

The Biblical Structure of History: Chapter 1, Creation

Gary North - October 27, 2021

For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: And he is before all things, and by him all things consist (Colossians 1:16–17).

A. Covenant Model, Point 1

Point 1 of the biblical covenant model is God's transcendence. God is separate from the creation. There is a fundamental Creator-creature distinction. This is also taught in Genesis 1. God spoke the universe into existence. It was not an extension of His being.

The biblical doctrine of transcendence is accompanied by the biblical doctrine of God's presence. He is present with the creation, but He is not part of it. This is taught in Genesis 2. He spoke face to face with Adam. It is taught in Genesis 3. He spoke face to face with Adam, Eve, and the serpent.

Point 1 of biblical social theory is sovereignty. God is absolutely sovereign by reason of His creation of the world and His providential sustaining of it.

Point 1 of biblical history is God's creation of the universe out of nothing by the power of His word. He spoke the world into existence. He sustains it by His providence.

B. Analysis

Colossians 1:16–17 relates Christ's creation of the cosmos to the concept of the sovereignty of God. First, the passage identifies Christ as the source of creation. So does John: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made" (John 1:1–3). So does the Epistle to the Hebrews.

But unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom. Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity; therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows. And, Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the works of thine hands: They shall perish; but thou remainest; and they all shall wax old as doth a garment; And as a vesture shalt thou fold them up, and they shall be changed: but thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail (Hebrews 1:8–12).

Second, the passage asserts that Christ sustains the cosmos: "by him all things consist" (v. 17). Hebrews 1 asserts a similar claim: "And as a vesture shalt thou fold them up" (v. 12). The New Testament's doctrine of creation is not limited to a one-time event: the creation week (Genesis 1). It extends through history. That is to say, *the doctrine of God's creation of the universe out of nothing is accompanied by the doctrine of God's providence*. They are inextricably intertwined.

The Old Testament makes the same connection. In Job 38–41, God announces His sovereignty by a series of rhetorical questions about the creation. Here is one: "Then the Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind, and said, Who is this that darkeneth counsel by words without knowledge? Gird up now thy loins like a man; for I will demand of thee, and answer thou me. Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? declare, if thou hast understanding. Who hath laid the measures thereof, if

thou knowest? or who hath stretched the line upon it? Whereupon are the foundations thereof fastened? or who laid the corner stone thereof” (Job 38:1–6).

Conclusion: *God is sovereign*. No one lawfully calls His judgment into question. “Then answered the Lord unto Job out of the whirlwind, and said, Gird up thy loins now like a man: I will demand of thee, and declare thou unto me. Wilt thou also disannul my judgment? wilt thou condemn me, that thou mayest be righteous?” (Job 40:6–8). Job had already announced this to his critics. “But ask now the beasts, and they shall teach thee; and the fowls of the air, and they shall tell thee: Or speak to the earth, and it shall teach thee: and the fishes of the sea shall declare unto thee. Who knoweth not in all these that the hand of the Lord hath wrought this? In whose hand is the soul of every living thing, and the breath of all mankind” (Job 12:7–10).

Isaiah 45 is a detailed assertion of God’s sovereignty, which rests on His creation.

I am the Lord, and there is none else, there is no God beside me: I girded thee, though thou hast not known me: That they may know from the rising of the sun, and from the west, that there is none beside me. I am the Lord, and there is none else. I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil: I the Lord do all these things. Drop down, ye heavens, from above, and let the skies pour down righteousness: let the earth open, and let them bring forth salvation, and let righteousness spring up together; I the Lord have created it. Woe unto him that striveth with his Maker! Let the potsherd strive with the potsherds of the earth. Shall the clay say to him that fashioneth it, What makest thou? or thy work, He hath no hands? Woe unto him that saith unto his father, What begetteth thou? or to the woman, What hast thou brought forth? Thus saith the Lord, the Holy One of Israel, and his Maker, Ask me of things to come concerning my sons, and concerning the work of my hands command ye me. I have made the earth, and created man upon it: I, even my hands, have stretched out the heavens, and all their host have I commanded (Isaiah 45:5–12).

This passage also declares God’s purpose in creating the cosmos: “For thus saith the Lord that created the heavens; God himself that formed the earth and made it; he hath established it, he created it not in vain, he formed it to be inhabited: I am the Lord; and there is none else” (Isaiah 45:18).

C. Genesis 1

The text of Genesis 1 is important for understanding the fundamentals of the structure of history. Genesis 1:1 informs us that God created the universe. “In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth” (v. 1). The remainder of Genesis 1 provides the starting point for an understanding of the structure of history. Any Christian who wants to understand the structure of history should begin with a consideration of Genesis 1.

Genesis 1 describes a sequence of six days of creation, followed by a seventh day of rest by God. Each day took time. Theologians debate whether the Hebrew word *yom* here means 24 hours, but this debate is recent. It exists because Christians want to compromise with some version of the evolutionary timescale. The word means *day*. We think of a day as a 24-hour day. Down through the ages, this is how Bible-believers understood “day.” Creation took time, but not much time. This is the beginning of a Christian concept of history. *The universe was not the product of one declaration or one act by God.* There was a day-by-day sequence. Each sequence took time.

God had standards for each day. We know this because of this announcement at the end of days three through five: “and God saw that it was good.” Then came day six. “And God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, it was very good. And the evening and the morning were the sixth day” (v. 31). This meant that there was perfect correspondence between His standards at the beginning of the day and the results of the end of the day. He passed judgment on His own work. Another way of saying this is that *He imputed excellence to His work*. Imputation means declaration. Each daily imputation was subjective, because God is personal. It was also objective, because God is sovereign. *This combination of objective truth and subjective truth is the basis for all evaluation in history*. Christians evaluate subjectively, but they do so in terms of a presupposition, namely, that there are objective standards of truth. This presupposition is confirmed in the first chapter of Genesis.

God spoke. This was not a monologue, according to Christian doctrine. There were three Persons involved in the evaluation of the work of the Second Person of the Trinity. There was agreement among them. This reveals to us that individual agreement can be consistent with collective agreement. The doctrine of the Trinity is the solution to the perennial philosophical problem of the seeming disparity between the one and the many. The problem is reconciled in the Trinitarian God.

God spoke in a language. This language was designed by God for communication. There was communication within the Godhead. It was based on language. On day six, when God created man, He spoke to man. Man understood. *There was coherence between the mind of God and the mind of man*. This coherence was revealed by the existence of language. Adam understood God. Eve understood Adam. Adam revealed God’s revelation to Eve. There is continuity from God’s announcement on day six and His reconfirmation in Genesis 2. *There is coherence over time*. Men can communicate truth across time.

The sequence of six days testifies to the existence of memory. God did not forget on day six what had taken place in the previous five days. There was coherence between what had taken place on each day and His memory of what had taken place. That is to say, *there was continuity based on memory*. Memory is a reliable tool of understanding. Indeed, without it, there cannot be understanding. Memory binds the past to the future by way of the present.

Memory makes possible progress in history. If men forgot everything that happened the day before, civilization would collapse. If every innovation that has brought benefits to an individual, a community, or a civilization were forgotten in a month or a year, there could be no progress. Memory is perfect only in the mind of God. God will bring final judgment at the end of time (Matthew 25). His understanding of history is perfect now, and it will be perfect then. He will evaluate the correspondence between His ethical standards and men’s performance. He will then announce the results of his evaluations. His announcement will determine where each person spends eternity. We do not find this doctrine in Genesis 1, but we find it in Matthew 25. The concepts of standards, evaluation, imputation, and declaration that we see in Genesis 1 extend through history. They are the basis of history.

D. Providence

The doctrine of creation implies the doctrine of providence, meaning God’s full-time sustaining of the creation. “By him all things consist” (Colossians 1:17). God watches over and cares for the universe in a personal way. He sees everything. He knows everything: *omniscience*. “Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we

have to do" (Hebrews 4:13). He has total control over the cosmos: *omnipotence*. "He hath made the earth by his power, he hath established the world by his wisdom, and hath stretched out the heavens by his discretion" (Jeremiah 10:12). He is everywhere: *omnipresence*. "If I ascend to heaven, you are there! If I make my bed in Sheol, you are there!" (Psalm 139:8). It is through the power of God that the earth is sustained. God also sustains the universe. It is not autonomous. In short: *no God—no universe*.

The biblical doctrine of providence is in complete opposition to the humanistic concept of chance. Nothing that takes place is random. This includes human actions. "A man's heart deviseth his way: but the Lord directeth his steps" (Proverbs 16:9). "And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?" (Daniel 4:35). All events take place within an overarching system of God's guidance. "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose" (Romans 8:28). This includes seemingly insignificant factors in history. "Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings, and not one of them is forgotten before God? But even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not therefore: ye are of more value than many sparrows" (Luke 12:6–7).

The doctrine of providence sustains the doctrine of historical causation. The biblical doctrine of historical causation is based on divine law. It is based on a specific law-order. (See Chapter 3.) The laws of development are not impersonal. They are not evolutionary. Obviously, they are not mechanical. Machines do not develop. So, this means that the two most prominent metaphors of change, mechanical change and biological change, do not apply to the biblical doctrine of providence. Both are part of the humanistic worldview. They are in conflict with each other, and both are also in conflict with the biblical doctrine of providence.

Paul on Mars Hill in Athens told his listeners about God, the Creator: "And hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation; That they should seek the Lord, if haply [it happen] they might feel after him, and find him, though he be not far from every one of us: For in him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also his offspring" (Acts 17:26–28). Paul affirmed the existence of a cosmic order. There is providence undergirding the creation. All things work together, yet not mechanically. The universe is not a gigantic clock that was wound up in the distant past by a watchmaker God. Then in what way does the structure of creation work as a unit? To achieve this purpose: to guarantee good things for all those who are called according to God's purpose. There is an overarching coherence in the creation. Creation is good for those called according to God's purpose. Creation is structured by God in terms of this. History must be understood in terms of this.

E. Purpose

God the Father had a purpose for His creation, Paul declared. This purpose preceded the creation. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will" (Ephesians 1:3–5). His original purpose is visible in the lives of the redeemed. Paul continued:

But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus. For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them (Ephesians 2:4–10).

The Bible's doctrine of creation includes God's original purpose, His plan for history, and His providential decree. His purpose cannot be thwarted. Paul declared:

Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour? What if God, willing to shew his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction: And that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory (Romans 9:20–23).

This declaration is the theological foundation of Paul's affirmation regarding the beneficiaries of God's sovereign purpose.

And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified. What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? (Romans 8:28–31).

This declaration is the basis of a *theologically mandatory historical optimism of covenant-keepers*. This declaration of God's providential support of covenant-keepers in history is comprehensive: “. . . all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose” (v. 28). God expects Christians to believe this. The trials and tribulations of life have a purpose. That is to say, they are neither random nor aspects of God's condemnation of His elect. They are part of a process of *personal progressive sanctification*. Paul testified to this in his own life. “Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; In journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness” (2 Corinthians 11:25–27). Peter also described this process. “And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 1:5–8).

Thus, the Bible's doctrine of creation is more than an assertion of cosmic origins. It declares the doctrine of God's absolute sovereignty, which includes His providential sustaining of all things through history. It also asserts that God is supremely purposeful. God looks to the future. He brings the future into

existence sequentially, moment by undefinable moment. Past, present, and future find coherence and meaning in God's purposeful decree.

R. J. Rushdoony described some of the implications of this view of time in his book, *The Biblical Philosophy of History* (1967). "The movement of time, according to the Bible, is from eternity, since it is created by God and moves out of and in terms of His eternal decree. Because time moves in terms of the eternal decree, when its function is finished there shall be time no more (Rev. 10:6). Because time is predestined, and because its beginning and end are already established, time does not develop in evolutionary fashion from past to present to future" (p. 11).

F. Cosmic Personalism

The biblical doctrine of creation affirms a specific view of the world: *cosmic personalism*. I have written about this in detail in Chapter 1 of my economic commentary on Genesis, [*Sovereignty and Dominion*](#) (2012). In Section A, "Creation and Personalism," I wrote this:

From beginning to end, the created world bears the mark of God's handiwork. "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handiwork" (Ps. 19:1). God did not create a self-sustaining universe that is now left to operate in terms of autonomous laws of nature. The universe is not a giant mechanism, like a clock, which God created and wound up at the beginning of time. Ours is not a mechanistic world, nor is it an autonomous biological entity, growing according to some genetic code of the cosmos. Ours is a world which is actively sustained by God on a full-time basis (Job 38–41). All creation is inescapably personal and theocentric. "For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead . . ." (Rom. 1:20).

If the universe is inescapably personal, then there can be no phenomenon or event in the creation that is independent from God. No phenomenon can be said to exist apart from God's all-inclusive plan for the ages. There is no uninterpreted "brute factuality." Nothing in the universe is autonomous, an English word derived from two Greek words that are transliterated *autos* (self) and *nomos* (law). Nothing in the creation generates its own conditions of existence, including the law structure under which something operates or is operated upon. Every fact in the universe, from beginning to end, is exhaustively interpreted by God in terms of His being, plan, and power.

In Section C, "Biblical Personalism," I wrote this: "The Bible's doctrine of cosmic purpose is in opposition to all forms of Darwinism. Darwin's theory of evolution through natural selection was self-consciously opposed to all varieties of cosmic purpose prior to the appearance of man. There is purpose in the universe. God is in charge of this purpose, and He directed this purpose toward mankind, who is made in His image (v. 26)."

How is this related to a correct understanding of history? I wrote:

No fact (datum) of the universe is independent of God and His plan. No man can assert his own autonomy and then legitimately claim to know anything exhaustively, for to know anything exhaustively requires that the knower understand everything exhaustively. Any fact (datum) in the universe may conceivably have some influence on any other fact. This is why Christians must assert that *all truth is exhaustively interrelated in God's single system of interpretation*. It is God, and God alone, who possesses this exhaustive system of interpretation.

The quest for exhaustive knowledge is demonic. It tempts man to surpass the limits of his creaturely status. It is the lure of Satan, namely, to become “as God.” This is why we need God’s revelation of Himself in the Bible to achieve accurate, though not exhaustive, knowledge of His creation. *The Bible provides the necessary corrective information, an interpretative context for studying and understanding the creation.* The Bible’s revelation keeps us from “going off the deep end” in endless speculation about the inconceivable—inconceivable for man, that is.

Cornelius Van Til returned to this theme again and again in his voluminous writings. He insisted that we can have true knowledge without having exhaustive knowledge. We can never have exhaustive knowledge. God alone is omniscient. Omniscience is an incommunicable attribute of God. Basic to our existence as creatures is the limitation of our knowledge. We are to strive for greater knowledge and more accurate knowledge, but we must do so with this in mind: *our goal is not exhaustive knowledge.* The more knowledge we gain, the more that we are exposed to our own limitations. Whenever we answer one question, we discover numerous additional questions. This is not a limitation based on history. This is our eternal condition as finite creatures made in the image of God. Finitude imposes an inherent limitation on our knowledge. The study of history is the study of events that happened in the past. We are in a huge sea of historical facts. These facts are not autonomous. They are not impersonal. They are not beyond the understanding of God. On the contrary, this sea of facts is the result of the comprehensive providence of God within a framework of comprehensive purpose. The universe is inherently purposeful. That is because it is the creation of God.

All historical causality is inherently purposeful. Every fact of the universe is a fact only within the framework of God’s omniscience and His comprehensive purpose and plan. *There is no such thing as brute factuality.* There is only interpreted factuality. God’s interpretation is perfect because God’s plan is both perfect and comprehensive. Van Til said this again and again.

G. Trinity

The Creator God is unity in diversity: one God, three Persons. He operates as an individual operates, but He is also corporate and interpersonal. Christianity is the only religion that teaches this doctrine. *This is the defining characteristic of Christianity.* The issue was settled by the first three church councils: Nicea (325), Constantinople (381), and Chalcedon (451).

Van Til placed the Creator/creature distinction at the center of his philosophical defense of the faith. He said that there is a fundamental separation between God and the creation. The cosmos is not an extension of God’s being. God is wholly transcendent. But Van Til insisted that God is present with His creation. He is not distant either geographically or chronologically. This was made manifest in the Incarnation of Jesus Christ, who was both man and God. The Nicene Creed put it this way: “. . . one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all worlds; God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God; begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father.” He is the God of history: “Who, for us men for our salvation, came down from heaven, and was incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the virgin Mary, and was made man; and was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate; He suffered and was buried; and the third day He rose again, according to the Scriptures; and ascended into heaven, and sits on the right hand of the Father; and He shall come again, with glory, to judge the quick and the dead; whose kingdom shall have no end.” These doctrines are involved in the doctrine of Christ: incarnation, death, resurrection, ascension, temporal judgment, and final judgment. *This is the outline of history’s grand narrative.*

Van Til emphasized another aspect of the Trinity. It is the cosmological solution to the recurring philosophical problem of the one and the many, unity and diversity. This problem affects all thought, every institution, and every academic discipline. The humanists have no solution to it. In Western philosophy, this is the dualism between timeless logic and constant change. Without logic, there is no coherence, no pattern in history. Without change, there is no individuality. But in what ways are timeless human logic and time-bound changes reconciled? What is the point of contact? This is the irreconcilable dualism between Parmenides' timeless logic and Heraclitus' constant change. Cosmic impersonalism leads men into blind alleys. Van Til put it this way:

In seeking for an answer to the one-and-many question, philosophers have admittedly experienced great difficulty. The *many* must be brought into contact with one another. But how do we know that they can be brought into contact with one another? How do we know that the many do not simply exist as unrelated particulars? The answer given is that in such a case we should know nothing of them; they would be abstracted from the body of knowledge that we have; they would be *abstract* particulars. On the other hand, how is it possible that we should obtain a unity that does not destroy the particulars? We seem to get our unity by generalizing, by abstracting from the particulars in order to include them into larger unities. If we keep up this process of generalization till we exclude all particulars, granted they can all be excluded, have we then not stripped these particulars of their particularity? Have we then obtained anything but an abstract universal? (*The Defense of the Faith*, 4th ed., p. 48)

To understand this, think about yourself. You are constantly changing. Your cells are constantly being replaced. Yet you are the same person. You get older. You will not be recognized in old age as the youthful person in the photographs. Yet you are the same person. What constitutes "you"? The inner you? But what is the inner you? The Christian answer is this: your creation by God, and His providential sustaining of your life. Isaiah declared this: "And now, saith the LORD that formed me from the womb to be his servant, to bring Jacob again to him, Though Israel be not gathered, yet shall I be glorious in the eyes of the LORD, and my God shall be my strength" (Isaiah 49:5). *God imputes meaning to your life*. He judges you, day by day. "Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations" (Jeremiah 1:5).

There are two aspects of the doctrine of the Trinity: the equality of the Persons (ontological Trinity) and the hierarchical division of labor in relation to the creation (economic Trinity). What about this hierarchy? Jesus said: "And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand. I and my Father are one" (John 10:28–30). Jesus was the Father's spokesman, i.e., His representative, on earth. "No man hath seen God at any time, the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him" (John 1:18). Then there is the Holy Spirit. Jesus said: "But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you" (John 14:26). God the Father sent Him. So did God the Son. "Nevertheless I tell you the truth; it is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you" (John 16:7). So, there is both equality and hierarchy in the Trinity.

As images of Jesus, the perfect man, we can and should represent Him in history. We can and should tell His story. His story is the grand narrative. All individual stories have meaning within this grand narrative. God, who is both one and many, imputes meaning to all of the mini-stories in terms of His plan for the

ages: the transition from wrath to grace. God's imputed coherence establishes the meaning of the facts of history. "Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they?" (Matthew 6:26). Through the guidance of the Holy Spirit, Christians can pursue their economic occupations and their spiritual callings in life. They know that there is a coherence in this world. This coherence is provided by God, who is the sovereign Creator and providential Sustainer of the universe. He is in control. He is omniscient, omnipotent, and omnipresent. He knows what is going on because He controls what is going on. We have access to His revelation in the Bible, which explains historically how He has dealt with covenant-keeping mankind. We have minds because we are made in His image. We have redeemed minds because we have the mind of Christ (1 Corinthians 2:16). We can make sense of the world because it is His world. The Christian historian possesses advantages that the non-Christian historian does not possess. He is responsible before God for putting these advantages to productive use in building the kingdom of God.

Conclusion

The Bible's doctrine of God's creation of the universe out of nothing through the power of His word is unique. No other ancient cosmology proposed such a doctrine. No other contemporary cosmology proposes such a doctrine.

The Christian historian who believes the Bible's interconnected doctrines of God's creation, providence, purpose, and decree has an enormous competitive advantage over all other historians. God does not call him to dedicate himself to understanding historical causation within a realm of seemingly infinite brute historical facts. God also does not call him to comprehend history in terms of some impersonal principle of interpretation. There is no impersonal principle of interpretation, any more than there is brute impersonal factuality. The Christian historian does not have to devote himself to discovering or inventing an impersonal principle of interpretation. He can make sense of the world without such a principle. He cannot make perfect sense of the world, but he can make accurate sense of it.

Without confidence in the omniscient and omnipotent God of the Bible, the historian is adrift in what appears to be a sea of factuality. He sees it as his task to connect the dots. But there are too many dots. He also does not have a reliable impersonal principle of interpretation that will allow him to connect the dots. *Cosmic impersonalism is a philosophy of despair.*

In contrast, cosmic personalism is a philosophy of dominion. It tells men that they need not attain perfection in their work in order to attain significance. They need not understand everything correctly in order to understand anything correctly. They need not understand anything exhaustively because such understanding is impossible. In an interconnected world that is devoid of cosmic personalism, anything might conceivably cause something else. This is known as the butterfly effect. In its popular form, we are told that the flapping wings of a butterfly might conceivably create a series of events that could create catastrophe far away from the butterfly. Problem: there are too many butterflies flapping their wings for anyone to be secure in his environment. When anything can conceivably cause something else, life becomes cosmically threatening.

The doctrine of creation delivers covenant-keepers from a psychology of ultimate despair. The world is not threatening to a covenant-keeper. It is not threatening, therefore, to a covenant-keeping researcher who seeks to understand some aspect of the past.