Doctrine of Creation

Vern S. Poythress

Westminster Theological Seminary
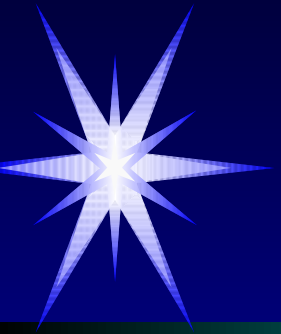
A. Definition of Creation
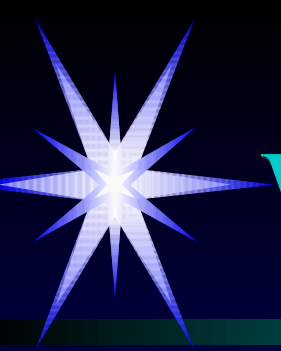
What Is Creation?

"Creation is the act of God alone
by which he brings into existence
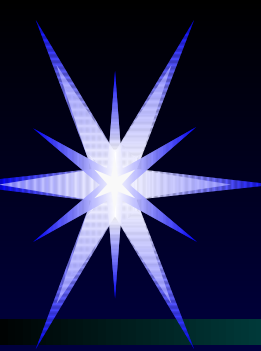what had no existence prior to the created
world."
(As described in Genesis 1:1-2:1.)
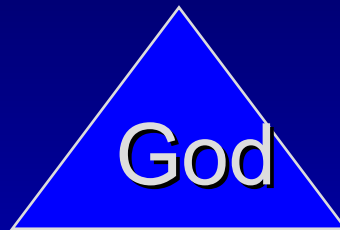
Creation Takes Place in Time

➤ Creation involves specific acts in time.
➤ The act of creating has a beginning and an end.
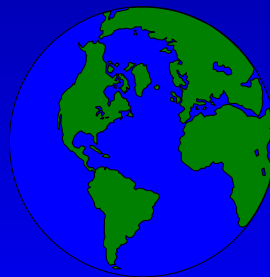➤ Creation is not eternal, not always taking place.

Beginning

End

God creates

providence,
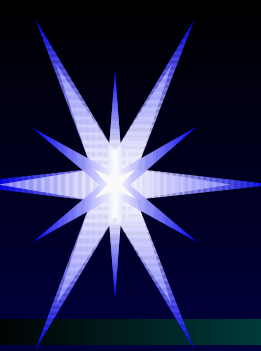not creation
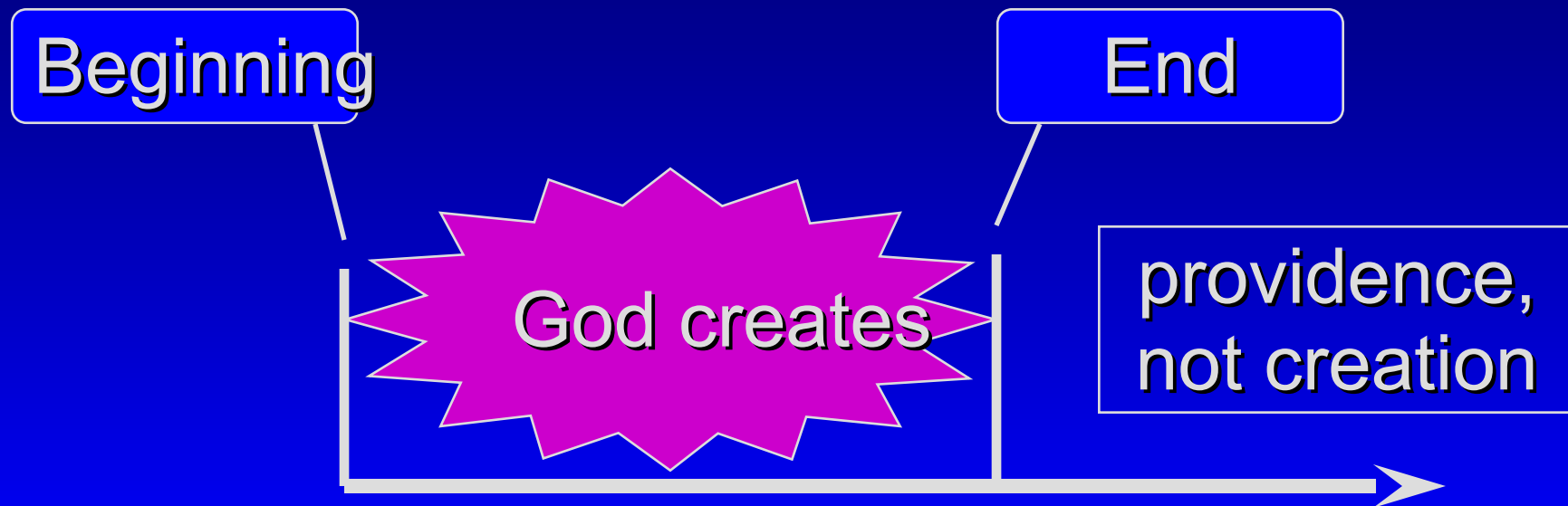
Creation Is Distinct

➤ Creation is distinct from God, not an emanation that participates in divine being.

God

distinction

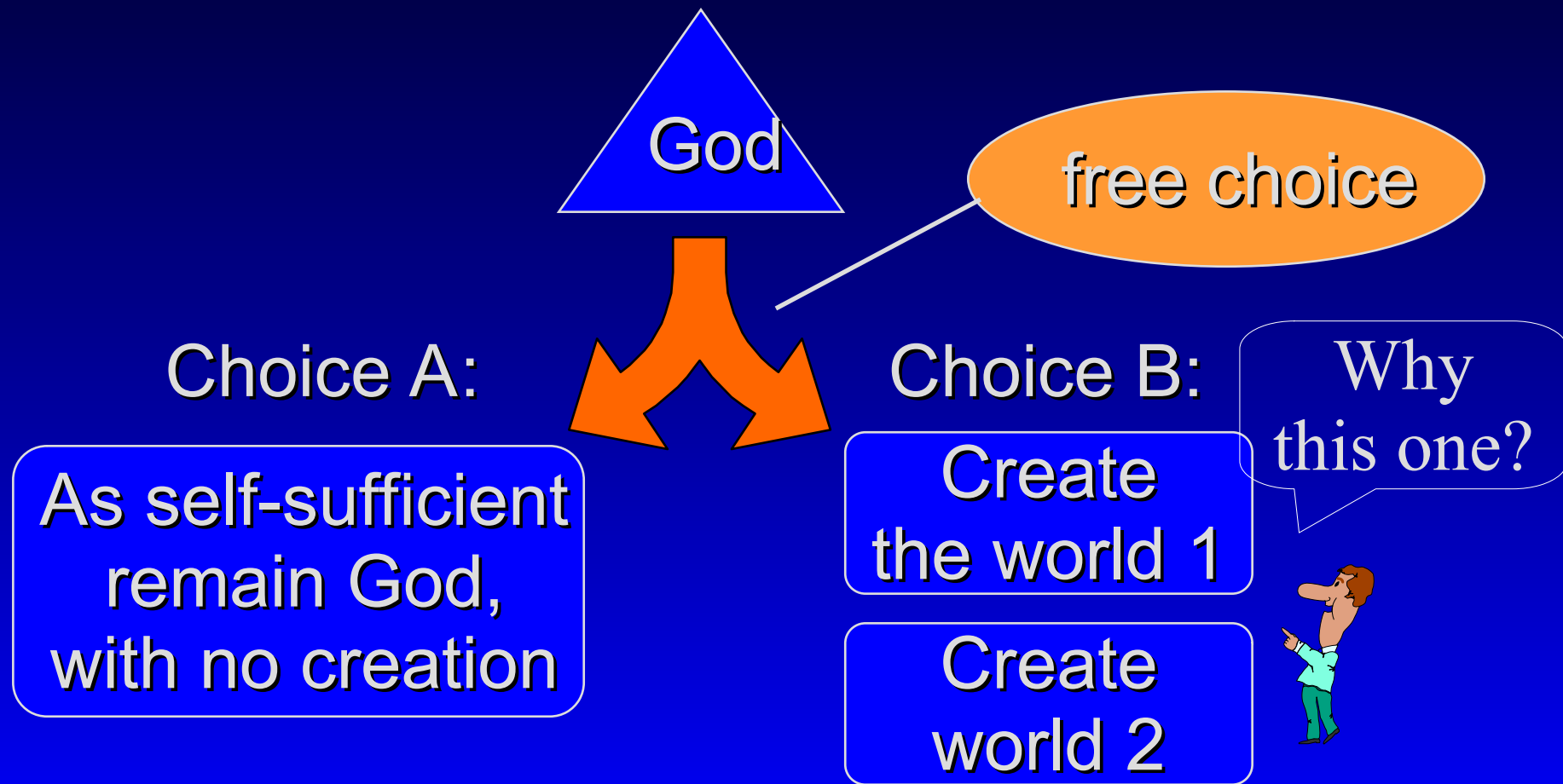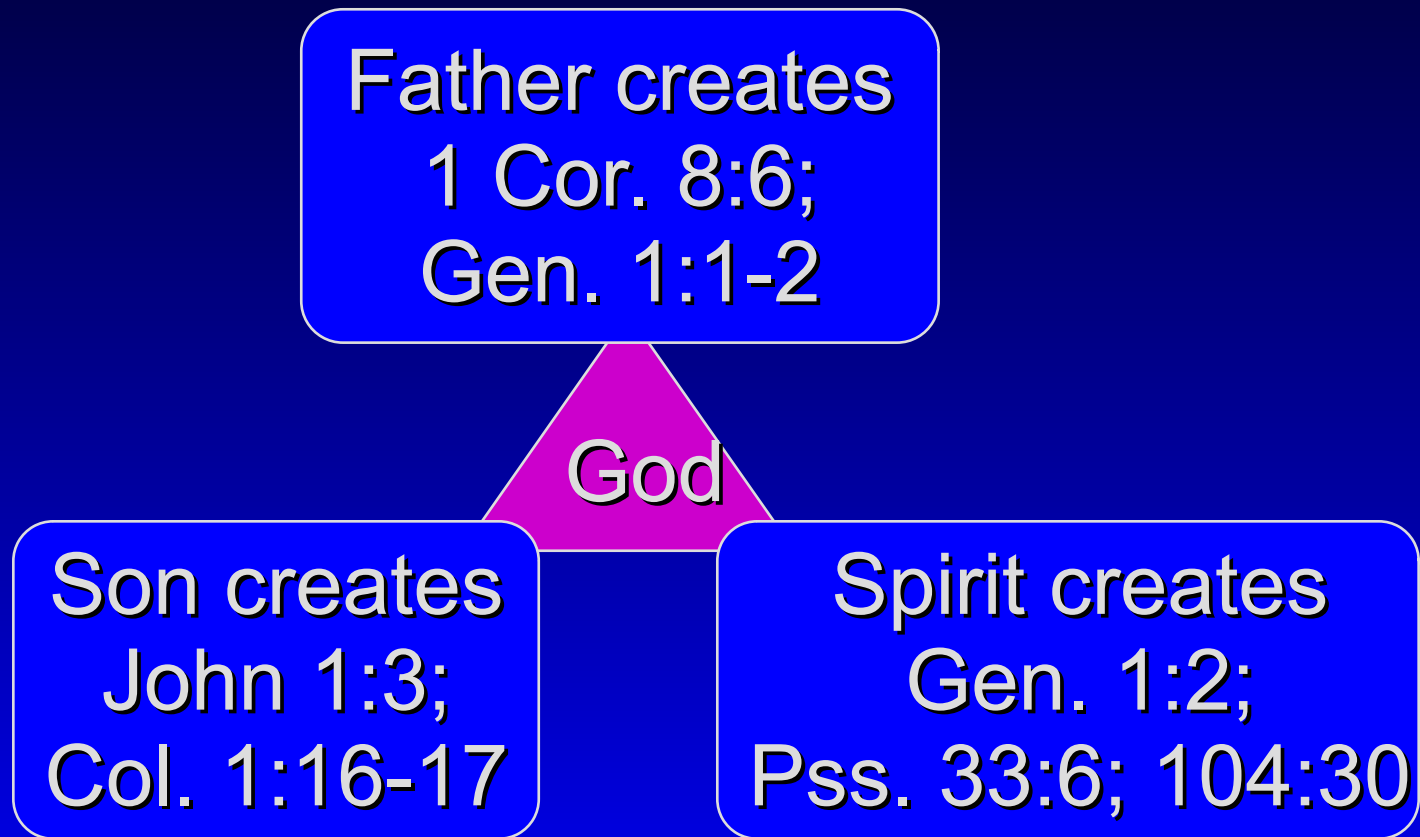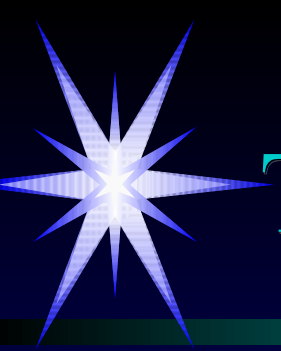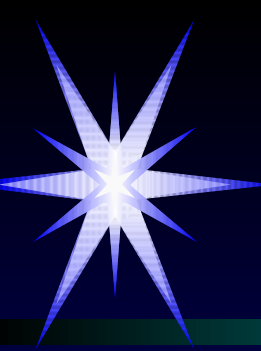No gnosticism or pantheism

CC: MSFT gallery

Creation Is a Free Act of God

God

free choice

Choice A:

As self-sufficient remain God, with no creation

Choice B:

Create the world 1

Create world 2

Why this one?

Creation as Trinitarian

Father creates
1 Cor. 8:6;
Gen. 1:1-2

God

Son creates
John 1:3;
Col. 1:16-17

Spirit creates
Gen. 1:2;
Pss. 33:6; 104:30

Three Persons with Distinct Roles

Father as Speaker: Origin

God

Son as Word: Structure

Spirit as Breath: Empowerer
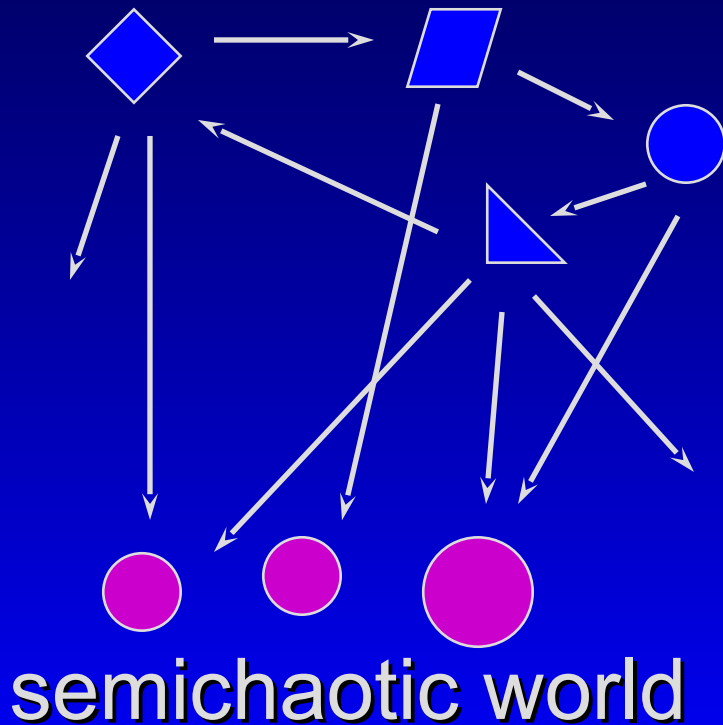
By speaking.
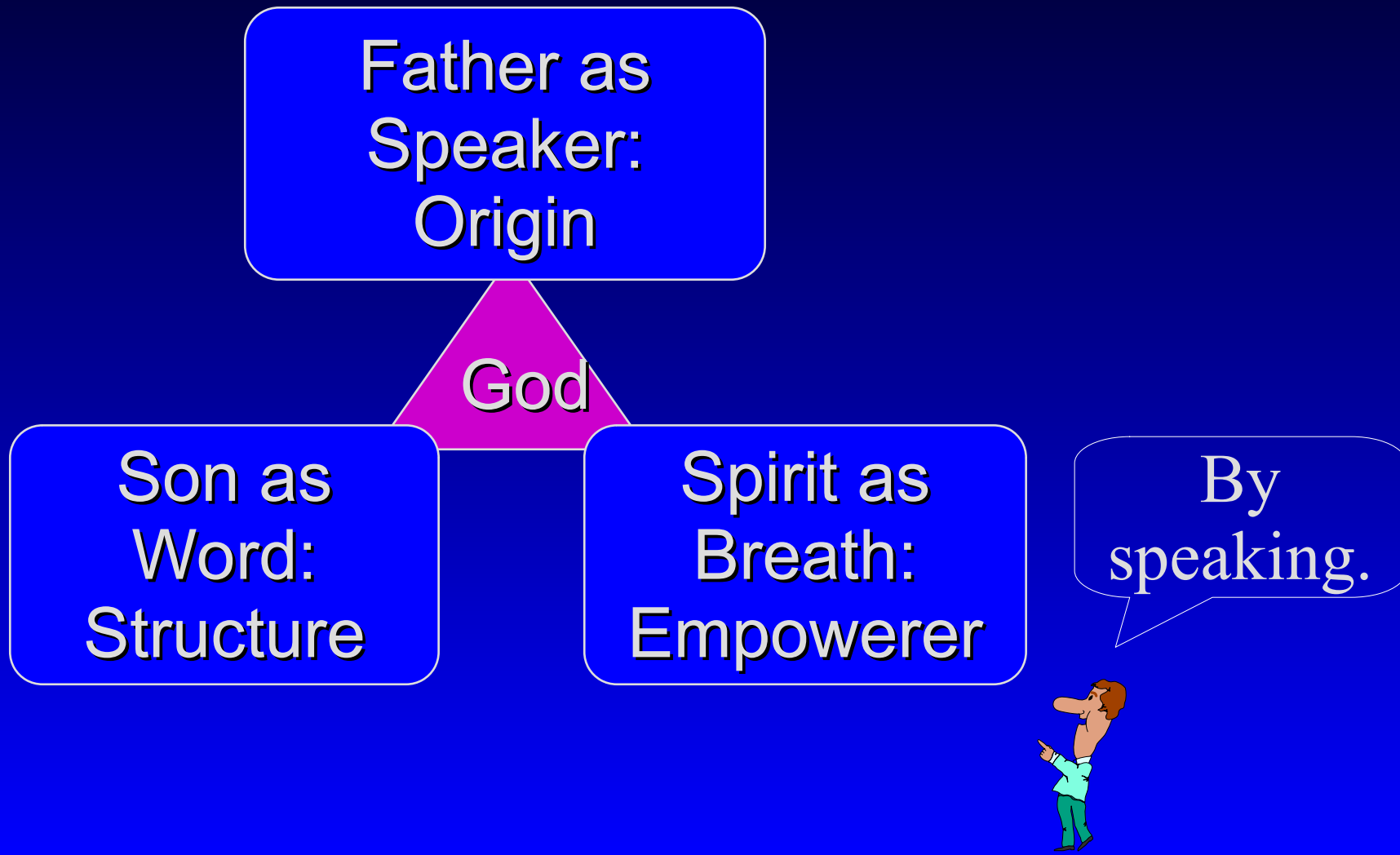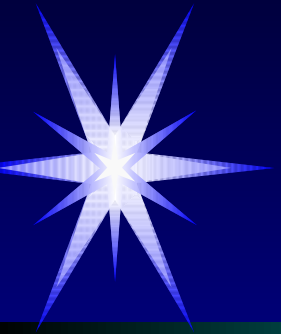
B. Theism vs. Polytheism

in Genesis 1-2
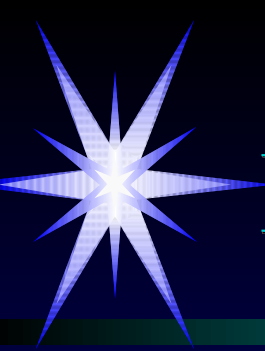
Many Sources vs. One

Polytheism:

Monotheism:

One God

one plan

Coherent, not chaotic.

unified creation

semichaotic world
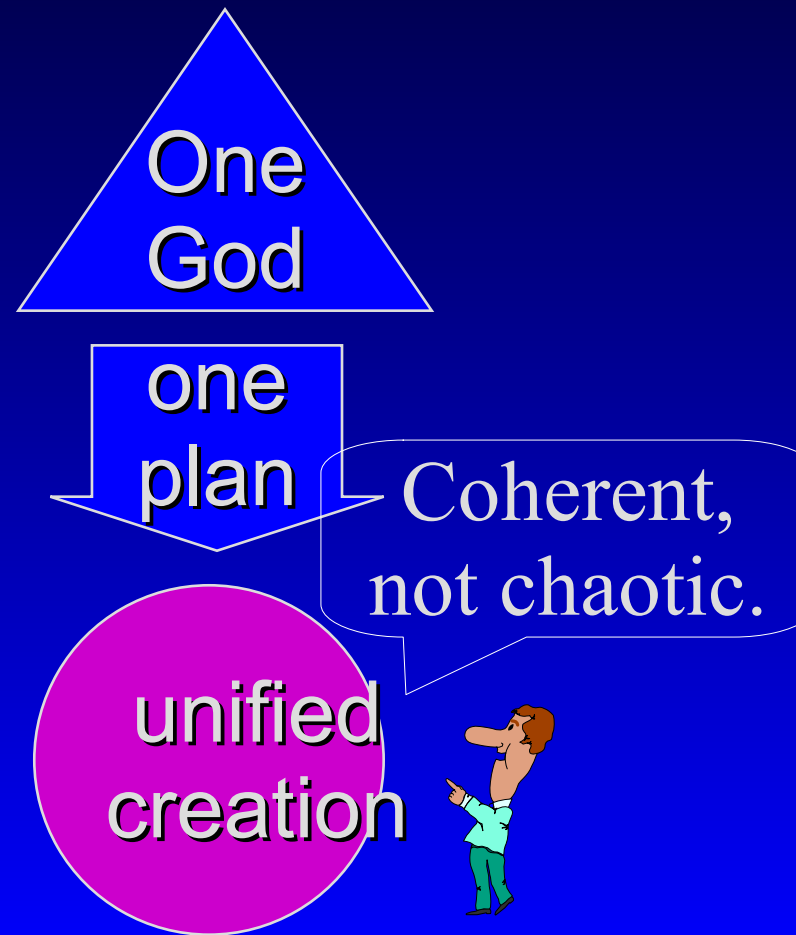
Independent vs. Dependent World

Polytheism:

Biblical theism:

God

totally controls
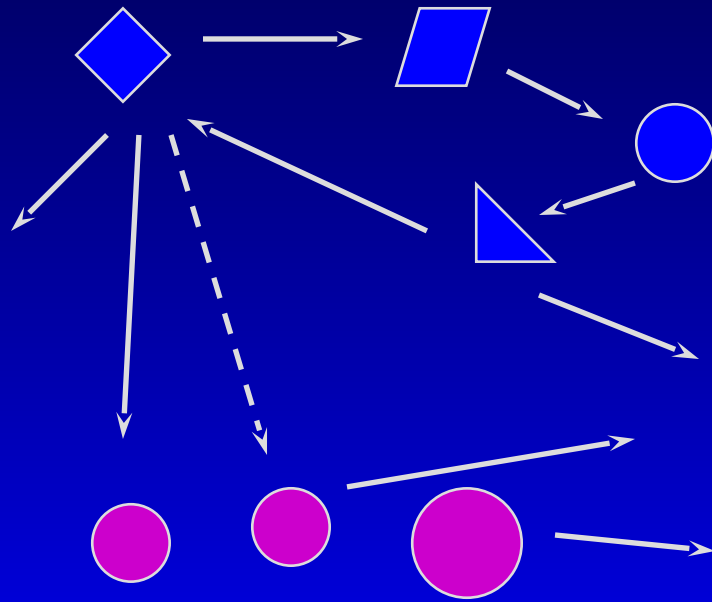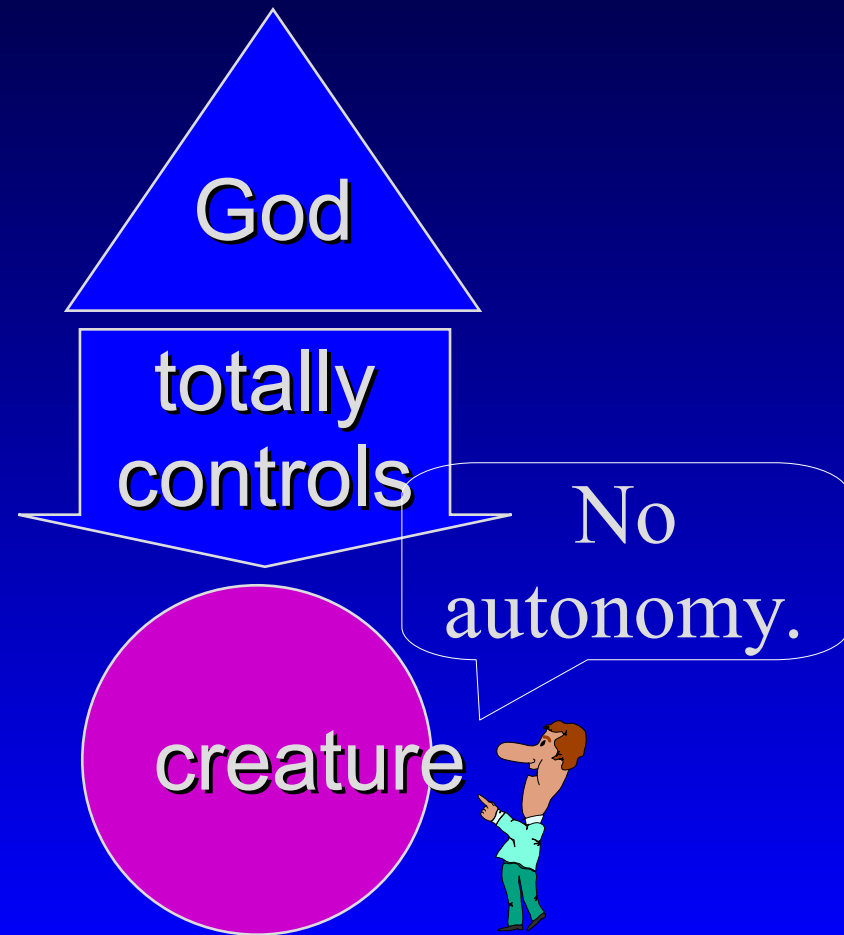
creature

No autonomy.

semi-independent world

Idols vs. God Alone

Polytheism:

Biblical theism:

God

worship God alone

creature

worship of images

creation is desacralized

Position of Mankind

Polytheism:

great men
are semi-
divine

slaves
are like
animals

Biblical theism:

God

man is
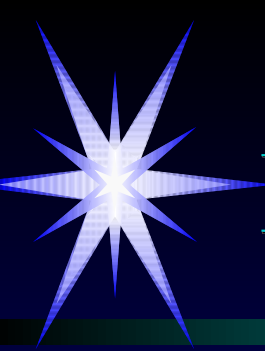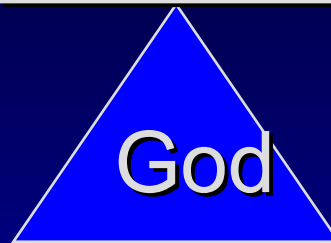creature

with unique
nature, role,
and dominion

CC: Logos Bible Clips

Mythic vs. Factual Account of Creation

Polytheism:

Let's make up a myth to express our feelings and guesses.
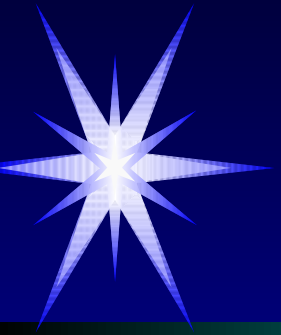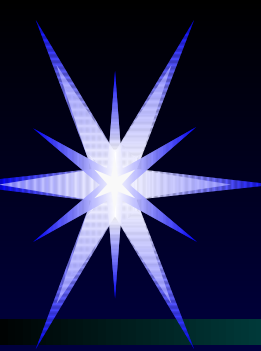
CC: Logos Bible Clips\

Biblical theism:

God

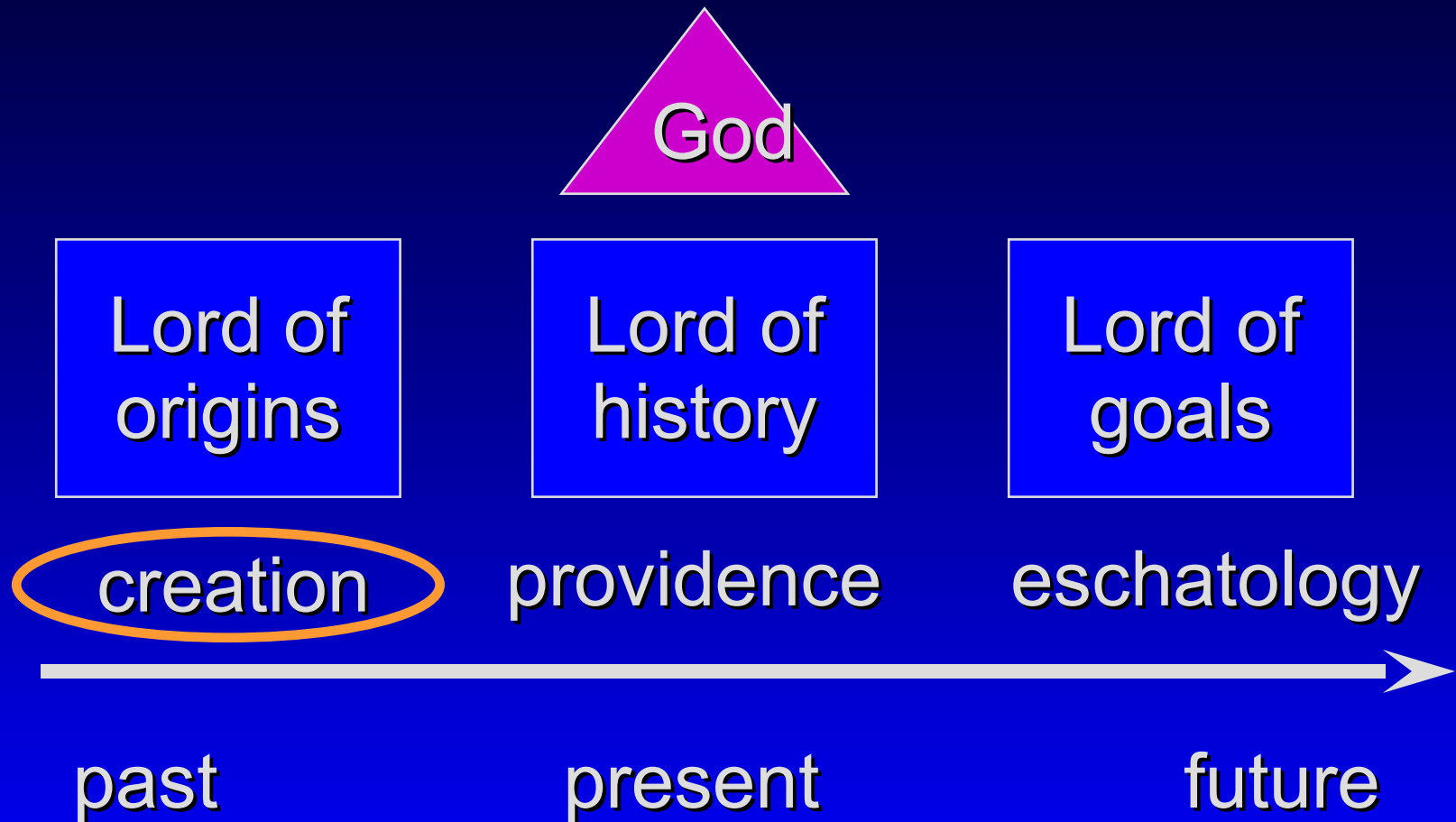Let me tell you how it happened.

➤ Integrated into later genealogical histories (Gen. 5:1ff).

➤ Treated as fact in later Scripture, 1 Cor. 15:22.

C. The Importance of the Doctrine of Creation

Creation Asserts God's Lordship

God

Lord of origins	Lord of history	Lord of goals
creation	providence	eschatology

past   present   future
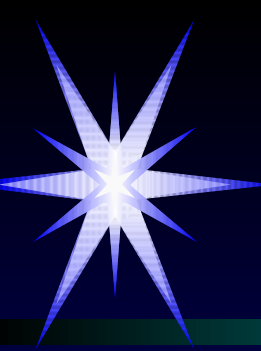
Creedal Importance

The Apostles' Creed:

I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth. And in Jesus Christ his only Son our Lord.

➤ Nicene Creed

➤ Augsburg Confession
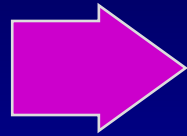
➤ Belgic Confession

➤ Westminster Confession

Pretty consistent.

Biblical Appeal to Creation

power of God in creation → power of God in **redemption**

"Our help is in the name of the LORD, the Maker of heaven and earth" (Ps. 124:8).
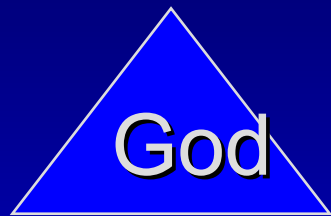
Confidence.

Creation as Ultimate Framework

➤ Creation "frames" our understanding of <u>everything</u>.

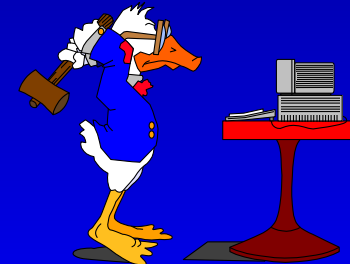Creation

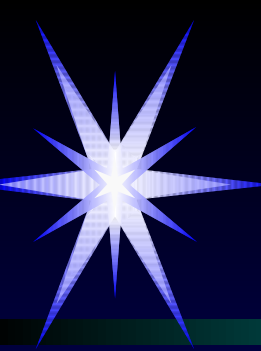Now I have it in perspective.

God Is Lord of "Insides" of Things

➤ God is complete Lord of all aspects of things; he is not just doing "the best he can" with recalcitrant material.
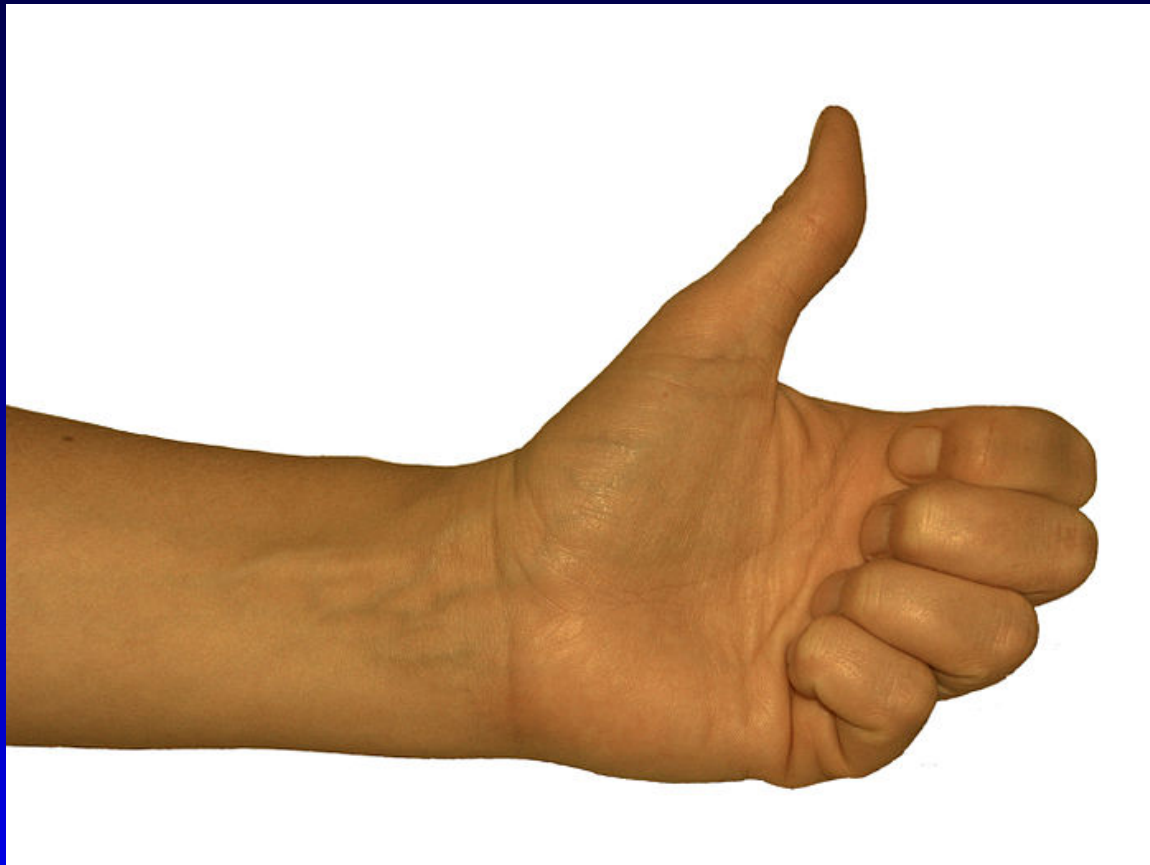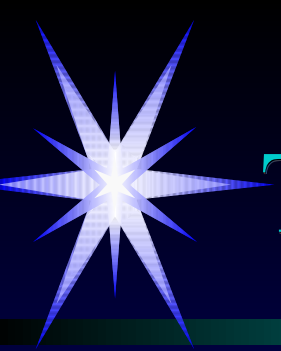
God

No problem.

Stupid machine!

MSFT gallery

Examples of God's Design: Hand
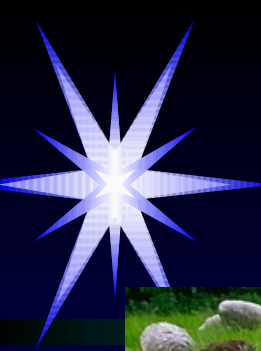

Remarkable!

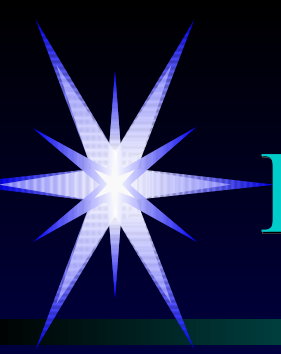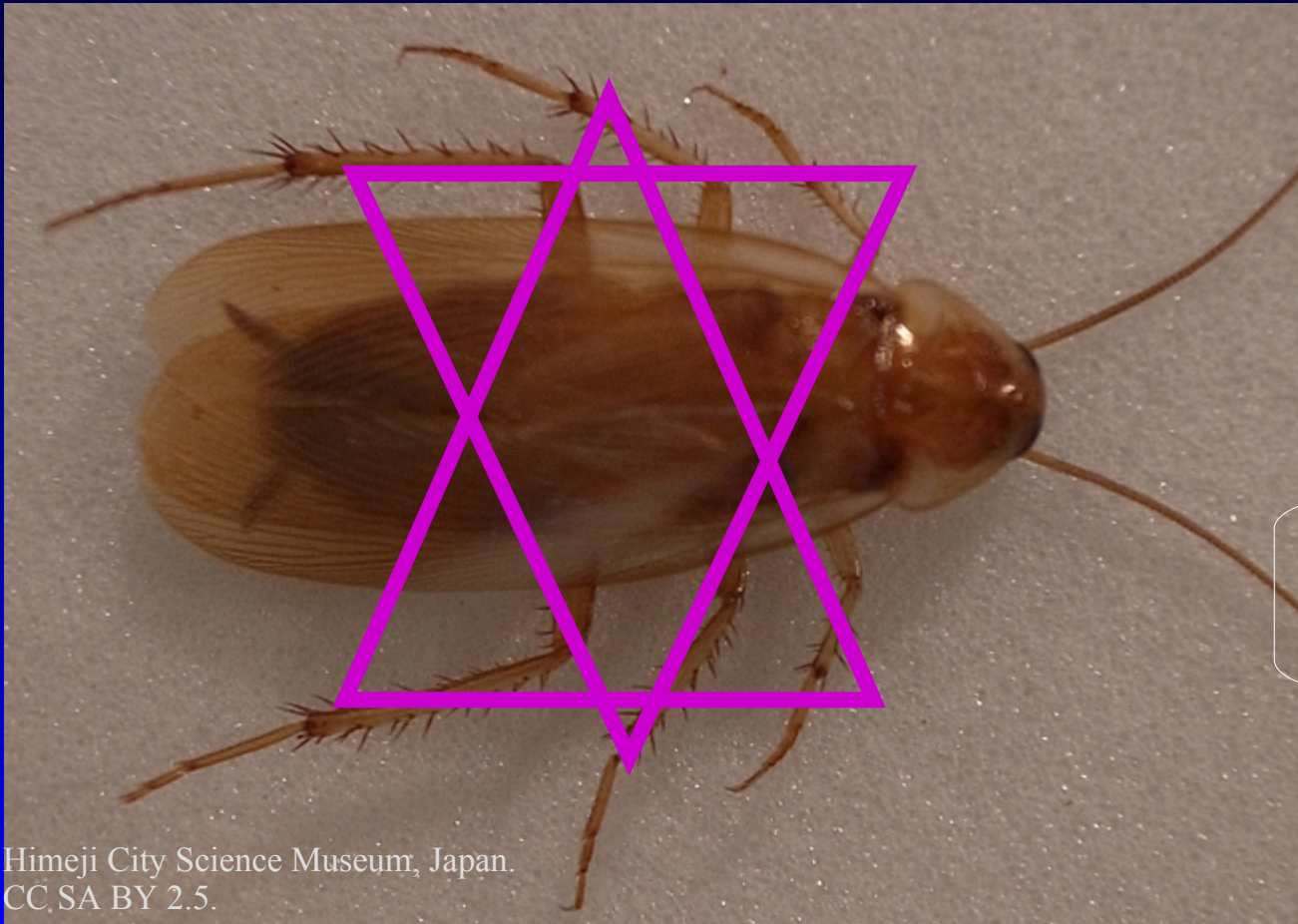# The Leaf as Energy Supplier

CC0

God Acting for Grass

CC0

"You cause the grass to grow for the livestock, …" (Ps. 104:14).

Design: Cockroach Locomotion

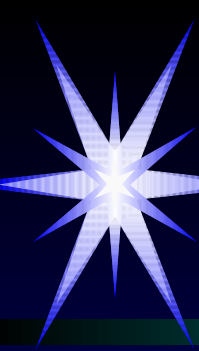Himeji City Science Museum, Japan.
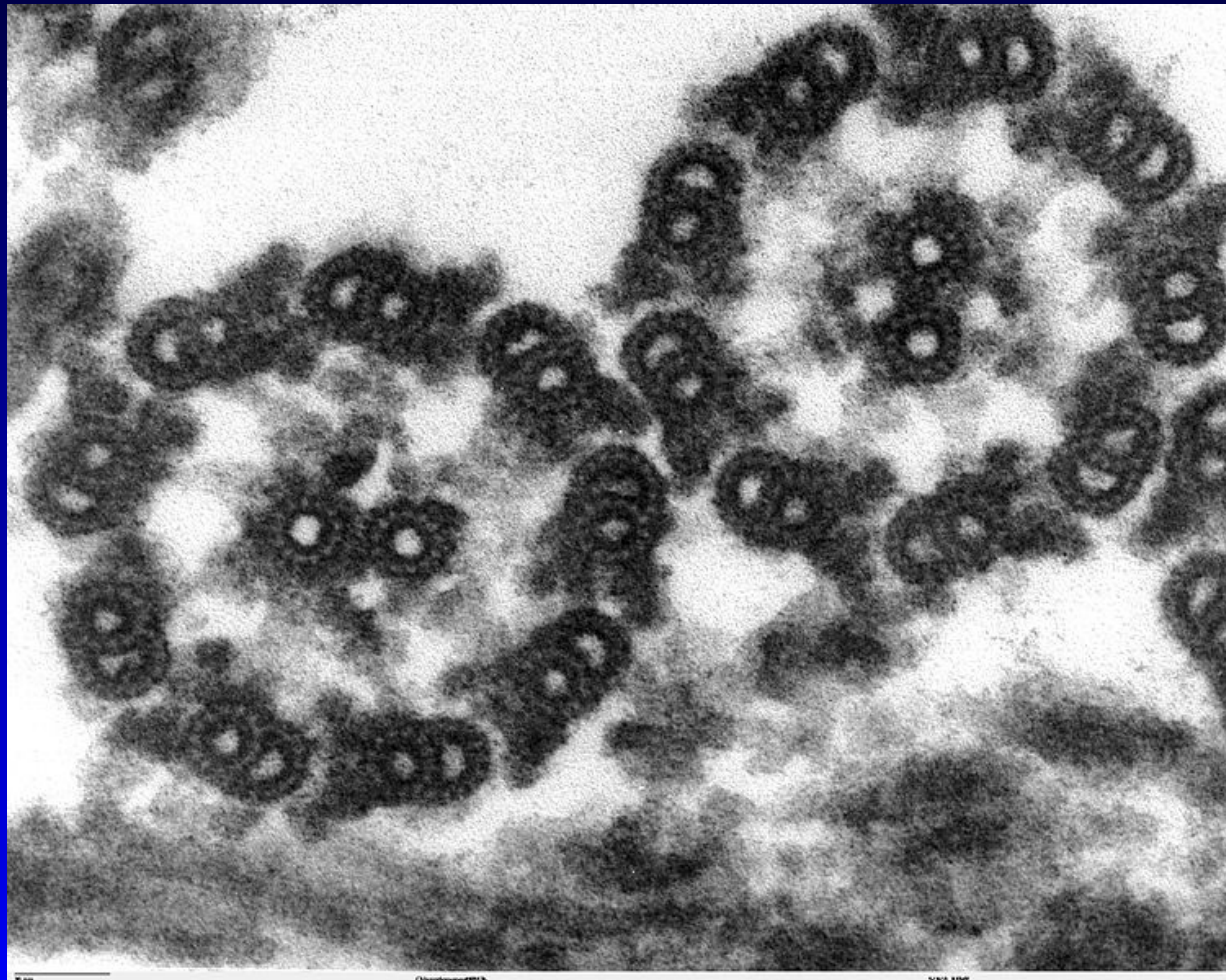CC SA BY 2.5.

Remarkable!

Designing a Flagellum

How'd he do that?
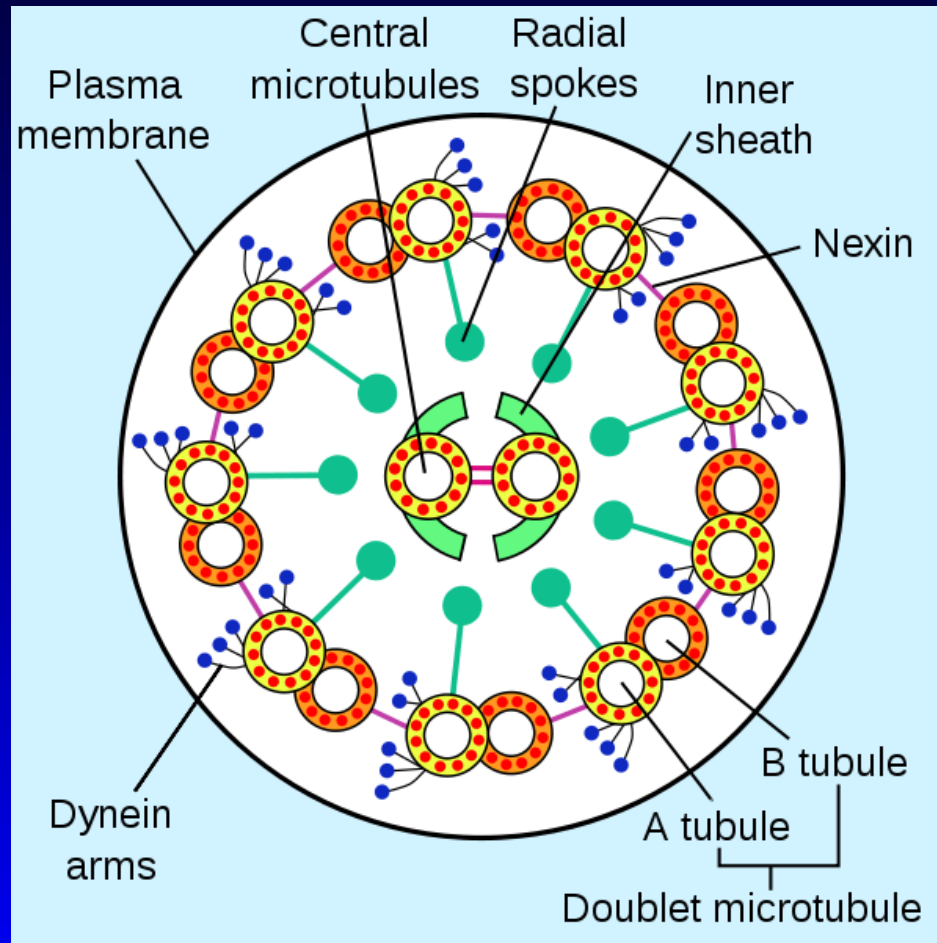
Flagellum Cross Section

Flagellum Cross Section (2)

Flagellum Diagram

Tip

Hook

Filament

Junction

L-ring

Rod

P-ring

Outer membrane

Cell wall

Periplasmic space

Stator

Inner membrane

MS-ring

C-ring

Type III secretion system
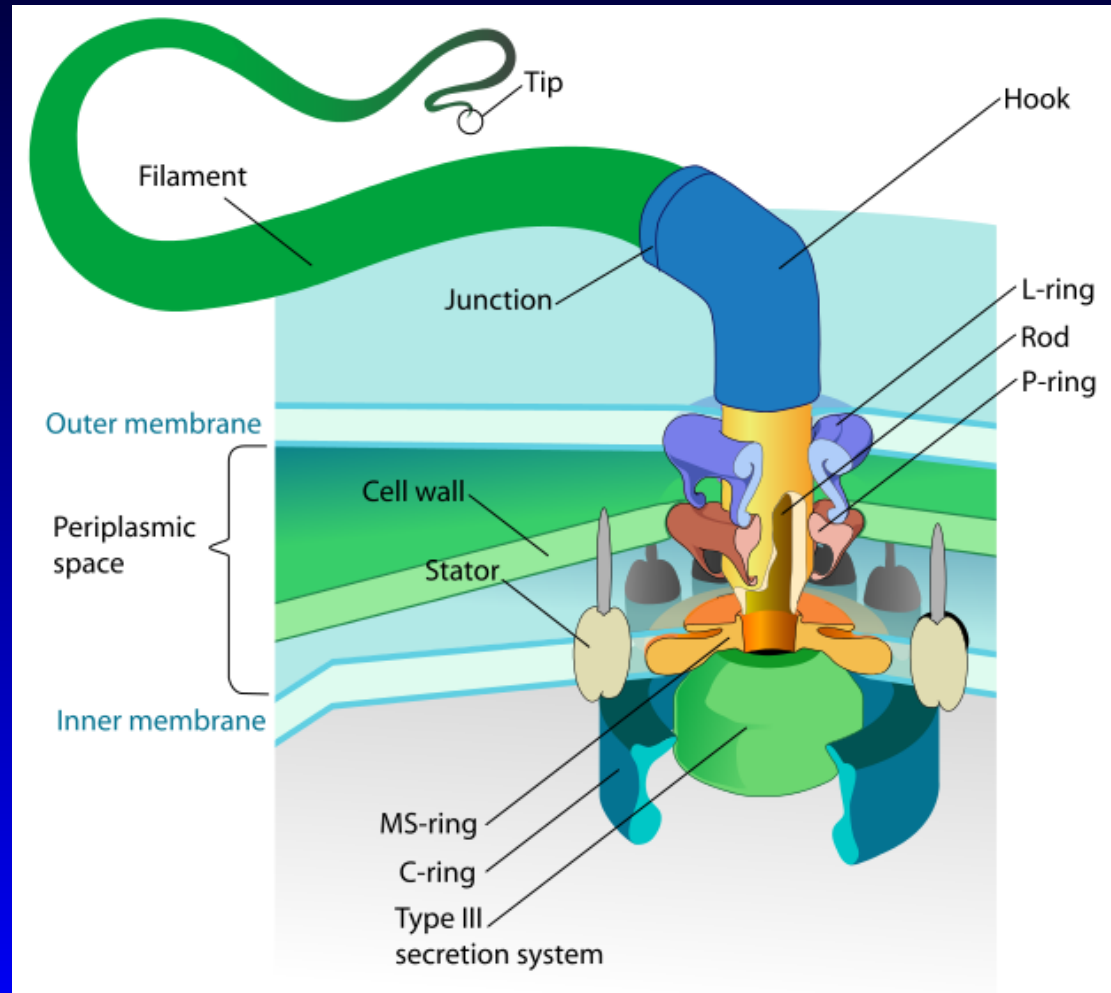
Human Creativity Imaging God

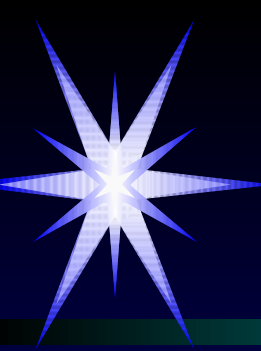God — creates motor for flagellum

man — creates motor for car

Man shows God's glory.

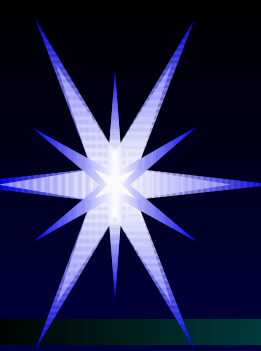# Response to God's Creation

Glory
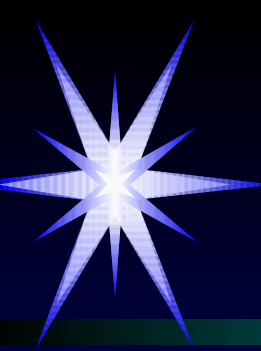
Rom. 1:21

Thanksgiving

Rebellion

or

Song from Rev. 4:11

Thou art worthy, Thou art worthy,
Thou are worthy, O Lord.

Thou are worthy to receive glory,
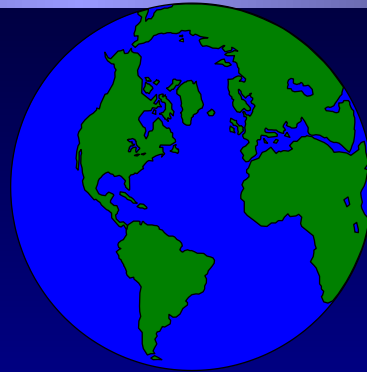glory, and honor, and power.

For Thou hast created--
hast all things created,
For Thou hast created all things.

And for Thy pleasure they are created;
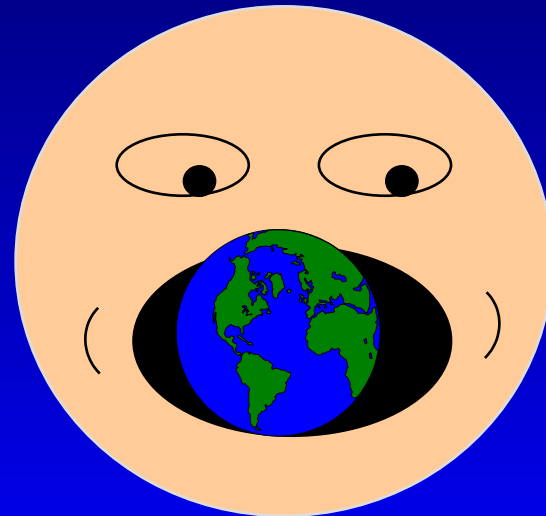Thou art worthy, O Lord.

Dangers with Secularism

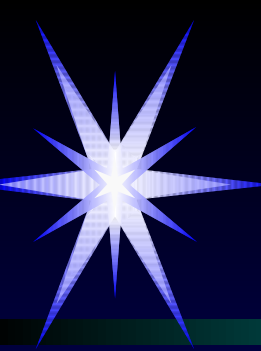➤ Pure rejection (fundamentalists)

➤ Pure acceptance (evangelicals following lust and materialism)

Not so good.

MSFT gallery

Biblical Response to Dangers

- Pure rejection (fundamentalists)

- Pure acceptance (evangelicals following lust and materialism)

- God's hand in creation invites engagement, not withdrawal.

- Seeing God satisfies and delivers from idols.

- Satisfaction with simple things.

D. Modern Worldviews Opposing Creation

- Polytheism and spiritism.
- Pantheism, in Hinduism and New Age movement, as well as some philosophies.
- Process philosophy has a finite god.
- Secularism says that the universe is uncreated and man is independent, autonomous.
- Religion as personal choice: whatever god you want!