

One God – the Maker of Heaven and Earth

We believe in one God, the Maker of heaven and earth

The God who has revealed Himself in the Son as Father, Son and Spirit, One God, has also revealed Himself as the maker of all that is, visible and invisible

This is what Scripture so clearly teaches

Genesis 1:1 "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth"

Or Revelation 4: 11 "Our Lord and God, you are worthy to receive glory and honour and power, because you have created all things, and by your will they exist and were created."

This is what believers confess in the Creed – we believe in One God, the maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen

And this is where in our society the objections, or the denials, start.

Often expressed in the claim that somehow scientific explanations – of the origin of life, or of natural phenomena – have disproved the existence of God, or made a Creator ‘an unnecessary hypothesis’.

And this determination of our secular society to drive God from His creation does, I think, effect believers in the West like us. We live consuming media awash with the absence of the true God, are educated to believe you can understand the world and know how to live in it without any reference to God, a society where public acknowledgement of God for His blessing is portrayed as distasteful. The result – especially for urban Christians – is that our awareness of God as Creator is weakened

It is almost as if believers in Jesus have a formal commitment to God as Creator, a commitment that is an extension or corollary of our primary belief in Jesus, but God as Creator is not something we are confident of in its own right

The result - our awe of His might diminished, our horror at the ingratitude of sin attenuated, our own thankfulness for all the good He bestows often reduced to an afterthought, formal and not heartfelt, and our witness and call for repentance dulled.

My aim to day is not to offer an extensive defence for belief in the Creator, but rather to explore from Scripture what it means to confess God as Creator – what does that mean for our understanding of who God is, and of who we are – and the confidence we can have in Him

The Ancient Alternatives

But I do want to start by addressing the elephant in the room, the belief that non-belief in a Creator God, the belief that matter is all there is, offers a better explanation of the world and so we can live well in the world ignoring its Creator.

There are basically only two alternative answers to the question of why there is something – this world, this universe – and not nothing, to why there is this particular world, and not nothing.

You can say that matter – including energy, physical forces – is eternal – was always there, and will always be there

Or that there is a Creator who is non-material and outside of this material world, and who has brought all that is into being.

The notion that matter is in some sense eternal was a feature of many pagan religions with their creation stories bringing the world into being from something that already existed, and the idea that history is cyclical, with the universe being consumed by fire and then reborn through the fire, - over and over and over again.

It is not a new idea, though one aggressively promoted by philosophical materialists like our atheistic evolutionists who claim matter is all there is and that all there is can be explained in terms of the actions of material forces – chemical and electrical processes inherent in matter.

Even though this ancient philosophy claims the mantle of scientific authority in our day it has and has always had intrinsic problems.

1. It cannot prove its starting assumption – that matter is all there is – which governs all their assessment of the evidence. Only believing in matter they only allow material explanations for anything and so any proof offered is entirely circular, containing their conclusion in their starting point.

That it is a faith position is seen, for example, in Richard Dawkins assertion, without any evidence, that life on other planets, if it exists, must have come from evolution;

Or their responding to the overwhelming evidence that our universe is fine tuned to allow life on earth to flourish by postulating, again without evidence, that this is just one of many possible universes, and so this fine tuning could have been arrived at by chance. [Strobel chapter 4, pp. 138 - 146

That is not science but faith-based speculation, which if thought through would only make the existence of our universe even more improbable, more the product of design – for how fine tuned would the parameters have to be to have a universe generating machine.

2. It is selective with its treatment of the evidence. It does not engage seriously with evidence of history, especially with Jesus and His resurrection, and is often dismissive of the testimony of those who have experience of God
3. It requires matter to be self-organising, but that self organization is incapable of producing the information needed for even the simplest cell [Strobel chapter 9]
4. It requires almost infinite time for the accumulation of beneficial mutations, when the Big Bang tells you that the universe has a finite age.
5. Profoundly anti-intuitive, defying human experience at every level. When in our experience do we ever see, without intelligent, purposeful input, the less organised becoming more organised, the information poor becoming information rich. How long, for example, would you need to leave a scrabble set with a baby before it spelt 'feed me' – too long for the baby. How often do you see building materials left on site become a house without intelligent input? Yet this is what we are being asked to believe – that highly complex, highly information rich life, has come about through the operation of purposeless forces.
6. It is bleak. "The universe we observe", said Richard Dawkins, 'has precisely the properties we should expect if there is, at bottom, no design, no purpose, no evil and no good, nothing but blind, pitiless indifference.'" In Strobel p. 154. It is a world without hope, where you and I are chance products with no ultimate purpose, and good and evil as we call them are arbitrary – just our preferences, with no power to bring justice, where we have to deny our longing for the transcendent as an irrational accident, or our desire for justice as an illusion – a cruel trick of the random forces that formed us.
7. Often, when dealing with Christians, it thinks that disproving one particular interpretation of Genesis 1 somehow proves their position, which is a fundamental logical flaw. Showing your opponents position is wrong does not show that your own position is true.
8. It fails to recognise that No explanation of how something works can ever explain why there is that something in the first place, or proves or disproves personal agency. Explaining how an electric car works doesn't answer the question of why there is an electric car, or whether it has arisen randomly or on purpose. Explaining genetic selection doesn't answer the question of why there are living organisms with genes in the first place, or prove or disprove intelligent involvement in their development.

These are intrinsic problems with the claim that matter is all there is, which is why materialism has over the years been neither persuasive or attractive to many – to most.

Whereas the universe and ourselves are what you would expect if the biblical story is true, if the God who reveals Himself in His dealings with people and in Scripture is as HE says He is

An ordered creation which shows the signs of intelligent design at many levels.

You may not be aware of some of the compelling evidence that comes from the fields of physics, astronomy, molecular biology and information studies

But it is there

A good and very readable introduction is “The Case for a Creator’ by Lee Strobel

He will present, for example, the evidence for the fine tuning of the universe or the irreducible complexity of the cell and what that means, and of the significance of the information held in the DNA of our cells, and on which our cells depend to build the proteins that they require to function. This latter is very significant as Stephen Meyer says “IF you can’t explain where the information comes from, you haven’t explained life, because it’s the information that makes the molecules into something that actually functions.” P. 225 The origin of this DNA can’t be explained by chance, or chance and natural selection [for that pre-supposes cells that have DNA and can divide], or by self organizing chemical processes, which are incapable of generating the specified complexity needed for information. Only intelligence can account for information – “The ‘creation of new information is habitually associated with conscious activity.” Henry Quastler in Strobel p. 226

Read the book, seek out the evidence, and satisfy yourselves, so you have conviction.

But the coherence of our experience with the biblical story goes beyond evidence of order and design in the material creation

The bible presents an accessible and ordered creation, with its own integrity, open to our understanding as those who have a role in stewarding creation

It presents a picture of humanity that makes sense of ourselves – of our significance in the created world, of our longing for personal relationship, including relationship beyond ourselves, beyond the material; of our frailty and failure in rebellion against God, with a compelling explanation of unbelief

A world with moral laws, as well as physical, where what you sow is what you reap, and there is hope for justice

Its explanatory power reaches beyond showing evidence of God’s activity in creation of the material world, but in history as well, and in our individual lives

Revealing a God who, while sustaining the order that allows us to go about our lives, is not contained in or constrained by that order and so at times can do things differently – like part the red sea, or heal a man born blind from birth, or raise the dead

A God who can enter into personal relationship with us

The Bible’s story is in tune with our intuitions, our experience of life, and the reality of our world

With a better, infinitely better hope – sustained not by some blind faith but by the actions of the living God in history

It is entirely reasonable to confess belief in a Creator

What does it mean to confess God as Creator?

But what are we saying about God when we confess He is ‘the Maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen.’ Now, as you saw last week, when you are hearing doctrinal sermons you are hearing lots of information.

That is because to teach a doctrine you have to draw material from many parts of Scripture. More than usual, the benefit will come from putting in your own work, reading and meditating on these Scriptures at home

Not just to check the truthfulness of what I teach, but to allow yourselves time to understand them and sense the greatness of our Creator.

SO, what are we saying when we confess God as maker of heaven and earth

1. We are confessing that the Creator God is distinct from, not part of, His creation

Genesis 1 makes that clear.

Creation is by His word – what comes into being is not an emanation of His being, there is no part of Him mixed in with the material creation. His life giving power is mediated by His Word. The repetition “Then God said And it was so” emphasises that creation comes into being exactly as He commands, that nothing is lost by that mediation while creation remains distinct from Him.

See this even in the creation of humanity in Genesis 2

Genesis 2:7 Then the LORD God formed the man out of the dust from the ground and breathed the breath of life into his nostrils, and the man became a living being.

Adam is Animated by God, he is dependent on God for life from God, but it is life distinct from God. He is not animated by a share of God’s Spirit, by a part, a spark, of the divine in each person.

So Creation shows evidence of God’s work and so of His nature –

Romans 1:19 since what can be known about God is evident among them, because God has shown it to them. 20 For his invisible attributes, that is, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen since the creation of the world, being understood through what he has made. As a result, people are without excuse.

but He is not contained in His work. He is over and above His creation.

2. We are confessing the Creator God is transcendent over His creation

God is not constrained by His creation, limited in any way in His being or in achieving His purposes in Creation – for He brings all into being. There is no pre-existent matter, that has an existence independent of him, and which might be hostile or resistant to His will.

And He is Not dependent on Creation. He does not need it to co-operate with Him, nor does it supply anything HE lacks. It manifests His being, but does not change it.

God’s transcendence over His creation means He is not independently accessible through His creation. You will not find Him in it unless He wills to reveal Himself through it.

He is Not part of the material world – which is why materialists are looking for a fiction when they are looking for evidence of God in matter – Dawkins flying teapot -and their claim there is no evidence carries no weight

Looking for a god no Christian believes in

For God is eternal, invisible Spirit, whose thoughts are higher than our thoughts Is. 55

This lack of constraint and dependence is expressed in God’s proclamation of His name in Exodus 3

Exodus 3:13 Then Moses asked God, “If I go to the Israelites and say to them, ‘The God of your ancestors has sent me to you,’ and they ask me, ‘What is his name?’ what should I tell them?”

14 God replied to Moses, “I AM WHO I AM. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: I AM has sent me to you.”

[or I will be who I will be]

We are not as conscious of the content of this name, for we translate it LORD – and it is a proclamation of His Sovereignty

But it is a sovereignty grounded in the freedom and sufficiency of His being

‘I am who I am’ is a declaration of absolute freedom.

He is not dependent on anything or anyone for His being

No-one and nothing can stop Him from being who He is - ever

So the LORD is free from the limitations of all created beings, and of all embodied beings.

He is free from the limits, or boundaries, of time, which come into existence with creation. That is what we mean when we say God is Eternal. It is not that He has a beginning and just gets older and older. He is not limited by time – the One who was, and is and is to come [Rev. 4:8]. He is present in all time

And He is free from all spatial limitation. We cannot be present in two places at once. But God is present in all places, omnipresent – the Creation of space, of physical dimensions, does not limit His being.

Psalm 139: ⁷ Where can I go to escape your Spirit?

Where can I flee from your presence?

⁸ If I go up to heaven, you are there;

if I make my bed in Sheol, you are there.

⁹ If I fly on the wings of the dawn

and settle down on the western horizon,^[a]

¹⁰ even there your hand will lead me;

your right hand will hold on to me.

¹¹ If I say, “Surely the darkness will hide me,

and the light around me will be night” —

¹² even the darkness is not dark to you.

The night shines like the day;

darkness and light are alike to you.

And God’s omnipresence isn’t a case of Him being spread more thinly over more and more places. He is wholly and immediately present in all places

And our creation creates no limits on His knowing, as if our separate and distinct minds had created an unknown space in the created universe.

He knows all – even the hiddenness of our individual consciousness is not hidden from God

Psalm 139 begins

Psalm 139: ¹ LORD, you have searched me and known me.

² You know when I sit down and when I stand up;

you understand my thoughts from far away.

³ You observe my travels and my rest;

you are aware of all my ways.

⁴ Before a word is on my tongue,

you know all about it, LORD.

⁵ You have encircled me;

you have placed your hand on me.

⁶ This wondrous knowledge is beyond me.

It is lofty; I am unable to reach it.

As the author of Hebrews says

Hebrews 4:¹³ No creature is hidden from him, but all things are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give an account.

Now all of this may seem a little abstract

Or even a little threatening if you want God out of your life

But if you are at peace with your creator – it is good

God is free – and that means He Freely relates to us. HE does not have to, He does not need us. He relates to us because He chooses to relate to us, to make Himself known to us – amazing condescension

Space and time are no limit on Him – that means HE is Always present to hear and help. There is not place where we are beyond His help – and that is so important. We might feel God is close when we are in our familiar settings. But God is no less close when all around us is unfamiliar, when we feel out of place and alone. IF you are going to serve God overseas you need to remember that.

And there is no time where we are beyond His help – even the time of our death.

And our Lord tells us that God knowing us is the basis for Christian prayer – we don't pray like the pagans because our Father knows what we need before we ask [Matt. 6:8]. Isn't it a comfort to know that HE knows, especially when we are struggling to put our thoughts and emotions into words.

Our Creator is Never absent, Never weary, Never unable, never ignorant

3. We are confessing the Creator God is sovereign over His creation. We will talk about this more next week, Lord willing, when we consider God as 'almighty'

But creating all that is means HE has No rivals – as we see in Genesis 1. There is no competition, no struggle, no frustration of His purpose. Creation is all 'very good' Gen. 1:31 – conforming to His will expressed in His word, and fit for the purpose He intends.

Making humanity in His image and entrusting rule to them is not creating a rival – but a tangible sign to the whole creation of the rule of the invisible God through His visible vice regents

Creation places no limits on His power. As the Psalmist says

*Psalm 135:⁵ For I know that the LORD is great;
our Lord is greater than all gods.*

*⁶ The LORD does whatever he pleases
in heaven and on earth,
in the seas and all the depths.*

*⁷ He causes the clouds to rise from the ends of the earth.
He makes lightning for the rain
and brings the wind from his storehouses.*

We are constantly trying to place limits on our God, but Scripture knows none. HE always is as HE chooses to be, and all serves His purpose.

4. We are confessing that the Creator God is the God who sustains all things. Having created all that is, Scripture teaches He continues to sustain life. IT isn't set and forget. He doesn't wind up the machine and walk away because it is too much bother and grief, or He just gets tired of it.

Psalm 104 is a wonderful Psalm that speaks of God's continuing care for His creation – and the good He provides for us in Creation.

Just a few verses

*Psalm 104:*¹⁰ *He causes the springs to gush into the valleys;
they flow between the mountains.*

¹¹ *They supply water for every wild beast;
the wild donkeys quench their thirst.*

¹² *The birds of the sky live beside the springs;
they make their voices heard among the foliage.*

¹³ *He waters the mountains from his palace;
the earth is satisfied by the fruit of your labor.*

¹⁴ *He causes grass to grow for the livestock
and provides crops for man to cultivate,
producing food from the earth,*

¹⁵ *wine that makes human hearts glad—
making his face shine with oil—
and bread that sustains human hearts.*

And again

*Psalm 104:*²⁷ *All of them wait for you
to give them their food at the right time.*

²⁸ *When you give it to them,
they gather it;*

*when you open your hand,
they are satisfied with good things.*

²⁹ *When you hide your face,
they are terrified;*

*when you take away their breath,
they die and return to the dust.*

³⁰ *When you send your breath,^[e]
they are created,*

and you renew the surface of the ground.

Life is dependent on God's continuing activity. That is what our Lord taught

Consider

*Matthew 5:*⁴⁵ *so that you may be^[a] children of your Father in heaven. For he causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.*

*Matthew 6:*²⁶ *Consider the birds of the sky: They don't sow or reap or gather into barns, yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Aren't you worth more than they?*²⁷ *Can any of you add one moment to his life span^[a] by worrying?*

²⁸ *And why do you worry about clothes? Observe how the wildflowers of the field grow: They don't labor or spin thread.*²⁹ *Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was adorned like one of these.*³⁰ *If that's how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and thrown into the furnace tomorrow, won't he do much more for you—you of little faith?*

Our lives are dependent on our God's continuing to sustain them, on His continuing provision – and our Lord says Creation tells us He is more than able [Acts 14:17]. He is the source of the good and abundant life we have [Psalm 148:1-10, Psalm 147:4-5, 7-8] and we can rely on Him.

And life itself is a rich wonder – to see – the wonders of colour, to taste and the pleasure of that, to touch – a baby's skin, to run and jump, to know the joy of human intimacy

And we are completely dependent on Him for this good gift and its continuation

That complete dependence on GOD for life and the course of our life is expressed by Paul

*Romans 11: 36 For from him and through him
and to him are all things.
To him be the glory forever. Amen.*

[It is our Lord, the Son, whom Hebrews says upholds all things

Heb. 1: 3 The Son is the radiance^[a] of God's glory and the exact expression^[b] of his nature, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After making purification for sins,^[c] he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high.^[d]

When we think of the wonder of life, its vastness, its rich variety, its goodness that each one of us can know

God our creator deserves both our awe and thanks

5. We are confessing He is the maker of all things

All, and so all are subject to Him

Natural forces – the rising of the sun, the coming of the storm, the movement of the wind – all depend on and are subject to Him

He Sustains regularity of nature because HE is a God of order, but He can work wonders because HE is not limited by the regularity HE creates and sustains

When considering events it is inadequate to stop with explanations of secondary causes. You haven't exhausted the significance of the sun rising when you explain that the world has undergone another complete rotation on its axis.

We should acknowledge His hand at work in the world in all things, even if unable to discern His particular purpose in any specific event. We will speak of more of this next week, for God's almighty power is seen in His exercising both judgement and mercy in the world

And He is the maker of Spiritual beings, beings invisible to us but which Scripture clearly teaches exist

The Devil is a creature, as Genesis 3 makes clear for the serpent whom the LORD God had made is identified as the devil in Revelation 12

Genesis 3: 3 Now the serpent was the most cunning of all the wild animals that the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God really say, 'You can't eat from any tree in the garden?'"

Angels are ministering spirits

Hebrews 1: 7 And about the angels he says:

***He makes his angels winds,
and his servants a fiery flame,***

All these spirits are subject to Him

We may not think this important – but if in an animist culture, as some of our indigenous people are, and see the world, your land, as populated by spirits with whom you must keep on good terms – important

If you think the universe is populated by spiritual powers who can interfere with the course of your life, it is important

Important to know that the Creator is the only God who rules over His creation, the only God we need to know and be at peace with if we are to live securely

Creation gives us insight into ourselves

- a. Creation by a Creator who is personal gives us the foundation of our identity – that firstly we are creatures, with the limitations of embodiment that we cannot free ourselves of; but also finite persons, made for relationship, where the personal is at the centre of the universe, made for relationship with the infinite God
- b. Creation gives us The foundation of the biblical understanding of wisdom, which is the key to a life of flourishing – to live in the fear of the LORD is to recognise His continuing engagement with His world, His might and His commitment to sustain His moral order in the world He has made
- c. Creation Helps us understand our sin
 - Sin as debt
 - Sin as folly
 - The horror of idolatry – no created thing to be worshipped

It is to creation Paul turns to help us see the reality of our rebellion against God

Romans 1: ¹⁸For God's wrath is revealed from heaven against all godlessness and unrighteousness of people who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth, ¹⁹since what can be known about God is evident among them, because God has shown it to them. ²⁰For his invisible attributes, that is, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen since the creation of the world, being understood through what he has made. As a result, people are without excuse. ²¹For though they knew God, they did not glorify him as God or show gratitude. Instead, their thinking became worthless, and their senseless hearts were darkened. ²²Claiming to be wise, they became fools ²³and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man, birds, four-footed animals, and reptiles.

It is thankless v. 21. He has given us our life and every good thing, and deserves our thanks, our acknowledgement of His kindness and our dependence on Him

And it is foolish v. 22, exchanging the infinite for the finite, the creator for the Creature, one who has life and can give life for those that are lifeless, one who has the authority and power to enact His judgements, for those that are powerless. It is foolish to trust and worship created things, the products of our own imagination

And grasping the greatness of the Creator shows us the horror of idolatry, which compares the Creator to his creatures, brings Him down to the level of their weakness and lifelessness. It is such a distortion of reality, a misrepresentation of the truth of the Creator God – who speaks and the world comes into being, and who knows no limit on His presence, power, knowledge and life.

Creation is Part of the gospel

Acts 17: ²⁴The God who made the world and everything in it—he is Lord of heaven and earth—does not live in shrines made by hands. ²⁵Neither is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives everyone life and breath and all things. ²⁶From one man he has made every nationality to live over the whole earth and has determined their appointed times and the boundaries of where they live. ²⁷He did this so that they might seek God, and perhaps they might reach out and find him, though he is not far from each one of us.

It is part of the gospel because to be able to know the Creator, to be freed from the grip of dead idols

To be able to know One who sustains our lives, and who is always present, always able to hear and help
 Who always lives and who always has the power to keep His promises
 Is good news in itself

And it is part of the gospel because it is the foundation of the call to repentance. We should turn away from ignorance of God and believing lies about our Creator who is the source of our lives and all the good we enjoy. We should be listening to Him, trusting Him – for HE can do all HE says – and giving Him our thanks and praise, and it is wrong, destructive and deadly not to.

And that is one of the reasons we should resist the pressure of our society to empty our confession of God as our Creator of conviction.

That lack of conviction, of confidence in our God, Father, Son and Spirit as Creator and Sustainer of all – has blunted our call to repentance, our conviction that all need to repent for all have their life from God, that our God is the God of all the earth

We believe

we believe in One God, the maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen

That belief should show in Conviction

Conviction OF the folly and ingratitude of sin – against God

And conviction of the rightness of the gospel call to repent

For all will meet their creator – we cannot hide from Him, and HE is the one in whom all can find life

That belief should show in Confidence in our transcendent, unlimited Creator

Repenting of timidity, of not trusting Him as He deserves which comes with a small view of God

Confidence that He can keep and care for us as our Lord says, provide for all we need

Confidence in keeping us in all things eternally, for there is no power in heaven and earth who can resist the God who has brought all things into being from nothing by His word Romans 8

And that belief should show in Praise and thanks

Repenting of ingratitude for the good lives He has given us

Living in the truth and resisting the pressure to remove God from our consciousness by giving thanks

It is good to give thanks to the LORD, the maker of heaven and earth, and so I hope you are practicing it

Giving thanks at meals for His provision

Giving thanks for shelter

Giving thanks for the good of life, for the way we are made to enjoy this good world, for sight, and touch, and sound

For the activity of our bodies

For the creatures that enrich our lives

Giving thanks that we have been made to know Him and be known by Him – the Maker of heaven and earth

Revelation 4: 11 "Our Lord and God, you are worthy to receive glory and honour and power, because you have created all things, and by your will they exist and were created."