As the assumptions of orthodoxy continue to be brought into subjugation via linguistic, phenomenological and various scientific approaches to religion, many theologians have found it necessary to seek alternative methods to begin rearticulating the faith in mediums that are more congruent with existential encounter, scientific approaches and post-modern worldviews rather than with traditional dogmatic faith claims. One such theologian is Gordon D. Kaufman and his proposed theological project as displayed in his magnum opus, *In Face of Mystery* (1993) and his most recent works *In the Beginning...Creativity* (2004) and *Jesus and Creativity* (2006). For Kaufman, one cannot do theology where the church was but must do it where it is today.¹ The conviction of his work is that the grammar of the faith, of the Christian Church, is still substantive but that the grammar communicates in vaguely understood, misleadingly narrow, or even intellectually dishonest ways considering our place on the continuum of history. Kaufman offers the Church an alternative approach to theology that attempts to take into consideration the meaning of Christian symbols while also considering the truthfulness of modern scientific knowledge.

An excurses into the sciences and theology, however, imply a conversation about metaphysics. For Kaufman, the best metaphysical postulations are extremely creative and carry with them an inherent sense of meaning. Ancient metaphysics, however, do

---

¹ Gordon D. Kaufman, *An Essay on Theological Method* (Missoula: Scholars Press, 1979), 60. “A major difficulty confronting contemporary theology is the seeming lack of appropriateness or relevance of traditional theological vocabulary to contemporary experience...we cannot address this problem by repeating the same old theological vocabulary, ever louder and more emphatically...what is required are fresh attempts to think through and interpret contemporary experience and knowledge theologically.”
not account for contemporary perspectives or knowledge and, therefore, fail to be intelligible to the world around us and the people who reside therein. For Kaufman, theology is a constructive task. It must continually and creatively construct the world of meaning with symbols it has been given, give new meaning to old symbols, or create new symbols altogether. Kaufman’s theological project is a constructive attempt to *re-cast* ancient Christian symbols into symbols of meaning congruent with contemporary perspectives, especially that of the scientific community as it relates to cosmic origins.

The result may be a continuation of the traditional symbolic Christian structure or new

---

2 Kaufman takes this cue from Kant’s critique of speculative metaphysical postulations. His work, *In the Beginning...Creativity* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2004), 107-127, contains a brief theological autobiography in which he unpacks his interest in Kant and the continuing influence thereof. Kaufman is suspicious of speculative metaphysical flight due, among other things, to his own experiential inability to encounter what people call the “holy.” He ascribes to this experiential remiss his belief that an “experience of God” is a Kantian categorical mistake. Philosophically speaking, God is not a category that can be apprehended to be ex-perienced. God is a symbol used to order and valuate reality, not necessarily a concrete abstraction to which one can be related. Metaphysics in the classical sense is challenged on three main fronts by Kant, all of which influence Kaufman’s work, and include: the presence of antinomies, the assertion that metaphysics cannot undermine the freedom of will that produces moral responsibility, and Hume’s critique that cause and effect are not necessarily dependent categories but Thomistic holdovers that have no logical connection. A recent critique of the Kantian turn is offered by Connor Cunningham’s work, *Genealogy of Nihilism*, (New York: Routledge, 2002), 74-99. Cunningham concludes that Kant is successful in saying no-thing and making any/every-thing disappear, thus reducing Kant to the long line of Nihilists that produces the thought of Lacan, Derrida, Badiou, Zizek, etc. Not wishing to circumvent this crucial Kantian nihilistic debate and its impact on contemporary philosophical theology, one can only suggest that Kaufman’s work is an attempt to turn-around the nihilism and critique of Kant toward a theology that can say something creatively…but indeed say something. Kant’s suspicions need not result only in nihilism.

3 Gordon D. Kaufman, *An Essay on Theological Method*, 24. Again, enter Kant, “For our purposes, the importance of Kant was his discovery that the concepts or images of God and the world are imaginative constructs, created by the mind for certain intra-mental functions and, thus, of a different logical order than the concepts and images which we have of the objects of experience,” Hence, if humanity has been, and is, busy about imaginatively constructing a world of meaning in which to live, so must contemporary theology continue this imaginative attempt and not find itself statically locked into ancient valuations of meaning. The task of theology is not to presuppose norms, but to test the norms and categories of God, Christ, etc., and determine their usefulness or discard them and embrace other symbols that may provide meaning, *Essay on Method*, 1-17. Noting the dogmatism of neo-orthodoxy, Kaufman writes that “any intelligent interested persons should be able to follow the reasoning [of the theologians decisions] and understand the [theological] steps being taken,” in Gordon Kaufman, *In Face of Mystery* (Cambridge: Harvard, 1993), 85. Proper theological method takes nothing for granted nor does it assume a creed. Rather, it builds a case for its method outside of Tillich’s theological circle so that others can make sense of its claims. He notes this constructive task of theology in numerous places of his writing including his *God the Problem* (Cambridge: Harvard, 1972) 17-37, *An Essay on Theological Method*, 21-41, *Theological Imagination* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1981), 11-57 and *In Face of Mystery*, 33-59.
appropriation thereof altogether.

Kaufman emphasizes throughout his work that methodology is tantamount to a theology having any bearing on the world to which it speaks. As my old professor of New Testament would never tire of stressing, “where one begins will determine where one ends up.” Kaufman understands the theological task as re-building the Christian theological edifice to coincide with a concept of God, and then subsequent theological categories of Trinity, Christ, salvation, etc., that are congruent within a presupposed evolutionary biohistorical perspective. Under this paradigm, Kaufman employs three terms (more to be mentioned below) that aid in this new construction: biohistorical evolutionary, serendipitous creativity and trajectory. It is from these perspectives that Kaufman seeks to understand Jesus, and the Christ event, through a thorough revision of what can be meant by the term God in our modern/postmodern worldview. If the world in which one does theology has changed in the past two thousand years, so must the theological concepts that have been created in another time and place that reflect different modes of knowledge, awareness and experience.

In light of the following, this paper proposes to do three things. First, it seeks to

---

4 Among the myriad of professors of theology to make this emphasis, it was brought to my attention by Dr. Daniel B. Spross and then demonstrated through the process of biblical exegesis.

5 The biohistorical evolutionary/ecological move plays a major role in In Face of Mystery and the more recent texts expounding creativity and pluralism. This theme will greatly influence Kaufman’s Christology and the radical ethics he will later espouse.

6 For a nuanced perspective on the functionality of the symbol ‘God’ see In the Beginning...Creativity, 1-32 and In Face of Mystery, 3-17; 301-340. John Hick also offers some insights in the process oriented text, The Metaphor of God Incarnate, 2nd ed., (Louisville: Westminster John Knox 2005), 27-46.

7 Kaufman notes that one of his theological mentors, Paul Tillich, was not able to see where theology must now be taken. Tillich’s insistence that theology speak to, and with, culture, however, provides an avenue to continue to speak theology into, with, our culture today. See Gordon Kaufman, “Reconceiving God and Humanity in Light of today’s Evolutionary-Ecological Consciousness,” in Religion in the New Millennium, ed. Raymond F. Bulman & Frederick J. Parrella (Macon: Mercer University Press, 2001), 236-238.
present Kaufman’s doctrine of Creativity (God). What does it mean to conceive of God thus? Attention will also be given here to elucidating his anthropology as a biohistorical evolutionary reality and the role it plays in his theological method, making note of the production of historical trajectories. Secondly, it will analyze the relationship between Jesus and creativity. If one cannot talk about God as a person, but only as creativity, what are the implications in Christian tradition for speaking about Jesus? In what way does Jesus incarnate creativity or creativity incarnate his ministry? What is this relationship exactly? Emphasis will be given to Kaufman’s thesis concerning his “Jesus Trajectory” and its connectivity with a biohistorical evolutionary perspective. Lastly, the paper will present Kaufman’s resulting Christology and its meritable relation to salvation, an always close category of Christology.

Creativity/God and Biohistorical Assertions

Kaufman’s recent work on Jesus is antecedently dependent on his thoroughgoing revision of a responsible doctrine of God in a post-modern evolutionary world. In his *In Face of Mystery*, Kaufman shifts the symbol of God away from metaphysical ontological speculation and into the realm of an empirically (somewhat) verifiable notion of God he calls “creativity.” Following Ludwig Fuerbach, Kaufman argues that the image of God upon which Christianity is predicated is nothing more than a reflection of itself. Theology has been largely anthropology; a demonstration of the human desire to be coercive, powerful and transcendent. Throughout the biblical story and subsequent theological endeavors, God is demonstrated as an agent with body parts of various sorts and acting in quite human ways, albeit with penultimate powers that finite humans can
never attain. In Nietzschen language, one could say that Kaufman suggests the symbol of God has become, and historically used, as nothing more than the divinization of the famed Ubermensch. Kaufman suggests a shift from this perspective and argues for a non-anthropocentric vision of divinity. He offers a biohistorical evolutionary perspective of God that continues the creative elements of the Gospel story but leaves behind the anthropocentric overtones, and necessarily the ontological baggage therewith. Kaufman shifts the focus from that which can be ontologically (un)-grasped, to that which is beyond ontology…indeed to that which enlivens being itself: creativity.

Kaufman’s proposal includes a shift away from the metaphorical identity of God and the highly anthropocentrized concepts of Lord, Father, Creator, and the inclusion of the universal concept of “serendipitous creativity.” For Kaufman, the mystery of the universe, that which grounds existence and produces further existence, and that toward which humanity has always attempted to grasp a better understanding of life through its religious propensities, is creativity. Creativity is God and God is creativity at work in the universe. God is not a person, a thing, or a time/spatial referent within or beyond reference. God is the presence and ongoing manifestation of mysterious creativity that has brought life into existence and continues to take life towards the future. It is not just

---

8 Kaufman, In the Beginning...Creativity, 4-6. Kaufman’s work is not alone in this critique. This critique has been imposed from many corners of theology including the conservative radical orthodox movement, to process thought and even into post-theistic conceptions. An excellent discussion of the possible limitations that divinity must have regardless of one’s orthodox stance can be found in Thomas J. Oord’s proposal, “A Process Wesleyan Theodicy,” in Thy Name and Thy Nature is Love, ed. Bryan P. Stone & Thomas Jay Oord (Nashville: Kingswood, 2001), 193-216.

9 Kaufman, In the Beginning...Creativity, 39; 55-70.

10 Creativity is not singular in kind. The concept of creativity vacillates across creativity 1, 2 and 3. Creativity 1 notes the coming into existence of the universe. Creativity 2 is that which occurs in the context of other realities that already exist. Creativity 3 is symbolic human creativity. See Kaufman, In the Beginning...Creativity, 76.
any old creativity that pushes humanity, the world and the cosmos along, but a type of serendipitous creativity that happens in newly creative, novel and unexpected ways.\textsuperscript{11} It is this creativity that Kaufman calls God and points to as beyond our comprehension. It is here that Kaufman stands alongside Kant on the edge of the empirical, sensible realm.\textsuperscript{12} It is this creativity that Kaufman classifies as the divine mystery, that which humans come up against and simply have no where else to go, reaching the limits of human knowledge but pointing toward a transcendence of sorts.\textsuperscript{13}

Contrary to critics, Kaufman’s proposal of God is not a-theistic, as many of his Kantian counterparts have chosen. He argues against atheism in his prolegomenal, \textit{Essay on Theological Method} and subsequent works. To the contrary, Kaufman is using Kantian reflective skepticism, coupled with scientific/methodological rigor, and a position within a faith community, to think of God in ways that are sensible and logical to the world in which we live. He simply appropriates some of Kant’s findings and asks the question, “whether the concept of God does not refer to reality in some other - more

\textsuperscript{11} This sort of creativity is consistent with some evolutionary theory that confesses a certain amount of random events that seem to have no necessarily scientific correlative answers, but are the result of subsequently necessary events. For a discussion on the specific function of theology and evolutionary processes see David A. S. Ferguson, \textit{the Cosmos and the Creator} (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1998), 56-60.

\textsuperscript{12} Kant paused at the limits of reason and reasons proper object. Alexie Nesteruk summarizes well that the Kantian, Kaufmanite, pause “is because Kant was arguing that any reference to an absolutely necessary being as the cause of the world was an unjustified transcendence of understanding beyond its legitimate realm of sensible experience, toward the world of intelligible forms, with no hope to hypostasize ontologically that being…” Alexie V. Nesteruk, \textit{Light from the East} (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003), 96. For a entire synopsis of Kantian and Patristic theoretical constructions see 91-117. For the corresponding Kantian text see Immanuel Kant, \textit{Critique of Pure Reason}, trans. J. M. D. Meiklejohn (Amherst: Prometheus Books, 1990), 346-394.

\textsuperscript{13} Gordon D. Kaufman, \textit{God, Mystery, Diversity} (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996), 96-99 and \textit{In the Beginning...Creativity}, 60. This notion of God is also consistently monotheistic.
profound - sense.” He concludes “…Kant himself drew this conclusion.”¹⁴ For Kaufman, God is real and necessary due to the symbols (God) directive value and denotation of transcendence. God without the being of beings is Creativity with all its good and ill.¹⁵

Notwithstanding the complexities of Kaufman’s doctrine of creativity, it is necessary now to move to how this concept correlates to his biohistorical evolutionary proposal. What does Kaufman mean by humans as biohistorical beings and how does this have bearing on a concept of God? First, when Kaufman discusses the nature of humanity and creation he does so with an approved bias toward evolutionary theories. He is committed to making sense of faith within the natural sciences attempt to make sense of life.¹⁶ Combustible cosmic activity that produced solar systems, planetary cycles

---

¹⁴ Kaufman, *An Essay on Theological Method*, 27. There are, of course, several theologians that would disagree that Kant ever went another direction or allowed a way beyond a closed monistic ontology. This may be the strongest critique against Kaufman’s project because Kaufman, along with Kant, is interested in imaginative mental constructs based on an extreme empiricism, while modern science is concerned with matter, substance, thing. The very thing Kaufman seems to be arguing for (i.e., natural sciences and rigorous fidelity to its findings) is partially being ignored and Kant’s wholesale transcendental ideal is adopted without considering what might transcend the conscious category of ideas making ideas possible of assimilation. Alexie Nesteruk points out that science gives ontological priority to the constructs of empirical observation, those constructs that make reality possible but transcend the experiential domain. He argues that conceptual “realities in science are considered ultimately to have the same ontology as empirical data.” See Nesteruk, *Light from the East*, 97. Kaufman does acknowledge this idea, but relegates it to mystery and historical processes, which may potentially affirm a purely theistic insight.

¹⁵ Kaufman, *In the Beginning...Creativity*, 53-106. This work focuses on Kaufman’s concept of creativity in more depth than available here. Also *In Face of Mystery*, 264-280 & 301-340 for greater clarity. God as creativity implies a shift away from traditional biblical anthropocentric language/paradigms. Of course, a constructive theology has already shifted in the direction of highly critical readings of scripture and moved away from biblical the hegemony present in many orthodox traditions. For Kaufman’s position on scripture see *Theological Imagination*, 25-31 and *In Face of Mystery*, 18-21.

¹⁶ Kaufman, *In the Beginning...Creativity*, 33-52, *In Face of Mystery*, 112-140 and *God, Mystery, Diversity*, 73-85. The suggestion is also made that traditional dogmatic claims about a God who will come in and save us from ourselves may also impair our abilities to analyze our situation and address it with Christian virtue and solution. It is becoming increasingly implausible that an apocalyptic end of sorts will come as humanity may be destroying creation more rapidly then it can be restored. Modern atrocities also challenge orthodox claims alongside evolutionary ecological awareness and force a re-thinking of theology. For an example see Graham B. Walker, Jr.’s, Elie Wiesel, *A Challenge to Theology* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 1988).
and atoms, also over time produced other parts of creation including humanity. Biohistorically speaking, humanity is part of the history of creation and emerged within the history of the universe. Humanity is a historical occurrence within the life of the universe and biologically connected to all other forms of life, albeit humanity was able to achieve higher forms of language and conceptualization\textsuperscript{17} that overtime has produced the world as technologically advanced as we now know it. Thus, humanity is not a separate thing created and placed into the Garden of Eden. Humanity and the garden are interdependent realities emerging together historically, as an event somewhere in the annals of cosmic history. Hence, humanity is a historical concept and biologically dependent on the creativity that began the “great evolutionary ecosystem that is our world.”\textsuperscript{18} Humanity, therefore, did not occur in an anthropocentric or theocentric vacuum, but is the result of the creative processes of life and dependent on the very processes it now has the ability to analyze. This concept of interdependence, in consequence, offers a radically different view of the relationships between creatures and opens the possibility to see the salvation, or end, of humanity bound to the end of the world. This united teleology will be especially important in our further Christological explorations.

Secondly, as humans began to emerge they also began to communicate and make sense of the world around them. Humans began to make symbols. The need to

\textsuperscript{17} The work of George Herbert Mead was very influential in the early Kaufman because Mead proposed “that human selfhood and mind were created in and developed to high levels through the evolution of language…totally reversing the common sense belief that language was the creation of the mind with the contention that our human minds themselves are actually a product of increasingly complex linguisticality.” See Kaufman, \textit{In the Beginning…Creativity}, 110.

\textsuperscript{18} Kaufman, \textit{In Face of Mystery}, 414.
communicate with one another and their world was inherently connected to the need to create meaning in the world. Humans developed early into socio-cultural animals that ordered their lives and related to one another by various means. Communication was necessary for hunting, for defense and organization. As humans began to communicate, they began to develop greater levels of awareness and consciousness, allowing them to reflect, and express linguistically, themselves and the world around them.\textsuperscript{19} The need to create meaning and communicate with others and the world around them produced several human constructions, all of which began to point to a sort of transcendence that needed to be communicated; in other words, humanity was aware that there was something moving it along the historical road and needed to find a way to express this meaning and therein begin to place value on their world. The result is that humans began to use language for what was beyond language.\textsuperscript{20}

As language began to develop, culture began to develop and developing cultures were handed down through generations. The development of culture marked the emergence of humans from their early ancestry of sustenance and instincts, to develop a greater sense of purpose and awareness. As humans developed a self-awareness, so too did humanity construe the subjective concept of feelings and conceptions of the objects that directly influenced human life began to be given names. Over a period of time these expressions began to take shape into more complex forms and the retelling of the expressions and developed forms allowed future generations to contemplate further and

\textsuperscript{19} Ibid., 114-115.

\textsuperscript{20} Ibid., 34.
imagine new possibilities for humanity through mediums such as writing. Thus, the story of humanity is the story of a unique part of creation that resulted from the biological world and developed into socio-culturally conditioned beings through the history of biological encounter. If such meaning, communication and organization was historically created, so too can terms be created that express a sense of otherness and awe as humanity continues to expand and develop on this particular historical trajectory.

It is within this development and imaginative context that the concept of God begins to emerge. For Kaufman, God is the result of human theological construction in order to make sense of the world around them. If God is a human imaginative construction, theologically speaking as a concept to which devotion and meaning are derived and directed, so too are the cognate traits and characteristics the word/concept God collects over time. For Kaufman, this process of emerging within history as a part of the biological life of the universe, coupled with the historical emergence of language and meaning valuations, suggests that humans are chiefly symbol and meaning makers

\[21\] Ibid., 34-35. For the elaborate expression of the role of human imagination and anthropological development see 33-44.

\[22\] It is expressed succinctly, “The minds ability to create images and characterizations, and imaginatively weld them together into a unified focus for attention, contemplation, devotion or address, is at work in the humblest believer’s prayers as well as in the most sophisticated philosopher’s speculations. In this respect, all speech to and about God, and all “experience of God,” is made possible by and is a function of the constructive powers of the imagination.” Kaufman, *Theological Imagination*, 22 and *In Face of Mystery*, 113. See also Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, 323-324, where he notes, “It is therefore a transcendental ideal which forms the basis of everything [my emphasis] that exists, and is the highest material condition of its possibility - a condition on which must rest the cogitation of all objects with respect to their content,” furthermore, “The object of ideal reason - an object existing only in reason itself- is also termed the primal being; as having no existence superior to him - the supreme being; and as being the condition of all other beings, which rank under it, the being of all beings. But none of these terms indicate the objective relation of an actually existing object to other things, but merely that of an idea to conceptions.” Using Kant’s own epistemological guide, (receiving representations and ordering representations), it may be rendered that these transcendental ideas are deductions from sensory presuppositions, thus the result of what Kaufman refers to as “powers of the imagination.”
and have been so since their emergence.\textsuperscript{23} Therefore, the task of living, of being human, is the task of continual theological construction and the creation of meaning that makes sense of the world in which the human lives. \textit{If such concepts are human constructions to provide a proper sense of the direction of life, than former concepts can be tested, tried, and either adopted or discarded according to the needs of humanity at any given point in history. This is Creativity at work!} For Kaufman, if meaning and symbols such as God and Christ can be created, so too can they be recreated. The reality that humanity is a biohistorical evolutionary product (subject to a particular historical trajectory) gives impetus to this continual reconstruction even more so.

If creation emerges on such a scale, than the concept of a creative God with hands and feet and a mouth that speaks creation into being must also be reconstructed with this newly found concept of the world and its origins. The ontological superhuman that sits outside of history for the ancients and watches through the clouds has now been disclosed to fail to reside within the three tiered universe of Old Testament cosmology. God, whoever it was, was not seen as NASA and other space programs raced to the moon. Either the ancients were wrong, God has moved, or something more is necessary. Kaufman argues that God can no longer responsibly be conceived as a real ontological thing that is somewhere.\textsuperscript{24} God can no longer be this being that is almighty in power and strength able to do whatever, whenever and to whomever God so desires. Existentially,

\textsuperscript{23} Kaufman, \textit{In the Beginning...Creativity}, 80-86.

\textsuperscript{24} Kaufman, \textit{God the Problem}, 4-16 & 41-71. Paul Tillich made this argument in his \textit{Systematic Theology, vol.1} (Chicago: Chicago, 1951) 235-239, when he wrote that God does not ex-ist because to do so would make God a category of creation, a thing. This led Tillich to his concept of Ground. Kaufman and Tillich are quite similar at this point as they both sought (are seeking) an alternative to mythological anthropocentrically generated theological systems. Kaufman, however, pushes a bit beyond Tillich by refusing to remain constrained by an anthropocentric framework.
the majority of human narratives cannot attest or confirm these classical theistic assertions. God must be conceived as the idea that produces creation and continues moving/sustaining creation. This is a concept upon which most people of faith can agree and affirm existentially. Other ontologically dependent affirmations rely more on faith than rational or scientifically informed explorations.25

If the Jews of the Holocaust cannot say that God is loving, and the process theologians cannot say God is able to cross metaphysical rules and boundaries, they can both say at the least that the world has the presence of creativity and this creativity produces serendipitously creative new things all around us quite frequently. Creativity is what brings a new day. It is what causes time to continue to march and the universe to continue to expand. It has caused the immense growth in world religions around creatively incarnate personalities of people such as Jesus. Creativity is surprising and catches us off notice, as it will for some of us engaged in conversation and relationship during this conference. Whether positively or negatively, there is a sovereign presence in the world and it is the presence of God, the presence of what Gordon Kaufman calls Creativity.

II. Jesus: Creativity Incarnate

Theological construction of this sort, however, will result in some dramatic shifts, and perhaps no other shift is so dramatic than the methodological consequences such an approach has upon the church’s Christology.

“The conception of God as creativity (instead of Creator) requires us to rethink

25 The move toward creativity is also a step of faith that requires having faith in the truth it offers. Kaufman, “Reconcieving God…,” 244. He writes, “the connection of what is distinctive about human existence…our historicity…with the mystery of creativity in the world, is to take a step of faith.”
completely the traditional way of understanding Jesus.”26 Kaufman proposes this rethinking take place within the confines of two paradigmatic references: Jesus Trajectory 1 and Jesus Trajectory 2. Under these benchmarks, Kaufman delineates between the ministry of Jesus that was miraculous, creative and inspiring and the place the church must now take this former creativity if it is to remain creative and substantive to post-modern sensibilities. One should keep in mind that Kaufman’s efforts at thinking Jesus are not an attempt to reduce Jesus to modern/postmodern suspicions of religion. On the contrary, Kaufman is advocating the significance of religion, and Christianity in particular, for organizing and orienting peoples lives. His Jesus project is not to reduce Jesus to no significance whatsoever. Rather, his project is to understand Jesus without the anthropomorphic mythical ontological leanings that have been established between a creator God and a son named Jesus via Nicea and Chalcedon and even the NT itself. In a world where there is no other world, no two or three tiered universe, where there is a large consensus in the scientific community for the place that evolution and biology play in the development of the universe and humanity…what does the Jesus event mean in this context, if anything?

To better answer this question and delineate the problem of Jesus created by the orthodox construal of God, Kaufman elaborates Jesus Trajectory 1 and 2. Kaufman argues that these two trajectories should be understood precisely as trajectories, or events in history due to certain conditions that pulled historic events into very particular places, thus creating a trajectory development.27 The events of Jesus, and the events that gave

---


27 Under traditional systematic theology categories, Kaufman’s “trajectory” replaces the concept of teleology.
way to faith surrounding Jesus, are events that took time and condition to materialize and become something wrapped into creativity. Thus, the very language he uses to propose his Christology is consistent with his biohistorical evolutionary leanings. In other words, for Kaufman there is no *ex-nihilo*, there is only trajectory development. As Robert Frost famous poem suggests, there will always be a path not taken. Trajectories are these multifaceted historical paths, the ones we are on and the ones we do not know exist.

Jesus trajectory 1 is the trajectory that unfolds around the ministry of Jesus and contains the Gospel story of birth, life, death and resurrection. This trajectory focuses on the ministry of Jesus and the subsequent generations who began to believe on the substance of his teachings and *have faith* in the proclamation of his resurrection. This is the trajectory that spurred the Church and gave rise to the eventual high Christology of the Gospel of John and the equation that Jesus and God are somehow ontologically connected. This trajectory culminated in the Divinity of Jesus due to the special circumstances surrounding his ministry, the unique portrayal of God that was understood to be incarnated in Jesus and the political need to have a divine God rather than a crucified revolutionary as an object of worship.

Indeed, the early church over a few hundred years moved from not only equating Jesus as the Christ with special revelation, but with making Christ the *very, only*,

---

28 Kaufman notes in several places that the NT is an indicator that the early followers of Jesus did not consider him divine, but understood him within his human categories of teacher, carpenter, etc. It was the creative imaginative attempts to understand Jesus and the Christ event that would lead to aggrandizing this human life. Kaufman writes, “In the NT Jesus is obviously not identified in any simple way with God the Father in heaven, the all-powerful creator of the heavens and the earth; he is portrayed as one man among others, living under and serving the Lord of the world.” See Kaufman, *In Face of Mystery*, 385 and NT texts: Mk 10.17-18; 13.32. There are, of course, plenty of NT texts and theologians that do seem to suggest otherwise. The literature in this regard is too expansive to be referenced here.

29 For the political overtures that may have made proclamation of a divine Jesus expedient see Douglas John Hall, “Confessing Christ in a Post-Christendom Context,” religion-online.org, accessed on 1/15/09.
revelation of God, God’s son. Faith in this remarkable development was due to the dramatically creative event of resurrection. Trajectory 1 needs the history of Jesus and his ministerial context but its authority only comes within the confines of a high Christology and it culminates in sectarian exclusivistic soteriological mandates. This trajectory produced the sometimes benevolent Church, but it also gave way to misleading paths such as the Crusades. Trajectory 1 was characterized by great creativity. It sparked monuments of architecture, literature, art, music and countless liturgical recitations, not to mention a plethora of church denominations. Trajectory 1 has been highly influential over the past 2000 years, but according to Kaufman the current historical scene begs the question if the myth that produced trajectory 1 is still a credibly creative event? When so many people simply cannot believe these ancient ideas due to what we know about the world scientifically, is this creativity finally spent? Does the same imagination that sparked the Christmas story continue to spark equally imaginative attempts to live out the life of Jesus in a meaningful way?

As we come to the end of Christendom, the Church must now move into a different prophetic mode and cease proclaiming the creativity of old that is quickly losing its creative steam. For Kaufman, this transition from blind, scientifically uninformed faith, must now transition to a period that responsibly converses with the scientific community. The Church must begin to proclaim something that embodies that which can be believed in: the radical nature of the Gospel of Jesus to creatively restore a world that is in danger of being destroyed by those very people who proclaim to live under Jesus

30 Kaufman, Jesus and Creativity, 55-56.
Trajectory 1. Jesus Trajectory 2 is this radical transition.

Jesus Trajectory 2 does not direct observance to traditional creedal formulations. Just as defining God as creativity requires a certain reconstruction of God, so this reconstruction demands that things such as virgin births and miraculous annunciations be left in the annals of history. Some may cringe at Kaufman’s words, but his point can be no more bluntly said, “Though we sing Christmas carols rejoicing in the birth of baby Jesus, most of us know in our hearts that this beautiful story - a magnificent creation of human imagination- is too simple and too implausible to be much of a guide to living in the world in which we today find ourselves.”

Jesus Trajectory 2, as with trajectory 1, is methodologically contingent upon the community of faith being interested in Jesus as a norm for faith. Kaufman is writing a Christology that can be understood by modern people who may, or may not, share in the same religious convictions. The fact that Jesus and Christology is part of the conversation means, however, that Jesus as the Christ is in someway already normative, but this normativity is foremost a move of faith. There is no necessary reason why one would choose the Jesus path over any other ideological movement, but there are good reasons for why one might make Jesus normative that do not include a metaphysically relative Trinitarian perspective. The question of Jesus is foremost considered because it is posed within a western Christian paradigm and not because it has special revelatory

---

31 This is most clearly seen in embodiments of pop culture apocalypticism.

32 Kaufman, *Jesus and Creativity*, 90. Remember, Kaufman is not disparaging the tradition due to its merits. He is attempting to make sense of Jesus without the context of an anthropomorphic God.

33 Kaufman, *In Face of Mystery*, 376.

characteristics that are ontologically connected to who God is, where God is. Thus, trajectory 2 is really wrapped into the question of, “why consider Jesus at all?,” since for many Christians Jesus is only considered because he is God, not because of his ministry or the creativity within it. Kaufman will ultimately answer that such normativity is granted because God in Christ speaks something that is still true and meaningful into the human predicament and can somehow bring humanity together, in a new creation.

While Trajectory 1 emphasizes the creativity surrounding the ministry of Jesus and the creatively imaginative attempts to understand his ministry…that eventually culminates in dogmatic utterances, Trajectory 2 focuses on Jesus’ creativity. In other words, if God is not understood as a person, but as the creativity that is at work in the universe serendipitously acting and moving creation into newer historical trajectories, than Trajectory 2 is focused on the creativity that is at work in and through Jesus. Thus, Kaufman’s Christology is not really the story of a God incarnate, but of creativity incarnate, embodied in this uniquely historical person from Nazareth.

This second trajectory does not carry with it the supernatural trappings of “this world” and the “other world to come.” In contrast to trajectory one which culminates in the doctrine of the Trinity, Trajectory 2 culminates in the radical teachings of a prophet who has the ability to create a new world through his teachings. This does not mean

---

35 Kaufman, *In Face of Mystery*, 410. “No coercive proof can be given that the Christ symbol presents us with materials for constructing a conception of the True God…but it is possible, nevertheless, to see why one might take such a position…the christic paradigm…draws us out and moves us toward a more profound humaneness while simultaneously rendering questionable our proudest achievements.” See also 404-405

36 Kaufman, *Jesus and Creativity*, 27.

37 Kaufman argues that this new world is the Pauline “new creation.” After the resurrection accounts and
that God (the concept of mystery that brings the concept to fore) is irrelevant because an ontological trinity is found suspect. On the contrary, creativity is still at work in all parts of the universe and a sharp distinction between God (creativity) and the world remain. God is still important and necessary, but the necessity is to see how creativity widens our Christology and how it allows humanity to live in the binary distinction of creativity and creation.

There are three major contributions that Jesus Trajectory 2 bring to the theological discussion to delineate itself from the Trajectory 1. First, the emphasis is less on institutional dogma about Jesus and more about the radical teachings of Jesus. In Trajectory 2, the creativity of Jesus produces ethical assertions that are as foreign today as they were then. A Wesleyan perspective, while not necessarily agreeing with methodological moves made by Kaufman, can at least agree that the teachings of Jesus can be lived in this life. Jesus is generally thought of when a person reflects on how they should live, act and be, and what should be of paramount importance for them. But why is this? Kaufman suggests it is because in the life of Jesus “we are presented with a dramatic image/story of one who appears to have trusted God absolutely, and in consequence was enabled to interact with his fellow humans with love and care and to

the events of the Act of the Apostles, it is clear that the community of believers around the Jesus event were experiencing in some powerfully new ways. The transformation that was occurring was decisive and provided a new start in life. As Paul wrote in 2 Cor. 5.17-20, “If anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new!” See Kaufman, Jesus and Creativity, 42-44. Should the Church proclaim what Jesus proclaimed or proclaim Jesus? Kaufman clearly prefers the latter.

38 Objectors may say that Kaufman is widening the road to pluralism with such thesis. This is absolutely the case on many levels. His own personal pluralistic interests have consisted in interfaith dialogue along Buddhist/Christian lines. See Kaufman, God, Mystery, Diversity, 157-186. For a completely opposite, but well written, view on the sectarian/pluralistic debate see Robert Gundry, Jesus the Word according to John the Sectarian (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998).
forgive even the enemies who were bringing his death…”39 Jesus authority comes not from his otherworldly power, but because of the thorough humanely human picture he presents. Jesus is an authority because of his reflection of sanctity.

The life of Jesus focused on others. It focused on values such as love, self-giving, forgiveness, reconciliation and peace. Jesus, because of the creativity of trajectory 1, early became a paradigm of how humans are supposed to live, which was embodied in the story of the crucified one. Once more, ideas of justice, peace and forgiveness already had context in their ancient setting. What Jesus did, however, was radicalize these notions and create a new paradigm of normativity whereby humans should live. Stories such as the woman caught in adultery, talking to women in public, the selfless healings without thanks, healing on the Sabbath, the crucifixion itself and even the embracing of “sinners” at dinner all represent radical ways of being in the world. One could virtually recite the entire Sermon on the Mount in The Gospel of Matthew to ascertain just how radical Jesus’ teachings are and how tenaciously creativity was being embodied in his teachings. What Jesus shows is that humans can treat each other differently and inaugurate a new creation. Jesus allowed Christians to more directly see the truly human and the humane became sharper into view.40 While most humanisms seem ethereal and abstract, this new Christian humanism became an archetype of ethical behavior. This is in some respects consistent with the radical teachings tradents of the holiness and Wesleyan traditions pursued with such vigor early in their histories and may be reason for

39 Kaufman, Jesus and Creativity, 32.

40 Ibid., 35.
Wesleyans to hear what Kaufman is suggesting.\(^{41}\)

Secondly, Trajectory 2 makes clear the role that creativity plays in Christology and hence theological construction. The presence of Jesus not only radicalizes ethics, but it demonstrates the creative development of a doctrine of God, and the re-creation of concepts of God according to the creativity of Jesus. In diachronic fashion, Kaufman argues that the Old Testament began with concepts of God that latter became reformed, and reformed and reformed continually, until one arrives at the Jesus event that eventually became the norm by which God is understood.\(^ {42}\) Consequently, theology is still busy reforming its ideas about God under numerous paradigms to account for scientific, linguistic and phenomenological theories. The life of Jesus and his preaching was about creatively re-imagining God and how God works in the world.\(^ {43}\) God grew from a tribal God to an all-powerful creator of all things, resulting in monotheism. God changed from a vengeful, destructively partisan reality, into an all encompassing compassionate reality that called for all people to be restored (see the Prophets). According to Jeremiah, the very covenant first established would be widened, superceded to include a broader spectrum of entrants (Jeremiah 31.31-34).\(^ {44}\) When Jesus appeared on the scene, he began to challenge even basic tenets of Jeremiah’s covenantal electoral amendment, suggesting that servanthood, self-emptying, and caring for others was of ultimate significance in this new kingdom coming. Finally, the Johannine assertions arise

\(^{41}\) See Samuel M. Powell & Michael E. Lodahl, ed., *Embodied Holiness* (Intervarsity Press: Downers Grove, 1999) for aspects of an embodied bodily response to the teachings of Jesus, which may also be known as holiness.

\(^{42}\) Kaufman, *In Face of Mystery*, 387-388.

\(^{43}\) Kaufman, *Jesus and Creativity*, 38.
in the NT wherein God is characterized as love, or as an activity, not a person. God is creativity, not a person-agent.\textsuperscript{45} The person of Jesus, therefore, becomes a norm and challenge to older conceptions about God and begins (because of creativity incarnate in him) to spark creative attempts to understand God in light of his ministry and teachings. It is for this reason that traditional triangular attempts of religion to understand the world under “God, humanity, world” is expanded in the humanistically expressed Christian version of this triangle inserting “Christ” as a fourth category of note.\textsuperscript{46}

Third, Jesus Trajectory 2 says something revelatory about creativity (God). Trajectory 2 largely focuses on the historical trajectory of the Jesus movement up to the present, but does not necessarily suggest anything unique about historical developments or the creativity that gave birth to the cosmos.\textsuperscript{47} Creativity produces many trajectories and the Jesus trajectory is just one among many. If one asks the question, however, does the ministry of Jesus reveal anything about creativity that one would not know without the said ministry?” This answer may be given in the affirmative. A person of faith can believe the ministry of Jesus to be normative so long as it provides - “a sense about what human life at its best is all about, a sense of how we ought to live, for what goals we should strive, what is truly good human life and human community - the distinctiveness

\textsuperscript{44} This notion is not to be confused with Christian anti-Semitic notions of supersessionism.

\textsuperscript{45} Ibid., 46.

\textsuperscript{46} The category of Christ is not strictly linked to the historical Jesus. Christ is a symbolic medium that Kaufman uses to discuss the community of reconciliation that grew up around the Jesus event. Thus, Christ could technically be a norm without having reference to the Jesus of history. See \textit{In Face of Mystery}, 401.

\textsuperscript{47} Kaufman suggests there are large parts of the universe that are seemingly untouched by the story of Jesus. It is only on earth, with its good and evils, that the Jesus story is pertinent if one takes into account Kaufman biohistorical evolutionary paradigm. This is in contrast to early church fathers, such as Origen, who argued for the redemption of all of creation.
of precisely these norms grounded in this story may quite properly be understood as a unique expression of creativity (God).” Hence, trajectory 2 indicates that it is part of the particular historical trajectory of Jesus, creativity incarnate, that leads the community to believe that it is part of the movement of God (creativity) to create norms by which humans can live their lives and orient their worldviews. This orientation creates communities and goals, eschatological goals if you will, toward which the community strives and longs; Goals that might just bring about a new creation.

If one is not careful, one may read Kaufman and think his early prolegomenal work is simply setting up an amorphous concept of the divine that has no relation to humanity or the world. Kaufman refutes this reading at many points, but the point of Jesus is the strongest refutation. The ministry of Jesus, the God-man, rather creativity-man, is the means by which a particular mode of being in the universe is demonstrated to humanity. In this respect, the new term for God, creativity, is not a concept that has no relation to the world. In the person of Jesus, God (creativity) is demonstrated to be intimately involved in the human trajectory of the world and providing a model by which men and women may live their lives. This new sense of being, embodied in the creativity of Jesus, gives a sense of the possibilities of the New Jerusalem that may be embodied on our planet and in our churches.49 Indeed, this new reality did come as John said and “dwell among us”… “exegeting the Father (creativity) to us…”50 Jesus was “doing

48 Kaufman, Jesus and Creativity, 51.

49 One need not look far for good orthodox theologians who will make similar assertions about the teleological dimensions of the cross. See Robert Jenson, Systematic Theology vol. 2 (New York: Oxford, 1999,) 319, where he suggests that the Church is this new creation uttered in doxological fashion.

50 John 1.
something new and decisively different from what had been understood in the past; a new vision of what the human strand of life was all about…was being created."\textsuperscript{51} Thus, creativity in Jesus moves beyond an explanation of the cosmos and embodies a way of being with one another.

There are, of course, several versions of Jesus one might invoke at this point, as has been demonstrated in the history of academic quests for the historical Jesus. Kaufman prefers to invoke the Jesus from his own Mennonite tradition: the passivist Jesus that embodies love for all people and calls others to communities of reconciliation and forgiveness.\textsuperscript{52} The community of Jesus is focused on love, as many of us Wesleyan scholars would agree. The focus on love and self-sacrifice leads Kaufman to an other-centered approach to Christology. Kaufman’s Christology could be characterized as a Christology of the other subject. The goal of this Christology is to follow the example of Jesus and to avoid the temptation of making religion individualistic or consumeristic or exclusivistic.\textsuperscript{53}

\textsuperscript{51} Kaufman, \textit{Jesus and Creativity}, 93.

\textsuperscript{52} One should also note that Kaufman is quick to critique a concept of God, or Christ, that is idolatrous. A viable concept of God, and Christ, must meet three criteria for Kaufman. First, it must provide a unified and clear set of images and concepts to concentrate the attention, interests and affections of women and men so that they can direct themselves toward God with some measure of confidence. Secondly, it must convey a sense of reality and truth, a sense that what these images represent is not just human fancy. Lastly, it must give men and women who respond to it the conviction that it is God and not some idol. Kaufman’s weakness is that this criteria may be turned against himself in regard to idolatry should he get too carried away with his own imaginative attempts. See Tho\textit{eological Imagination}, 155.

\textsuperscript{53} Kaufman, \textit{In the Beginning...Creativity}, 68. He writes, “Our postmodern world picture, taken together with the conception of God as serendipitous creativity, evokes a significantly different stance in the world than that associated with the Christian symbol-system as traditionally interpreted…Thinking of God as creativity undercuts the arrogant stance of much traditional Christianity vis-à-vis the natural order as a whole, as well as with respect to other religious and secular traditions. Christians may no longer consider themselves to be authorized in what they say and do by God’s special revelation.”
Kaufman’s Christological Application

Christology is generally crucial because of the atonement theologies that follow. It is for this reason that theologians such as Rudolph Bultmann had such a difficult time in America. Their study was not merely “messing” with academia but it was forcing a reconstruction of the very paradigm of salvation that is so central to Christian theology. Christology is central because it seeks to offer a solution to a/the problem of humanity. Under traditional theistic models, the importance of the Jesus event was wrapped in his ability to perform a substituting act of grace for an undeserving humanity. This was known as the substitutionary theory of the atonement and has remained the most central theory in Christian theology thanks to Anselm. The Kaufmanite shift in perspective on God, however, makes this substitution problem benign because there is not a God in this traditional sense that needs the human requirement of retribution/offense forgiveness. Thus, if one shifts toward a biohistorical evolutionary paradigm, than a de-emphasis on God as Savior begins to take place because saving and forgiving are both anthropocentrically conceived concepts of necessity, not evolutionary requirements.

54 For a recent attempt to re-write a theology of atonement in the Girardian tradition see S. Mark Heim, Saved From Sacrifice: A Theology of the Cross (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006). See also William Paul Jones, Theological Worldviews (Louisville: Westminster Johnknox, 1989), for a shift away from rigid theological paradigms of sin/salvation. He suggests the traditional Lutheran theme of guilt ridden sinner/Christ as Savior paradigm, may in fact be meaningful to many, but does not speak to all people who come to the Jesus the Christ. For a look at his multiple proposals see pp.11-44.

55 Kaufman’s proposal is not the only means by which to cast suspicion on traditional atonement theories and demand Christological reconsiderations. Process, Open, Girardian, Feminist, Deconstructionist and Physicalist approaches all offer similar suggestions.
Under this paradigm, Kaufman does not see the chief obsessio (dilemma/obstruction) of the human predicament to be the Lutheran lament of sin or the fatalistic Calvinistic approach to piety. These may be possible worldviews but need not be the only ones. Once Kaufman’s methodological shift occurs, the older Christology based on sin, salvation and literal interpretations thereof, fades to the background, along with the consequences of an atonement theology. For Kaufman, the problem is not personal sin but ecological and global destruction. Kaufman’s context and method focuses his attention upon the nuclear age and the ability of humanity to destroy itself, the consumption of mass amounts of resources, economic pressures that harm the planet, global warming, and the plague of humanitarian concerns that would be in our news cycle if it were not for the poor global economy. Kaufman is almost apocalyptic in his proposal, “unless we change these inherited ways of living and acting, believing and hoping, we may commit species suicide.”

56 For other paradigm options see Jones, Theological Worldviews, 42-43. Jone’s five paradigms of Christian belief include the more reformed condemnation/forgiveness (obsessio is condemnation) archetype, but also include: separation/reunion (obsessio is isolation), conflict/vindication, (obsessio is chaos) emptiness/fulfillment (obsessio is self-estrangement), and suffering/endurance (obsessio is meaninglessness).

57 Samuel M. Powell, Participating in God (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003), 183-213. Powell would agree with the addition of Kaufman’s new locus of lostness as it regards creation, though a total replacement Powell would seem suspect. Powell further calls for a renewed understanding of the image of God in Christ, which allows the paradigm of Jesus the Christ to determine the Gen. 1.27 and the meaning of dominion over creation. He writes, “Gospel statements indicating that power is not to be abused but used in humble servitude suggest how the notion of dominion can be put to use today in a way that does not imply a rapacious attitude toward nature.” See Powell, Participating in God, 205. For an example of how atonement theories may be incorporated in a dynamic sense see Douglas John Hall, The Cross in our Context (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003).

58 The ecological/global concern is now the dilemma and Kaufman proposes his Christology precisely for this context. See Kaufman, In the Beginning…Creativity, 33-52 and “Reconcieving God…” 238-250.

59 Kaufman, Jesus and Creativity, 103. Mark C. Taylor in his recent book, After God (Chicago: Chicago, 2007), shares this impending sense of global danger and offers his work as a solution and analysis of the culture that breeds these new dangers. Take special note of pp.313-377.
Certainly there are many paradigms one may choose other than the Christian one to bring about these ends. Yet, there is something peculiar that Christian communities create and demonstrate about what it means to live in light of the divine mystery of creativity. Christian communities have an incarnate example of what creativity does when it is intimately involved in human affairs. The creativity of Jesus should not be seen as creating a sectarian Gospel as some have espoused, but as having created vision for humanity to embrace, where there is no Jew or Greek, slave or free, male or female. There may be no better time than the present, a time in which people are face to face globally on a daily basis, that these timeless teachings, and this timeless life, is needed most seriously. Kaufman’s conclusion is challenging,

This [Jesus’] radical vision of the human potential may help us see more clearly what will be required if we are to move past the hatred and aggressiveness, the misplaced loyalties, the defensive ideas of duty and honor and patriotism, and the like, to an openness that welcomes other people, cultures, and religions and a willingness to forgive and forget past injuries and crimes. The radical love and forgiveness advocated by Jesus can transform destructive human practices…

Summary

For many people in our Churches, a turn toward Jesus Trajectory 2 and away from Jesus Trajectory 1 will undoubtedly be bad news. What Kaufman is proposing is nothing less than a reconfiguration of the entire Christian edifice and a challenge to the piety of many Christians. Not withstanding the pragmatic complexities Kaufman’s proposals would pose for churches all over the globe, especially Catholic Tradition, it should be noted that Creativity does contain Good News. The good news of the Creativity of Trajectory 2 is that it keeps the story of Jesus centered on this world and not

---

60 Ibid., 112.
on another world hereafter and promises openness to serendipitously creative events that can save the world from itself. Further, it maintains a distinction between God and world, a distinction that much humanism does not, and notes the dependence that all humanity has upon events that brought them into existence and upon which humanity is sustained. Lastly, it allows sincere Christians to believe in Jesus while also accounting for the mystery of the universe as demarcated through scientific advance.

Kaufman’s Jesus is the product of Kaufman’s God. God is best understood as creativity, that serendipitous creativity that brings things into being without notice and moves history down various historical trajectories. There is a twofold reason for moving in this direction. First, in summarization, Kaufman embraces biohistorical evolutionary perspectives on creation and espouses a preference for the natural sciences. Creation was not a single act, but an act that actuated in the Big Bang and through a series of creative events produced historical trajectories. Secondly, this leads Kaufman to reject any cosmology based on ancient multi-tiered worlds. He is this-worldly focused. The biblical accounts of God and Jesus are based on anthropocentric models of God that are built within ancient cosmologies of “here” and “there.” For Kaufman, there is only here. Kaufman, therefore, rejects any doctrines or dogmas that requires an ancient cosmological background such as God having a literal son. This happens in myth, not in the scientific world that is known today.

Consequently, any ontology based on an otherworldly reality is rejected. Hence, in his magnum opus, *In Face of Mystery*, he addresses Trinity with some profound insight

---

61 Samuel M. Powell, 29-41. Powell notes that the natural sciences are the most viable hermeneutical option in the contemporary scene, though he chooses to move in markedly different directions than Kaufman’s proposal.
and offers some suggestions for how this doctrine is still useful and needed. He does not, however, suggest any substantive credence to the physical ontological claims made at Nicea or Chalcedon. He notes that these events demonstrate the way in which creativity works in theological construction, without whose advances Kaufman’s proposal would scarcely be intelligible. Since these councils had chiefly to do with Trinitarian related matters, it should be noted that Kaufman does not disparage Trinitarian discourse. In his magnum opus, *In Face of Mystery*, Kaufman presents his Trinitarian perspectives from within the more Tillichian symbolic fashion. Kaufman’s proposal focuses more on the functioning aspects of a Trinitarian theology than on the dogmatic creedal (faith based?) assertions.62

Under this context, Jesus cannot be considered God incarnate, unless this language is heavily qualified. Jesus may be best characterized as Creativity Incarnate, since his ministry and teachings reflects the creativity in his ministry, his own creativity, the creativity that occurred after his death and in subsequent resurrection proclamations, and lastly by followers seeking to live out his creatively new vision of the world.63 The creativity of Jesus also demonstrates the process by which God is imaginatively understood, examined and amended, to coincide with developments within the historical trajectory. Further, the life and ministry of Jesus meets the criteria of pointing toward a

---

62 Kaufman, *In Face of Mystery*, 413-425. Powell’s work, *Participating in God*, chiefly focuses the scientific conversation on the Christian doctrine of Trinity. He does not attempt an apologetic appeal for/to the trinity, rather he uses the symbol of trinity to argue that creation is interrelated and participatory in nature. He moves his argument through various stages including the biological world, the universe, finitude and existence arguing that the interrelatedness of the trinity is an appropriate model with which to understand the interdependence of all of creation. See 61-162. There are, however, intense theological attempts to use trinity in conjunction with scientific inquiry. The work of Powell and Nesteruk offer some credibly rigorous alternatives to the assessments of Kaufman. See Powell’s, *Participating in God*, 61-157 and Nesteruk, *Light from the East*, 75-248.

63 Kaufman, *Jesus and Creativity*, 95.
true God and not an idol because his creativity points in the direction of humanizing and relativising the human situation in order to prevent us from hubris and selfish desires. 64

The ministry of Jesus is radical and unique and embodies a truly counter cultural mode of existence that calls for a new creation and then lives out such creativity. All of this does not violate the principle of taking due regard for scientific knowledge and then asking theological questions in light of what is now best known about the universe. 65

Jesus Trajectory 2 offers a responsible Christology the church can hold in the future if it is serious about changing the world. This is not the only option possible due to the mystery of the nature of things with which our discourse has to do. This is, however, the path Kaufman chooses in order to keep his scientific integrity and express his theological/religious conviction. This radical conception of God and Jesus’ relationship to God should come as no surprise to many of us in this conversation.

Feminist, Deconstructionist, Process, Post-theistic and other theological movements have been proposing alternative answers to traditional theisms and the systems built on top of them. This newer attempt by Kaufman, though possibly silenced because of its blatant non-creedal content, does offer some promise for new directions of living and thinking. 66

A few years ago, Nancy Murphy was the Thursday banquet night speaker at the WTS meeting in Seattle. Her address was about physicality and the church's evangelical

64 Kaufman, 155.

65 Of course this methodology could be reversed and is most notably done by the theological movement radical orthodoxy. Under this paradigm, the question is not “what does theology mean in light of science,” but “what does science mean in light of theology?” To Kaufman’s credit, he is attempting to balance the two without the hostility that generally follows this conversation.
mission under the light of theology’s new found interest in physiology. For those who missed that address, at the time Dr. Murphy was busy thinking theology without the Greek concept of soul that came to our theological fathers and mothers via Hellinization.

If our bodies are all we have and the soul is a non-localizable, verifiable, object than why bother thinking it is there? Theologically, the faith step in a soul is not necessary, (or creedal) in doing Christian faith. Dr. Murphy asked us all the question at dinner, “I wonder how different the world would look if instead of being worried about saving souls the past 1500 years, it was interested in saving bodies?” Kaufman does not ask the question in precisely this way, nor does he share methodological paradigms with Dr. Murphy, but the eschatological vision they both cast is similar in emphasis on the radical ministry of Jesus. Kaufman is proposing a Christology that is rethought in light of the concept of God as creativity and asking the question, “what does the ministry of Jesus say about creativity?” Kaufman’s hunch is that this person we know from Nazareth is in a rather unique position to provide the kind of loving incarnation our world might just desperately need. If we fall under this conviction, the world may look much differently in a 100 years and perhaps are few less souls, and a few more bodies (and the planet), and a bit more universal human solidarity, may be the harvest of Jesus Trajectory 2. The only question remaining is “What direction will Creativity take humanity and how will humanity respond?”

\[66\]

For an alternative expression of a scientifically informed option note Nesteruk’s Trinitarian suggestions, particularly the harmony that is found in his formulations and scientific theory. See Nesteruk, Light from the East, 96-117.
Bibliography


Heim, S. Mark. *Saved From Sacrifice: A Theology of the Cross*. Grand Rapids:


