermediate cause be several, or only one. Now to take away the cause is to take away the effect. Therefore, if there be no first cause among efficient causes, there will be no ultimate, nor any intermediate cause. But if in efficient causes it is possible to go on to infinity, there will be no first efficient cause, neither will there be an ultimate effect, nor any intermediate efficient causes; all of which is plainly false. Therefore it is necessary to admit a first efficient cause, to which everyone gives the name of God.¹⁰⁰

The principle of efficient causality, central to the second way, is that every contingent being has an efficient cause which is distinct from itself. A necessary being, however, needs no outside efficient cause. Since contingent beings receive their being from another, they are brought into existence from an efficient cause. But nothing is the efficient cause of itself, for as previously noted, that would mean it existed before itself. Aquinas rejects an infinite regress, thus concluding the existence of an ultimate first cause.

⁹⁹ Frederick Copleston, S.J., *A History of Philosophy*, Book One: Vols. I, II, and III (Garden City: Image Books, 1985), Vol. II, 338, 340-346.

¹⁰⁰ Aquinas, *ST*, I, q. 2, a. 3.

Kenny critiques each of the Five Ways, finding deficiencies in them all. His treatment of the second way will be outlined here.¹⁰¹ The second way encompasses, beyond the first way, the case of something being brought into existence. Such generation of one individual of a species by another would seem to be an irrefutable example of a one-way causal relationship, which Kenny calls irreflexive. But when Aquinas speaks of an order of efficient causes here, he does not intend generation by father, grandfather, great-grandfather, etc. For Aquinas, such a series of efficient causes *per accidens* can be infinite. What he rules out, rather, is an infinite regress in a series of efficient causes *per se*. Aquinas follows Aristotle in holding that man is begotten not only by man but also by the sun. The relevant series in the second way thus does not go back in time, but into the heavens simultaneously, thereby coming to an end with God. It uses an equivocation of “first” equated to both “earlier” and “unpreceded” to argue against an infinite regress, and rests upon an archaic fiction of the role of the sun. Kenny finds, apart from medieval astronomy, there is no reason to believe a man, in begetting, is part of a series of simultaneously active efficient causes. Such a man may in a sense be an uncaused cause, but not the one Aquinas is attempting to prove.

Mackey, aware of Kenny’s critical review in citing his work, goes beyond the specifics of the Five Ways to a broader consideration of faith and reason.¹⁰² While Augustine held that understanding is made possible by faith, Aquinas pursued proof of the existence of God as a preamble to faith. Mackey finds that Aquinas’ proofs operate in the space provided by the self-withholding of the infinite, which would otherwise crowd out the possibility of the finite. To the degree the proofs depend on signs signifying God, they are founded on faith. God withholds his power, allowing himself, in the resulting absence, to be proven in the world of signs. It is faith

¹⁰¹ Kenny, 43-46.

¹⁰² Mackey, 106 and 114-118.

which enables such signs to signify what is absent. Speaking of Aquinas' use of Aristotelean philosophy and Christian theology, the "Thomistic synthesis," Mackey finds its "irenic distinction between 'faith' and 'reason' is the line of cleavage along which the earthquake of the Renaissance opened up the abyss of modernity."¹⁰³

It is not the purpose here to chronicle the history of philosophy from Aquinas to the "abyss," but rather to make use of the recovery of Aquinas in a renewed application of reason in the service of faith.

Kenny finds the Five Ways fail primarily because they are difficult to separate from their medieval cosmology. Elsewhere in his review, he speaks of "recent" cosmologists who are either steady-state theorists or proponents of the big bang theory, thus touching upon, but not further exploring, the state of cosmological science.¹⁰⁴

Not all would agree Aquinas's Aristotelian metaphysics is vitiated by its relationship to medieval cosmology.¹⁰⁵ Edward Feser, for one, acknowledges that Aquinas and other medieval Aristotelians expressed their arguments in terms of now-archaic scientific notions, but he asserts the essence of their argumentation does not depend on the outdated scientific context. The philosophy is logically independent and can be considered separately. He goes further to claim not only is Aristotelian metaphysics not refuted by modern science, but on the contrary, science itself rests on deeper metaphysical foundations, and it is upon those foundations that the

¹⁰³ Ibid., 116.

¹⁰⁴ Kenny, 13 and 61.

¹⁰⁵ For a thorough description of medieval cosmology, see Edward Grant, "A New Look at Medieval Cosmology, 1200-1687," *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 129, no. 4 (1985): 417-432.

arguments for the existence of God also rest.¹⁰⁶ The Aristotelian philosophy of nature is a presupposition for the very intelligibility of science.¹⁰⁷

Moving on from medieval cosmology, Kenny identifies the key, in his view, to the rational proof sought by Aquinas. “If one could establish without appeal to revelation that the material world had not always existed, then the principle that no substance can begin to exist without a cause would provide a swift proof of a Creator.”¹⁰⁸ Published in electronic format in 2009, and so cited in this thesis, Kenny’s monograph actually dates to his course at Oxford in 1967-68. As will be addressed in the next section of this chapter, developments in more recent decades have changed the theoretical landscape, opening the way for the very proof of which he speaks.

Proof for the Existence of God: A Contemporary Illustration

The view of causation in the 17th and 18th centuries was one of bodies and forces, grounded in Newtonian mechanics, rather than the four causes of Aristotle, which relate to the Five Ways of Aquinas. However, perspective in the physical sciences, and in philosophy, has changed as a result of discoveries which have supplanted the Newtonian framework. The five-step metaphysical proof to be presented here reconsiders the uncaused Cause argument, the second way of Aquinas, in light of the contemporary understanding of physical reality.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁶ Edward Feser, *Five Proofs of the Existence of God* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 2017), 12-13, 56 n 29, 57-58.

¹⁰⁷ Edward Feser, “Existential Inertia and the Five Ways,” *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 85, no. 2 (2011): 266.

¹⁰⁸ Kenny, 62.

¹⁰⁹ Robert J. Spitzer, S.J., *New Proofs for the Existence of God: Contributions of Contemporary Physics and Philosophy* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2010), 7.

Fr. Robert Spitzer describes the discoveries in physics, mathematics, and philosophy in recent decades which support recovery of a metaphysical proof for the existence of God. These include:¹¹⁰

- Refined mathematical argumentation for the finite nature of past time, implying a timeless Creator.
- Quantum Theory providing new perspective on physical reality.
- The General Theory of Relativity leading to a new vision of the universe as a finite whole, rather than the Newtonian universe of mass points and empty space.
- Big bang cosmology demonstrating the probability that the observable universe is finite, and universal inflationary theory showing the strong probability of a starting point, termed an “initial singularity,” 13.7 billion years ago. Together these imply a causative power transcending space and time, respectively.
- Analysis of universal constants leading to the Penrose number as an estimate of the unimaginably minute odds [one in 10^{123}] of an anthropic universe emerging from the Big Bang. A non-anthropic universe would be prohibitive for any life form, chaotically unstable, prohibiting any process of evolution.

Philosophical proofs resting on causation have a history, since the time of Immanuel Kant, of being challenged on the grounds that “cause” is not precisely understood. Such challenges, to the extent they were rooted in the dynamics of Newtonian physics, have been undercut by the above-noted discoveries. Nonetheless, this contemporary proof avoids the freighted history of causality by considering only dependence on conditions, without concern as

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 2-3, 49, 52, 54, and 59.

to the kinds of conditions, employing ontological use of terms associated with conditioned reality. “Conditioned reality” is any reality dependent on another reality for its existence; “conditions” are any reality upon which a conditioned reality depends for its existence; and “unconditioned reality” is a reality that does not depend on any other reality of any kind for its existence. Complete disjunctions are utilized to logically frame all possibilities.¹¹¹

Regarding simplicity, to be taken up in Step 2, the contrast with the scientific world view will be apparent. In a scientific framework, complexity increases with higher ontological levels – a marine mammal as compared to ocean plankton, for example. Within the philosophical thought of Aquinas, however, greater simplicity is associated with higher ontological status, and absolute simplicity with the highest level of being. This will become more evident in the working of the proof.¹¹²

The basis for the lack of restriction, to be taken up in Step 3, is founded on two major metaphysical principles discovered by Aquinas: (1) distinction between existence and essence; and (2) existence precedes essence. As will be presented here, “existence” is interpreted as “existence through itself,” “essence” as “any restricted way of existing,” and “precedes” as “must exist prior to.”¹¹³

Step One – At Least One Unconditioned Reality¹¹⁴

Reality is everything in the universe. In the set of all reality, there is either no unconditioned reality, or there is at least one unconditioned reality. There are no other

¹¹¹ Ibid., 222-223, 7, and 111-112.

¹¹² Robert J. Spitzer, S.J., “A Contemporary Thomistic Metaphysical Proof of God (with a response to Richard Dawkins’ *The God Delusion*),” *Magis Institute* (blog) (November, 2015), 12.

¹¹³ Ibid., 3-4.

¹¹⁴ This five-step proof presentation and associated figures are adapted from Spitzer, *New Proofs for the Existence of God*, 110-143.

possibilities. As shown on the left side of **Figure 3A**, “there are only conditioned realities” is an equivalent way of stating “there are no unconditioned realities.” Focusing further on the left side, we have the case that all reality is made up of only conditioned realities (**Figure 3B**). In this case, a conditioned reality would have to depend on either a finite number of conditions or an infinite number of conditions for its existence.

If any conditioned reality depends on a finite number of conditions, then there would have to be a last, or final, condition on which it depends. If there is a last condition, it would itself have to be a conditioned reality, given this is under the assumption that “all reality” is made up of only conditioned realities. But, if the last condition is a conditioned reality, and there are no other conditions, then it would be a conditioned reality whose conditions cannot be fulfilled. In other words, it can’t exist. If it doesn’t exist, then all the conditioned realities dependent upon it couldn’t exist. Further, none of the reality evident in the universe would exist. This line of thinking is an obvious dead end. Conditioned realities cannot depend on a finite number of conditions (**Figure 3C**).

If any conditioned reality depends on an infinite number of conditions, then there would be no last or final condition on which it depends. A conditioned reality would depend on an unending number of conditions. But, if a conditioned reality is dependent on an unending number of conditions, then its conditions can never be fulfilled. There will always be more conditions than can ever be met. A conditioned reality would never be able to exist if it depended on an unfulfillable number of conditions. This line of thinking is also a dead end. Once again, none of the reality apparent in the universe would exist (**Figure 3D**). A circle of only conditioned realities is an illusion, not a solution.

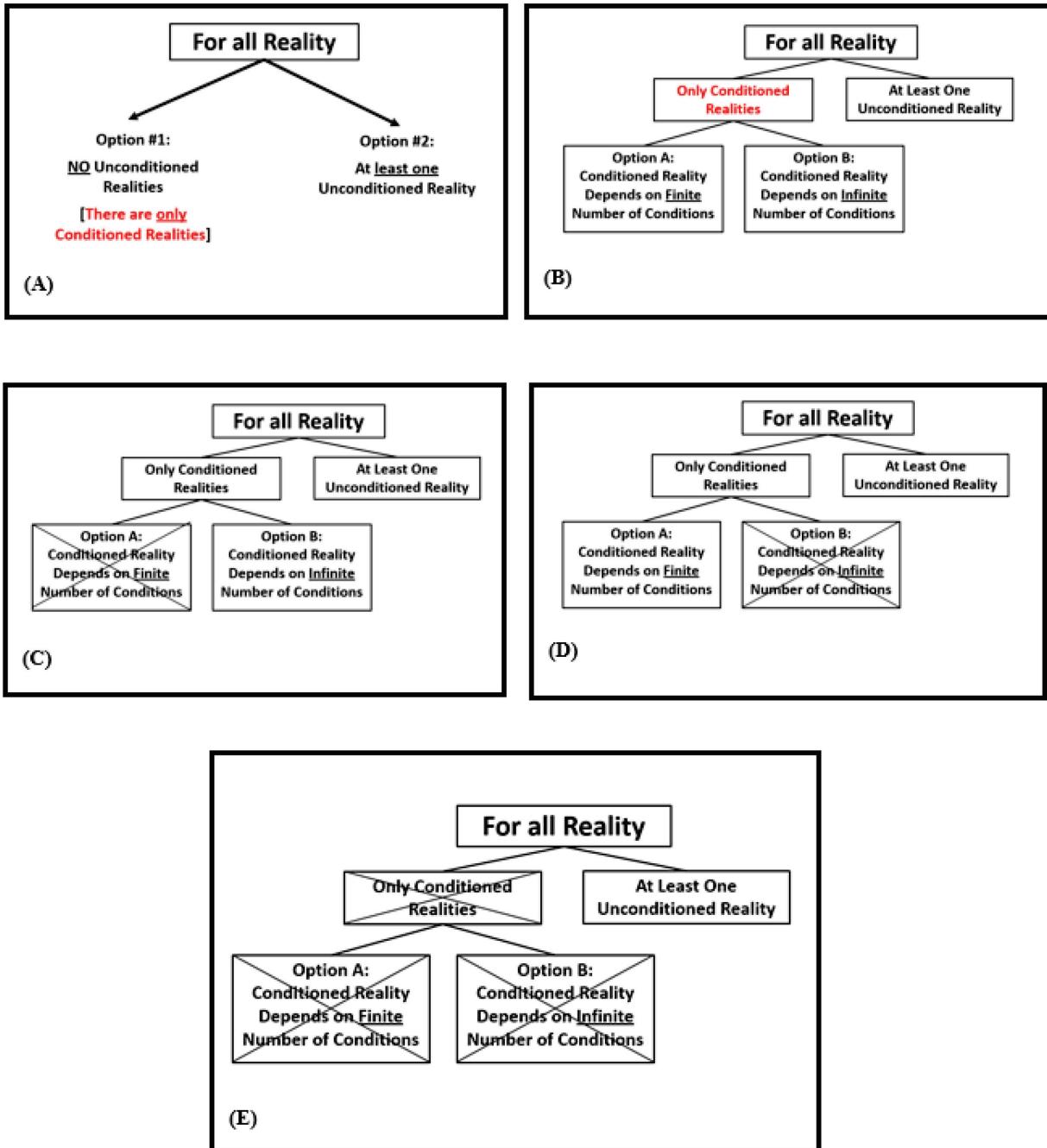


Figure 3. The first step (A through E) of the metaphysical proof for the existence of God, that there exists at least one unconditioned reality in all of reality.

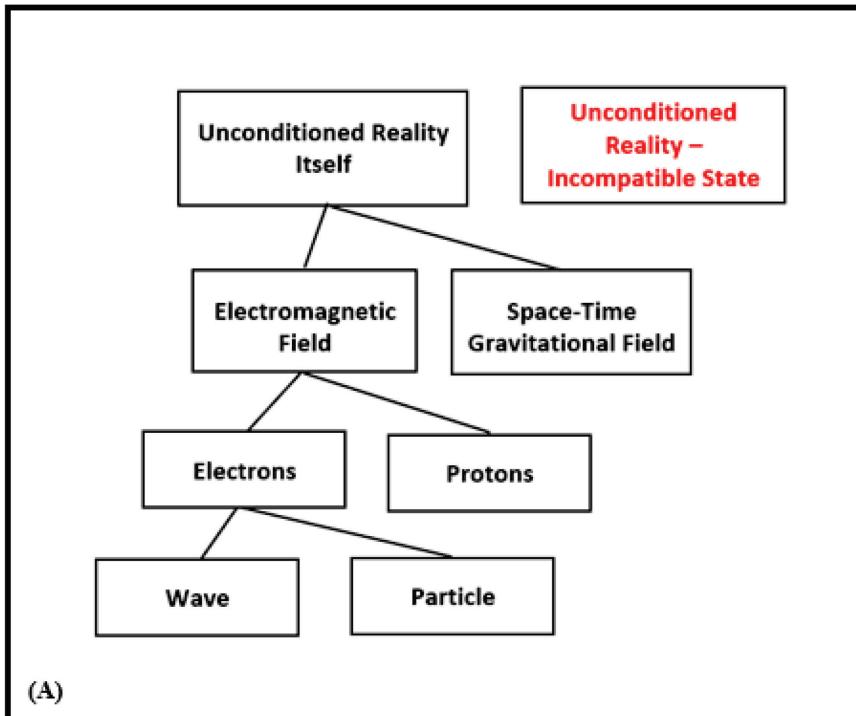
The assumption that all reality is made up of only conditioned realities has been demonstrated to be false. Therefore, the only other option must be true. There must be at least one unconditioned reality in all of reality (**Figure 3E**). There can't be an infinite number of conditions. The last condition must always be an unconditioned reality.

Step Two – Absolutely Simple

Simplicity as applied to unconditioned reality means being completely inclusive of all other realities. Inclusive with unconditioned reality means fulfilling the conditions for the existence of all conditioned realities – the whole universe.

The diagram in **Figure 4A** presents a “tree of being” as a way to organize things according to their level of simplicity. This example of a tree of being uses scientific concepts. Waves and particles are found on the bottom of the tree in this example. They are unified in the next step up, by electrons. Proceeding on up, electrons and protons are unified by electromagnetic fields, which are more simple. The higher up the tree of being, the more inclusive the reality has to be, and thereby the more simple it is. If something were absolutely simple, it would not exclude anything from itself. Ignore for this step in the proof the “unconditioned reality – incompatible state” labelled in red.

From the first step of the proof, it was found that conditioned realities depend on the existence of at least one unconditioned reality. Therefore, an unconditioned reality must not exclude any conditioned reality from itself. To be completely compatible, an unconditioned reality must be at the very top of the tree of being, and it must be compatible with everything under it. Another way of expressing this is that an unconditioned reality must be absolutely simple.



If there is restriction, then there is exclusion.

But, there can be no exclusion from unconditioned reality (otherwise there would be a contradiction).

Therefore, there is no restriction in unconditioned reality.

Conclusion: Unconditioned Reality must be Unrestricted

Key Points:

1. Every restriction excludes from itself (on the same level of simplicity, at the same place and time).
2. **Everything** which can exist must be compatible with Unconditioned Reality, which is pure existence through itself (another way of saying not dependent on conditions).

(B)

Figure 4. The second and third steps of the metaphysical proof for the existence of God, that unconditioned reality is absolutely simple (A) and unrestricted (B).

Step Three – Unrestricted

In finding that unconditioned reality is absolutely simple in the second step of the proof, it was noted this meant being inclusive, not excluding any conditioned realities. This third step of the proof will address why unconditioned reality must be without any restrictions.

Restrictions exclude. But unconditioned reality can't exclude. To do so would be a contradiction. The logic of unconditioned reality being unrestricted is outlined in **Figure 4B**. Key points are that: (1) every restriction excludes from itself (on the same level of simplicity, at the same place and time); and (2) everything which can exist must be compatible with unconditioned reality, which is pure existence through itself (another way of saying not dependent on conditions).

Step Four – Absolutely Unique

Why must unrestricted, unconditioned reality be unique? Why can there be one and only one unconditioned reality? If there is going to be two or more of anything, a multiplicity, there must be a difference between the one and the other. If there is a difference between two or more realities, then there must be some restriction in at least one of them to allow for the difference. The logic for this fourth step in the proof is outlined in **Figure 5A**. If there is multiplicity, then there is difference. If there is difference, then there is restriction. But there can be no restriction in unconditioned reality. Therefore, there can be no difference among unconditioned realities. Therefore, there can be no multiplicity of unconditioned realities. An unconditioned reality must be absolutely unique.

Looking back at **Figure 4A**, the tree of being shows a second unconditioned reality at the top, which is an incompatible state with unconditioned reality itself. If there were two or more unconditioned realities at the top of the tree of being, there would have to be a difference

If there is multiplicity, then there is difference.
If there is difference, then there is restriction.

But, there can be no restriction in unconditioned reality.

Therefore, there can be no difference among unconditioned realities.

Therefore, there can be no multiplicity of unconditioned realities.

Conclusion: The Unrestricted, Unconditioned Reality must be Absolutely Unique



If there is a difference between Unrestricted, Unconditioned Realities (UR-1 and UR-2):

One of them must have something, be something, or be somewhere the other one is **NOT**.

But, the one that is **NOT** something or somewhere would then be **RESTRICTED**.

(A)

The One Unconditioned Reality is the Creator of Everything Else that Exists

If an unconditioned reality must be the ultimate fulfillment of the conditions of every conditioned reality, and if everything is a conditioned reality except the one unconditioned reality, then the one unconditioned reality must be the ultimate fulfillment of the conditions of everything in all reality except itself (**a Creator**).

The One Unconditioned Reality is the *Continuous* Creator of Everything Else that Exists

If every conditioned reality can cease to exist at any moment that its conditions are not fulfilled, then the one unconditioned reality must fulfill every conditioned reality's conditions at every moment that it exists – it must be the continuous Creator of all else that is.

An Analogy:

The one unconditioned reality must continually “think” us into being. If it ceased to think about us for a single moment, we would cease to exist.

(B)

Figure 5. The fourth and fifth steps of the metaphysical proof for the existence of God, that unconditioned reality is absolutely unique (A) and the continuous Creator of all else that is (B).

between them, otherwise they would be the same reality. In order for this difference to exist, one of the unconditioned realities would have to be somewhere, be something, or have something that the other one did not. The unconditioned reality which is not something or somewhere that the other one is would have to be restricted. As was demonstrated in the third step, an unconditioned reality must be unrestricted. It can't exclude anything from itself. Two or more unconditioned realities is an intrinsic contradiction. One of them would have to be restricted, to be different, or there wouldn't be two. Therefore, the second unconditioned reality would not be truly unconditioned, as it would not be compatible with every possible reality.

Step Five – Continuous Creator of All Else That Is

The reasoning for this fifth and final step in the proof is outlined in **Figure 5B**. In the first step of the proof, it was demonstrated that an unconditioned reality must be the ultimate fulfillment of the conditions of every conditioned reality. By finding in the fourth step that there is one and only one unconditioned reality, it is thereby known everything else must be a conditioned reality. From these outcomes it can be concluded the one unconditioned Reality is the ultimate fulfillment of conditions of everything else in reality – in other words, it is the Creator of all else that is. “Creator” is to be understood in the context of the ontological use of terminology associated with conditioned reality being employed in this five-step proof. In this framework, “Creator” means the source which ultimately fulfills the conditions for a conditioned reality. This source is unconditioned Reality itself.

From the earlier definition of terms, it is known that every conditioned reality's existence depends on its conditions being fulfilled. A conditioned reality would cease to exist – become nothing – without the fulfillment of its conditions at every moment of its existence (**Figure 5B**). The only reason a conditioned reality doesn't become nothing is because the one unconditioned

Reality continues to fulfill its conditions. Thus, it can be said the one unconditioned Reality not only initially creates, but continually holds conditioned reality in existence. In other words, unconditioned Reality is the continuous Creator of all else that is. By way of analogy, the one unconditioned Reality must continually “think” reality into being, for if it ceased to think about reality for a moment, all would cease to exist.

Outcome of the Five-Step Proof

Bringing together the outcomes of the five steps in this contemporary metaphysical proof leads to the conclusion that the unique, absolutely simple, unrestricted, unconditioned Reality itself which is the continuous Creator of all else that is, must exist. Such a Reality is understood to be “God.”

In Summary: A Synthesis

An effort was undertaken in this chapter, following the thought of Ratzinger/Benedict XVI, to search for a philosophical counter to the atheism of evolutionism. Guided by the CCC, which references Aquinas and causality in speaking of the existence of God, the Five Ways of Aquinas were considered. Their relationship to the four causes of Aristotle was described. While elegant in their simplicity, these metaphysical proofs for the existence of God are not without criticism. Critique of the uncaused Cause argument, Aquinas’ second way, was examined in detail as a case study. Of central concern have been issues surrounding causality and association with medieval cosmology.

Discoveries in physics, mathematics, and philosophy in recent decades support recovery of a metaphysical proof for the existence of God. These discoveries indicate the observable universe and past time are finite, with a starting point 13.7 billion years ago, implying a timeless

Creator. This understanding is accompanied by a new vision of the universe as a finite whole, rather than Newton's realm of mass points and empty space, with unimaginably minute odds of emerging from the Big Bang capable of supporting life. A non-anthropic universe would be prohibitive for any life form, chaotically unstable, prohibiting any process of evolution.

A five-step metaphysical proof was presented which reconsiders the second way of Aquinas, in light of the contemporary understanding of physical reality. This proof avoids the conflicted history of causality by considering only dependence on conditions and ontological use of terms associated with conditioned reality, concluding that the unique, absolutely simple, unrestricted, unconditioned Reality itself which is the continuous Creator of all else that is, must exist. Such a Reality is understood to be "God."

In this way, reason has countered the philosophy of evolutionism, which denies the existence of God, and thereby the understanding of creation realized in the preceding chapter.

It remains to integrate the two lines of inquiry pursued in this thesis, namely (1) the understanding of creation faith brings to a cooperative engagement with evolution science, and (2) countering evolutionism with reason, back to the thought of Ratzinger/Benedict XVI.

Conclusion

Creation and Evolution

Recognizing the biological mechanisms of evolution as a presupposition, this thesis set out to address the question of whether the thought of Ratzinger/Benedict XVI provides a both/and approach toward a Catholic understanding of evolution, and if it does, to explore how such an approach might be employed.

The question of a both/and approach was answered in the affirmative. According to Ratzinger/Benedict XVI, “[w]e cannot say: creation *or* evolution, inasmuch as these two things respond to two different realities...we are faced here with two complimentary – rather than mutually exclusive – realities.”¹¹⁵ Further, a two-track strategy was found to follow from his thought: faith brings an understanding of creation to cooperative engagement with evolution science, while reason mounts a philosophical counter to evolutionism. The latter is a philosophical view which came to be associated with the scientific dimension of evolution. Such a philosophy denies God in the origin and governance of the world, seeing rather in unmade matter the source of all that exists.

Both tracks following from the thought of Ratzinger/Benedict XVI were explored. First, covenantal promise and fulfillment, and the Wisdom literature, were examined as pathways beyond Genesis to the “conclusive and normative” creation account in the Gospel of John. The Creator God of the Seven Days, the Creator God of the Garden, is also the God in ongoing relationship with man and the rest of creation through covenant, the God from whom came Wisdom, who delights in relationship with humanity, the God who is the Word. This understanding of creation, to be brought to a cooperative engagement with evolution science,

¹¹⁵ Ratzinger, *In the Beginning*, 50.

looks forward from Genesis to the Word who “became flesh and dwelt among us” (Jn 1:14) so that “believing [we] may have life in his name.” (Jn 20:31) Thus, the end and the beginning are one and the same, in that “all things were made through him.” (Jn 1:3)

Second, guided by the *CCC*, the Five Ways of Aquinas were considered as an exercise of reason for the existence of God, counter to evolutionism. Although these metaphysical proofs have suffered criticism due to issues surrounding causality and their association with medieval cosmology, it was found that discoveries in physics, mathematics, and philosophy in recent decades support recovery of a metaphysical proof for the existence of God. A five-step metaphysical proof, which reconsiders the second way of Aquinas in light of the contemporary understanding of physical reality, concludes that the unique, absolutely simple, unrestricted, unconditioned Reality itself which is the continuous Creator of all else that is, must exist, and that such a Reality is understood to be “God.” In this way, reason mounts a counter to the philosophy of evolutionism, which denies the existence of God, and thereby the understanding of creation realized in the other track.

As was noted earlier, Darwin held that man, even though he may exhibit noble qualities and god-like intellect, nonetheless bears the mark of his lowly origin. Darwin looks downward from humankind, finding material building blocks subject to evolutionary processes. While the science may be sound, the associated philosophy is not. Ratzinger/Benedict XVI would have us acknowledge evolutionary mechanisms operating on matter as discovered by science, but then look upward, in that “each human being, however wretched or exalted he or she may be, however sick or suffering, however good-for-nothing or important, whether born or unborn, whether incurably ill or radiant with health – each one bears God’s breath in himself or herself,

each one is God's image.”¹¹⁶ For Ratzinger/Benedict XVI, contra Darwin, even the most wretched person bears the mark of his or her divine origin.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 45.

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