

Attending to the Story of Adam, Eve, and The Fall

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The last few decades have seen a narrowing of society's metaphysical imagination. Much of our culture has settled into a superficial metaphysics in which "reality" is reduced to that which can be immediately experienced. The "meta" is dropped from metaphysics, and physics is treated as a way to understand the fundamental nature of things—it is treated as a first-order rather than second-order investigation. Too easily the fact that such a move is laden with metaphysical assumptions goes unnoticed by much of the world, not least in academic circles. A consequence of this is that natural scientists find themselves being asked to offer insight into the ultimate nature of things; they are invited to be philosophers. This gives physicists such as Stephen Hawking and Leonard Mlodinow the naïve self-confidence not only to denounce religion but, still further, to pronounce that "philosophy is dead" (2010, 5).

With nothing short of pure mastery, Hud Hudson sets out to challenge the presumptive ways in which some people can overestimate the scope of science in *The Fall and Hypertime*. He exposes the way in which contemporary scientific practice has taken upon itself to advance theories that are grounded in the kind of metaphysical speculation that belongs to the domain of philosophers and theologians.

Nowhere are these problems more evident than in the conversation about science and religion. Metaphysical ignorance is often at its most blatant when science is presented as debunking certain religious beliefs. Now, it is true that scientific approaches may challenge, for example, the historical veracity of certain biblical claims. At the same time, however, the so-presented "scientific reasons" will tend to take certain metaphysical presuppositions for granted: presuppositions that are open to debate and far from empirically verifiable. Accordingly, when science is said to be incompatible with religion, it is normally because there is a particular metaphysically-loaded (e.g. scientistic or naturalistic) version of science in play, making *a priori* assumptions that *lead* to "scientific" ("*a posteriori*") conclusions that are essentially incompatible with religion—for reasons that are not primarily scientific but metaphysical. So, for Hudson: "an ongoing theme of this book is that what appears to be a struggle between science and religion is often a contest between metaphysics and metaphysics (76)."¹ By addressing this theme, Hudson helps readers to understand the limits of a modern scientific worldview in order to encourage not only an intellectual humility but also a deeper reverence for the role that metaphysics has

¹ All page-only citations are from Hudson 2014.

to play in thinking about the nature of science, religion, and the interrelationship between the two.

By helping scientists to understand the assumptions they are making, philosophers are able not only to guide them in conversations about science and religion, but to help them recognise what it means to participate in the sciences: to learn what can and cannot be said in the name of empirical science—to facilitate a deeper understanding of the nature and scope of scientific criteria.

A prime example of a field in which scientists often overstep the boundaries of empirical science is evolutionary science. As Hudson writes: “What cannot be simply granted (and what obviously, boringly, should not be simply granted) is an additional, non-scientific, metaphysical thesis—namely, that God did not play any role in guiding the course of evolution by, say, determining which mutations would occur in some given population (45).” The assumption that evolution is totally unguided is consistently presented as a scientific conclusion when it is quite clearly a metaphysical one. Hudson demonstrates this with admirable clarity, straightforwardly sorting out a major confusion that continues to haunt the conversation about science and religion.

But Hudson not only seeks to point out the obvious. He also seeks to demonstrate that some of the contemporary world’s most basic assumptions about the nature of things are based on metaphysical assumptions that are far from uncontroversial. To that end, he illustrates how some of the most widely assumed “science-based” conclusions are not simply drawn from empirical evidence but depend upon varying degrees of metaphysical speculation. In particular, he undertakes a case study of the story of Adam, Eve, and the Fall (SAEF), setting out to show that, in and of itself, contemporary science cannot rule out a literal-historical—or, more precisely, literal-hyperhistorical—reading of the first chapters of Genesis, as reporting events that actually occurred. Ruling out that such events occurred in the past is not the same thing as ruling out their occurrence simpliciter, and Hudson argues for the possibility of two dimensions of time according to which actual events may be located in hyperhistory (i.e., at earlier hypertimes) rather than in history. He regards this case as particularly apt for his project because:

...the deliverances of empirical science encourage greeting any remaining sympathetic talk of a historical Garden of Eden and a unique ancestral pair with a mixture of pity and condescension at best (since it betrays such culpable innocence of what is now common knowledge) and with open and unreserved hostility at worst (since it endangers our children and societies, in ways that are not always carefully enumerated but that we can be assured are immediate and threatening) (42).

Hudson shows how the Hypertime Hypothesis can provide us with a way to reconcile a literal-historical reading of SAEF with the observations of empirical science. It enables us to “tell a *just-so story* accommodating both the relevant verdicts of our modern worldview and a full-blooded realism about a hyperhistorical garden.” (194) Therefore, the supposition that there is an essential conflict between SAEF and contemporary science requires metaphysical speculation; empirical science alone, he

argues, cannot rule out the possibility that the Genesis narrative could have occurred (despite its absence in our history). On the hypothesized view, which appeals to a second temporal series (i.e., the hypertimes), the Genesis account corresponds to a narrative that occurred not in our past but in our hyper-past: in a hyper-earlier spacetime that we no longer inhabit because humanity was exiled from this timeline in the event of the Fall.

The Hypertime Hypothesis succeeds on the basis that it cannot be ruled out as a possible way of explaining the historical occurrence of SAEF—thereby making it possible that SAEF actually occurred. Clearly, a great many eccentric claims can be made on this basis, and the Hypertime Hypothesis itself may appear to belong to this genre. However, any assertion about the wildness of the Hypertime Hypothesis will itself require metaphysical judgment, thereby demonstrating Hudson’s underlying argument. I might also add that part of the reason that it may seem wild is that we are caught up in the immediate frame of our historical experience. It appears less counterintuitive when we are open to the possibility of wider horizons—those that stem from the recognition that a transcendent God creates the historical world(s) we inhabit.

In responding to Hudson, I do not intend to assess his complex metaphysical arguments, which I find convincing. Nor am I going to reflect on the theological aptness of the Hypertime Hypothesis; Hudson is not concerned about demonstrating the veracity of the Hypertime Hypothesis, which he concludes may well not be true (192). It is also worth clarifying that this book is not primarily seeking to affirm all the historical details of SAEF—but merely the epistemic possibility of their actuality.

The question I intend to raise is a pragmatic one and concerns the way in which Hudson uses SAEF as a case study for his argument. That is: is it constructive to use a story from Scripture to make a specific apologetic point if it draws attention to a reading of that story that we would not otherwise want to affirm? More particularly, is positing the Hypertime Hypothesis to make a case for the possibility of a literal-historical reading of SAEF, which he does not uphold, the most helpful way to deliver us to the conclusions he wants us to consider? Before thinking more specifically about how we should engage with SAEF, I shall consider briefly why these kinds of questions are particularly pertinent to the task of apologetics. I shall then go on to propose an alternative reading of SAEF that I find more constructive in the face of the reigning scientific orthodoxy—a reading that is quite different from both Hudson’s reading and also the more literal-historical reading that *The Fall and Hypertime* serves to defend from its scientific critics.

To What Do We Draw Attention?

Reflecting on the strategy of apologetics, Hudson suggests that apologetics does not serve to explain why God does things in the way that he does but merely proposes possible, justifiable reasons why God might do things in the way that he does. It does not serve to reveal what is really going on behind a perplexing set of circumstances but proposes possible explanations that may help us to recognise a possible logic to a

situation.² By so doing, it defends various theistic positions against those who would suggest that they are logically indefensible.

So, to be clear, apologetics does not serve to defend the divine economy—as though God’s activity must be defensible in human terms. However, apologetics can serve to defend those human beliefs that witness to the divine economy. By so doing, apologetics serves to demonstrate the intellectual viability of religious beliefs in terms that an unbelieving audience can recognise, without the help of God. While apologetics may not itself deliver Christian faith,³ it can serve to bring unbelievers to a place where they may be more likely to encounter God. For example, on recognising the intellectual viability of Christianity, an unbeliever may be more likely to enter through the doors of a church, to listen earnestly to a preacher, and/or to hear the Gospel being proclaimed. As such, apologetics can help unbelievers (or those struggling with unbelief) to appreciate the intellectual viability of the ordained human platforms, spaces, and words through which God is known to draw persons into a life of faith.

Having said that, within the field of apologetics, there is a danger that the object of Christianity comes to be perceived as occupying the same playing field as its attackers. There is a risk that apologists proceed as though it is their task to make God known in terms that will satisfy the secular world. If this happens, apologists can become caught up in a conversation with unbelievers in which they disregard the gracious reality of the triune God—in which their attention is diverted away from the God who makes himself known, in Christ, through the power of the Holy Spirit. If this happens, to quote Karl Barth, Christianity “has renounced its birthright. It has renounced the unique power which it has as the religion of revelation” (1956, 333).⁴ It seeks validation from that which cannot provide it. Rather than calling into question the endeavour of a particular form of human rationality, it complies with it, entertains it, and risks losing itself in the process. In particular, it draws attention to a generic or abstract “god” that is not the triune God of Christianity.

To avoid this mistake, Christian apologists need to take care to ensure that they do not draw positive attention to the wrong thing. For example, when a Christian advances a version of the free will defense of God, in response to the problem of evil, it would be a problem if they ended up drawing positive attention to a deistic vision of God: to God as a divine being who does not involve himself in the history of creation. If this happened, further qualification would be needed to show how the free will defense can align with the Christian vision of the God who acts in history.

So, what role can apologetics have? Again, it can be helpful in defending Christian beliefs by exposing the weakness of arguments or approaches that present themselves as undermining the intellectual viability of Christianity. By so doing, it can expose the superficiality of those attacks that may stop a person from visiting a Church or attending earnestly to the proclamation of the Gospel. It can be a means of

² Hudson makes this point in the context of a more specific reflection on Peter van Inwagen’s response to the problem of evil (51).

³ According to Christianity, conversion requires God to encounter a person by the power of the Holy Spirit in such a way as to deliver that person into a conscious relationship with the God who reveals himself in Jesus Christ.

⁴ For an excellent, more detailed discussion of this issue, see Diller 2014, 177–222.

opening lines of conversation with sceptics who are disinclined to recognise that the Gospel might just be true. By offering a defense that a sceptic can appreciate, a Christian can draw a sceptic into conversation about the Gospel message.

A further challenge for constructive contemporary theology is the tendency for theologians to become caught up in debates of the past—to focus on addressing the problems faced by Augustine, Aquinas, Luther, Calvin, Barth, for example—while disregarding the problems we face us today. Clearly, a great deal is to be gained by drawing on the wealth of the Christian tradition. However, like those who came before them, contemporary theologians need to think about what it means to communicate the Gospel today, where the Church faces a new set of challenges. In a world where science and faith are continually felt to be at odds with one another, and in a world where Christian belief is felt to be comparable to a belief in magic or quackery, apologetics has an important role to play in helping theological claims to be heard in the contemporary world.

The Fall and Hypertime serves this role by exposing the shallowness of some of the barriers that have shut down theological engagement in the name of science. And it does so while avoiding many of the pitfalls that can face Christian apologetics. In many respects, therefore, it provides a model for how apologetics should be done. Even more commendable, perhaps, is the way it proceeds to make an even riskier move. It includes a story from Scripture in its argument. The reason I think this is riskier is because it calls upon the Christian thinker to ensure that she or he does not only defend Christianity but also draws the right kind of attention to the message of the story that has been selected.

By advancing the Hypertime Hypothesis as a way to defend the possibility that SAEF actually happened, Hudson draws positive attention to the historical occurrence of events in SAEF in a way that would enable it to secure the genre of (hyper-)historical report. This kind of attention will no doubt be appreciated by many Christians who want to maintain a more literal-historical reading of SAEF. At the same time, Hudson himself thinks that SAEF is “(in almost all of its details) a myth” (41) (although, he still wishes to maintain that the doctrines of Original Sin and the Fall have some grounding in historical occurrence).

While I read SAEF differently from Hudson (as I discuss below), we both disagree with literal-historical readings of SAEF that place SAEF in the genre of historical report. This means that Hudson defends a reading of SAEF that is at odds with the reading that he himself would endorse. The benefit of such an approach is that it encourages readers to question confused suppositions about the necessity of assuming the mythological nature of the Genesis narrative. Also, it reflects an attitude of charity towards those who hold to a literal-historical reading of SAEF by taking their position seriously. However, it also serves to give positive attention to a reading of SAEF that makes questionable assumptions about its literary genre.

Pragmatically (or tactically) speaking, even if there is a place for such consideration, the amount of speculation and problem-solving devoted to this task risks distracting from the theological significance of the story—what SAEF is meant to affirm about God and creation. The Christian theologian might be concerned about suggesting subliminally that the message of SAEF (and a part of the message of Christianity) is contingent upon the natural-historical actuality of the events of SAEF.

Again, both Hudson and I would seem to agree that the historicity of most of the details of SAEF is beside the point. If we set the question of literal-historicity aside, and focus on what SAEF has to tell us about the relationship between God and creation (whether or not it is able to function as a historical report), then I think we are enabled to devote due attention to reading the story in a way that is likely to be more fruitful for Christian theological reflection. So, my slight concern is that *The Fall and Hypertime* risks the same danger that faces all areas of apologetics: it risks getting caught up in a conversation with unbelievers in which their agendas play a critical role in determining how we ought to think and talk about Scripture and the Christian faith.

I am now going to offer an alternative suggestion as to how SAEF might be approached, in contrast to that which Hudson considers.

On Reading Genesis

Hudson refers to two ways in which a person may “retreat” from recognising the historicity of SAEF.

(1) *The retreat partial* views SAEF as a specially constructed myth—inspired by the Holy Spirit. However, it does acknowledge that SAEF points back to our first ancestors who rebelled or turned away from God. It offers a minimalist account of how “a particular historical event, a certain act of disobedience, somehow damaged its agents and their descendants (including us) (37).”

(2) *The retreat entire* views SAEF as a myth full stop. It does not document “a sin whose consequences continue to ripple through the ages and are to be found in every crib.” “We are all separated from God by our own repeated acts of rebellion and disobedience, and the Genesis myth serves to remind us of our deplorable and voluntary condition (37).”

Hudson includes himself in the group of people “who believe the Adam and Eve story to be (in almost all of its details) a myth (41).” However, he qualifies this by writing:

I believe the construction and the preservation of that myth were conducted under the influence of the Holy Spirit, and that it has special significance, touching on topics of consequence to all persons (near and far, past and future). I take the primary function of the myth to document the occurrence of a historical event involving our first ancestors who were also persons. I believe these individuals—whether one, two, or an entire community—in some manner freely rebelled or disobeyed or turned away from God and in so doing damaged both

themselves and those who have come into the world afterwards in a way that none of us is able to repair.

That is, I accept, a historical fall involving some individual or community of historical persons, and I accept the claim that their rebellion had among its consequences a kind of ruin from which you and I also suffer, but I do not accept the further claims that I performed or committed that original sin or that I am guilty of it or responsible for its corrupting consequences. Thus, although I do not ascribe to the doctrine of original guilt...., I do accept the doctrines of The Fall and Original Sin. (41)

These points are discussed in a chapter titled “The Paths of Retreat,” where Hudson considers some of the ways in which Christians can retreat from their beliefs in response to the reigning scientific orthodoxy, when it comes to interpreting SAEF. He considers “numerous strategies—increasingly concessive—that attempt to preserve as much of the doctrines of The Fall, Original Sin, and Original Guilt as possible without infringing on the authority of the reigning scientific orthodoxy (30).”

The first thing I have to say is that I do not think we need to view a retreat from a literal-historical reading of SAEF as a retreat from a valuable or accurate reading of SAEF. Hudson does not suggest this, but the language of retreat can easily be taken to suggest that something important is being given up due to the stiffness of the competition.⁵ Also, to a certain extent, Hudson does want to maintain that SAEF is grounded in actual historical occurrence; he sees it as “the *primary function* of the myth to document the occurrence of a historical event involving our first ancestors who were also persons” (41, emphasis mine).

In response to Hudson’s approach, I am going to propose an alternative approach that I find to be more constructive for the following reasons: (1) it provides us with an easier way to make sense of the authorship of SAEF; and (2) it is able to focus attention on what I take to be the primary function of the text: serving as a witness to God and his purposes for creation.

Before proposing an alternative approach, let me reiterate that I agree with much of what Hudson is seeking to achieve. It is often the case that when scientists discover something that calls into question a certain religious commitment, there is a temptation for religious believers to over-retreat. As I have already noted, this is particularly evident in some religious responses to evolutionary science and can too easily reflect intellectual cowardice or false modesty, which fails to object when science makes metaphysical assumptions in the name of empirical science.

At the same time, it is not clear that we should devote so much attention to defending the possibility of a literal-historical reading of SAEF—even in the limited, hypothetical way that Hudson seeks to do. Still further, one wonders why Hudson

⁵ At one point, when referring to Peter van Inwagen’s reflection on the Genesis story as a form of retreat, Hudson notes that “van Inwagen may not regard his presentation as retreating from anything; the label is mine.” (43). So, Hudson is aware that some persons might not find the term “retreat” entirely apt for describing approaches that question the historical accuracy of the early chapters of Genesis.

feels a need to defend: “[1] a historical fall involving some individual or community of historical persons, and... [2] the claim that their rebellion had among its consequences a kind of ruin from which you and I also suffer (41).” Could we not hold, instead: (1) that we live in a sinful set of circumstances that is helpfully depicted by SAEF; and (2) we participate in a rebellion that is represented by SAEF (which leaves the question open as to whether or not any of the events of SAEF actually happened)? By proposing this approach, one might be seen to be taking the road of “retreat entire”: viewing “the story as a myth full stop.” However, it is not clear that the approach I am proposing should be associated with a reading of SAEF as a “myth full stop.” Let me elaborate.

First, I agree that SAEF should be read as providing a divinely ordained explanation for understanding the nature of the created order and its relation to God. As such, it should be seen as an integral element in the most important explanation available to us. It provides us with a theological language for talking about the nature and reality of creation, as it exists in relation to God.

At the same time, such an approach requires SAEF to be read as providing a record of events that have occurred in creation’s history (or hyperhistory). But why should this be a cause of concern? *First*, we need to take seriously the difficulties that come with aligning SAEF with the views of contemporary science (even if they are surmountable by positing a scenario involving hypertime). *Second*, it is difficult to make sense of the authorship of SAEF if it really does narrate past events. Given the shortage of witnesses and writers to observe and record the events that occurred at the beginning of human existence, it is hard to work out how this history could be recounted.⁶ *Third*, it is unclear where the problem lies with reading SAEF as a piece of theological saga, created as a divinely inspired, poetic rendering of history that would effectively communicate fundamental theological insights to its readers.⁷ Given the difficulties that would be involved in God’s communicating a theology of creation to the limited human intellect, by means of a scientifically accurate account, it makes sense that God would reveal a theology of creation through a poetic rendering of history. Hudson makes a related point when considering why the notion of hypertime may not feature in Scripture. He writes: “loading up Genesis with heavy-handed descriptions of hypertime and sequences of spacetime manifolds might have made it a bit less accessible to its intended audience (192).” With Hudson, I think that SAEF was designed to be accessible and understandable to a broad range of human beings, with varying abilities. As such, there would be good reason for SAEF to be written with a poetic license that was not restricted by the actual events of history.

So why would I be unhappy to associate such a position with “retreat entire”—with a “myth—full stop”? First, I agree that we need to recognise that SAEF communicates truths or facts that are tied up with the very history of creation as it is purposefully created by God. SAEF articulates with clarity and in depth how the

⁶ There are, of course, ways in which this could have happened. Obviously, God could have provided a record of this history to the (human) author of SAEF. However, it is not at all clear that God ever dictates history to the authors of Scripture in this way. And I see no reason to think that a special exception might have been made for the writing of SAEF.

⁷ For an excellent discussion of how we might read the creation narratives as saga, see Green 1990, 19–38.

concrete existence and life of creation is bound up with God's purposes.⁸ For example, SAEF reveals that the guidance that God gives to Adam and Eve is not an optional part of creation but an essential aspect of its created nature: it is every bit as fundamental to the basic operations of creation as the physical and biological laws that can be observed by science. Just as blood flows through our veins and oxygen through our lungs, so God's ways sustain our lives. This is a central message about the reality of creation that resonates with the rest of the canon of Scripture. As such, I would denounce a reading of SAEF that dissociates it from the hard facts of reality and reduces it to a myth that tells us about an abstract meaning to creation (as prescribed, for example, by Stephen Jay Gould's non-overlapping magisteria). SAEF tells us that every facet of creation is contained within and defined by God's creative purposes. In Barth's words, it speaks of creation as the "presupposition of the realisation of the divine purpose of love" (1958, 96).

Now, in order to communicate that SAEF pertains to the historical reality in which we participate, it would need to present itself as more than an abstract myth. What we are given is a story about our history that articulates God's creative purposes for the world. What this means is that the continuity between SAEF and the present needs to be construed in theological rather than bird's eye historical terms. God's purposes for creation are thereby perceived to be every bit as fundamental to our existence as they are presented through the poeticism of SAEF.

SAEF, in tandem with the rest of Scripture, is a witness to the fact that the totality of the contingent order needs to be interpreted with reference to God's purposiveness. "[T]o encounter Scripture," as John Webster writes, "is to stand before a witness to something which is not simply part of the immanent historical world" (2012, 70). SAEF bears witness to the God who purposively determines the nature of created reality and does so from beyond the surface phenomena of our experience. To achieve this, SAEF does not need to provide a record of natural-historical occurrences that correspond in some direct way to the state of play in our scientific understandings of the natural world. A prophetic reimagining of history can be just as true a witness to God and God's purposes for creatures. While it is clearly important to recognize that Scripture provides an accurate record of certain historical events (such as the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ), it is also important to remember that Scripture is, first and foremost, a witness to the eternal God who transcends the particular world we inhabit. This means that there may be better ways to communicate God's purposes than those restricted by the record of human history (or hyper-history).

One reason that Hudson thinks it is important "to continue to take the doctrines of The Fall and Original Sin very seriously is the role those doctrines can play in giving a comprehensive response to a variety of arguments for the non-existence of God that are often slopped together under the heading 'The Problem of

⁸ For example, the image of the tree of life is a sign that the life of creation is to be enjoyed as a gift from God. In SAEF, the tree of life gives form to the Garden in the way that the tabernacle gives shape to Israel's camp in the desert, in the way that the temple gives shape to Jerusalem, and in the way that the holiest of holies gives shape to both the tabernacle and the temple. With this form, SAEF tells us that the Garden (and creation) was created to be a place of worship, in which life is oriented towards God, and in which fullness of life is found in obedient fellowship with God.

Evil (42).” He later adds: “I take the doctrines of The Fall and Original Sin to provide a crucial piece of the best response to the magnitude, intensity, and distribution of evil in the world (54).”

Again, Hudson’s comments are pertinent. The doctrines of The Fall and Original Sin (as they are developed from SAEF) are important in that they communicate that we exist in a world that is “fallen” or sinful: that this is not the world for which we were created and that, therefore, we are in need of redemption. Still more importantly, they make it clear that God does not create the sin and evil that seek to consume this world; the dynamic internal to creation itself that is originally responsible for the existence of sin and evil. And they are important, therefore, in their emphasis that sin and evil are primarily an expression of alienation from God; they arise in a creation that seeks its own moral autonomy over against loving and obedient fellowship with God.

In short, although the doctrines of Original Sin and the Fall have an important role to play in revealing the nature of our current situation, it is not clear that it is necessary for us to see them as being grounded in “the occurrence of a historical event involving our first ancestors (41).” Nor is it obvious that it is helpful to view such an historical event as having a decisive role in the aetiology of evil—that there is evil in the world simply because of a historical act of disobedience by a distant ancestor.

Can we not again say that couched in this teaching is an inspired witness to God’s purposes and our failings—a witness that needs to be interpreted fully in the light of the Word made flesh, the one through whom and for whom all things are created—an interpretation that will provide a much more profound account of God’s actions than is served by a literal, historical rendering of the aetiology of sin? This would enable us to say: “I cannot begin to understand or suggest why God permits the kind of evil we see in the world. However, SAEF is the best story we are given to help us understand the nature of our contribution to the current situation?” With this kind of response, we humbly acknowledge our inability to explain why evil exists. It may well be that we could not begin to understand the reasons for why God permits evil—such reasons may only be understandable by the transcendent God. But would that be in tension with SAEF?

It seems central to the message of SAEF that we need to recognise our second-order place before God. Insofar as SAEF associates the Fall with eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, SAEF appears to suggest that there is some knowledge that is not proper to creaturely knowing. As Gerhard von Rad writes on the Genesis narrative, “Man in his original state was completely *subject* to God’s command, and the question, “Who will say to him, What doest thou?” (Job 9.12; Dan 4.35b) was equally out of place in Paradise” (1972, 80–81). SAEF tells us that there is a certain order to human knowing according to which obedience to God’s commands takes priority over an autonomous human knowledge that seeks to understand creation in its own terms.

It would appear that Hudson may agree with the general direction of the arguments above. If so, one is left asking why we should go to the effort of positing the Hypertime Hypothesis when one could assert that SAEF is a poetic rendering of history while still maintaining its importance? To reiterate, Hudson’s demonstration that science alone cannot deny that SAEF actually happened is admirable. The

concern, however, is whether *The Fall and Hypertime* gives SAEF the wrong kind of attention in order to make the intended point. Is it really the case that “the primary function” of SAEF is “to document the occurrence of a historical event involving our first ancestors who were also persons” (41), as Hudson suggests? Or is its primary function to communicate something about the nature of our relationship to God in terms that we can understand? If it is the former, then I may well be the one who is missing the point. If, however, it is the latter, it is not clear why SAEF should be interpreted as grounded in actual historical events in the manner that Hudson defends.

Conclusion

Problem-solving is an essential part of apologetics. In the contemporary secular world, it can serve an important role in the mission of the Church by helping to defend Christian beliefs against those who attack them as problematic. Also, it can be part of a game that serves to test a person’s cognitive ingenuity. These two functions are not necessarily incompatible; there is no reason why a person cannot enjoy the challenge of defending Christianity against those who regard it as problematic. However, if problem-solving is to serve the Church, the latter function must always be subservient to the former—the game must always be played to defend Christian beliefs against attacks. If, instead, the former function is subservient to the latter, then Christian beliefs become a way to play a game. Under these circumstances, Christian thought risks being given the wrong kind of attention, in a way that lessens and distorts its explanatory power. Consequently, when Christians engage in problem-solving for the sake of defending Christian beliefs, they need to ensure that their commitment to this task is ultimately drawing attention to the right thing. At the very least, this may suggest a need for an appendix to a piece of puzzle-solving that clarifies how it serves the Church and its task of theology.

In many respects, *The Fall and Hypertime* does not require this. One of the main ways in which it is able to serve the Church is quite clear from the outset: it seeks to expose the inability of science *qua* empirical science to deny a biblical understanding of history in the way that it is often presumed to be able to do. Still further, it serves to expand the metaphysical imagination of its readers in a way that could encourage a greater openness to theism (or, at least, something beyond physics) on the part of its sceptics.

That said, it would have been good to see a note of clarification that gave more explicit and in-depth attention to the question as to how this book might shed positive light on the theology of SAEF: on the role of SAEF as a story that witnesses to God and God’s acts of revelation.

This, of course, was not the primary task of the book and the concern I have articulated should not be interpreted as an attempt to undermine what *The Fall and Hypertime* set out to achieve. To this extent, there is little one would want Hudson to leave out of his book, whose intellectual rigour and analytic cogency is hard to critique. What needs to be emphasised is that its primary contribution lies in its

capacity to deliver a deep appreciation of the place and scope of metaphysics in the interpretation of Scripture and, perhaps, a humbler perception of the capacity of science to call into question a theological view of history. For this reason, Hudson's contribution in this impressive book has profound significance for the theological task.

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