

March 13, 2024
Homily Manuscript

Time & Eternity: Perspectives from Theology & Science

Tonight we are continuing our homily series on topics suggested by you, the parishioners of St Matthias, by considering the subject of time. It has been noted that “the phenomenon of ‘time’... is so familiar to everyone, and yet so foreign,”¹ particularly if one tries to explain how it relates to God and to eternity. Indeed, “Theologian Louis Berkhof once mentioned that “the relationship of eternity to time constitutes one of the most difficult problems in philosophy and theology”.² And yet, to tackle this topic, we also cannot ignore developments in the scientific understanding of time, which were quite significant in the 20th century. So, I’ve tried my best to grasp these things myself and distill them down, but I’ll do a short Q&A immediately following this homily and before your discussion groups, which can perhaps provide clarification where it’s needed.

I want to start by establishing that the classical idea from both philosophy & theology, which influences & underlies many of our religious assumptions, is that God is timeless.³ God is conceived as a timeless Being, who exists totally outside of time and has no temporal duration. And for a timeless God, all time exists in one eternal present; there is no past or future for God; all time exists for God in one eternal now. This concept of God reigned unchallenged from the philosopher Aristotle (in the 4th century B.C.) to Christian theologians St. Augustine (of the 4th-5th centuries A.D.), and well on through St. Thomas Aquinas (of the 13th century A.D.); so for a long time! And the attribute of God’s timelessness is tied up together with (or “inseparably interrelated to”) other attributes classically ascribed to God, like His omnipresence (that God can be & is everywhere at the same time), His omniscience (that God knows everything), His immutability (that God doesn’t change), and His impassibility (that God is unaffected by the world).⁴

But, in recent centuries, some theologians have begun to question this assumption that God is timeless. And their critique is that, while the notion of God’s timelessness succeeds in maintaining a distinction between God and creation, they question whether this *attribute* would allow God to *relate* to the temporal world or *act in* the temporal world.⁵ “In other words, if the eternal God exists absolutely

¹ Antje Jackelén, *Time And Eternity: The Question Of Time In Church, Science, And Theology*, Templeton Press: 2005.

² Anné Verhoef, “Timelessness, Trinity, and temporality,” 2/28/2011, 43. p.83,
https://www.researchgate.net/publication/290869246_Timelessness_trinity_and_temporality

³ Also known as ‘divine atemporality’

⁴ Verhoef

⁵ Verhoef: “Brian Davies (1983: 215) summarizes several major objections to God’s timelessness as follows: “1. If God is timeless He cannot be a person. 2. If God is timeless, his knowledge entails absurd consequences or is restricted. 3. If God is timeless, he cannot act. 4. If God is timeless, he cannot command our admiration or love. 5. There is Biblical precedent for rejecting the view that God is timeless. 6. There is no good reason for supposing that if there is a God, then he is timeless”. (Verhoef 103)

In contrast, recent advocates of the view that God *is* timeless are Paul Helm and Brian Leftow, among others.

Verhoef: “Helm is aware of the critique against the timeless view of God, which asks how God’s action of the temporal world can be explained. For example: Does this temporal act not change God’s mode of existence to temporal? Helm’s answer is that God’s creation of the universe is not a temporal event, nor was there a temporal starting-point for the universe to exist because it is co-eternal with God. (Verhoef 103)

In Helm’s own words: “As an analogy we may think of a person’s action in setting the timer on her central heating system. This is (we may suppose) one action, analogous to God’s eternal willing. But this one action has numerous temporally scattered effects, analogous to the effects in time of God’s eternal act of willing.”

Verhoef: “Although Helm does try in this analogy to answer this main critique against the timelessness of God, there are still many other critiques against this opinion. One is the inner incoherence regarding the problem of “simultaneity”; another is the implied immutability and impassibility that is implied by divine timeless eternity, and another is that many temporalists assert that a timelessly eternal God cannot be omniscient because he cannot know what time

outside of time, how can God relate to human time?” And this includes the concern that if God is absolutely outside of time, could God really have taken on human flesh in Jesus?

Opponents of divine timelessness suggest that the idea of God’s timelessness didn’t really come from scripture, but rather from the Greek philosophy of Plato & Aristotle (and neo-Platonists) and their influence on theologians like Augustine and Aquinas. You see, ancient Greek philosophy generally held that eternity & time were opposed to one another, with eternity being superior & true. And so, God as the most perfect being must be eternal and not temporal - not in time - for time involves change and change would imply God could improve. So ancient Greek philosophy viewed time & eternity as opposed to one another and determined that God must be in the eternity category, and theologians like Augustine & Anselm adopted this assumption (that God is timeless).

But theologians who are critical of divine timelessness *also* suggest that the Bible itself never asserts that God is timeless, believing instead that people read this view into scripture. Instead, they observe that the Bible is actually all about God acting in time.⁶ Furthermore, these critics say the Greek idea that time & eternity are opposed - are the antithesis of one another - or even of eternity being timeless cannot be found in the Bible. Instead, the Bible speaks of time and eternity related to each other in various ways, such as in eternal life breaking into temporal human life now - as indicated in John 3:16 and the writings of Paul, or even in Jesus’ announcement that we heard from Mark 1:15 tonight that the kingdom of God has “come near”: that in Jesus an eternal way of living with God and becoming like God has become available.⁷ And while the Bible doesn’t clearly define what eternity is, it certainly indicates eternity as relating to time and not being diametrically opposed to it.

So, if time and eternity are not complete opposites and God is not necessarily timeless, what are the alternatives. Well, contemporary theologians like Robert Jenson and Antje Jackelén⁸ (pronounced Ahn-tee Yakalin) have each proposed an alternative. Jackelén insists that “Time (has to be something) more than a deficient eternity, and eternity is something other than multiplied time.” Instead of eternity *contrasting* with time, she says that eternity incorporates time.⁹

And Jenson says something similar. He says that time is not what separates God and the world. Instead, time is what God and the world have in common.¹⁰ For Jenson, God created time as an accommodation, so that others - creatures, like us - might be able to exist and relate to Him.¹¹ He describes time as a “*roominess within God*” that allows things other than God to exist. And so, Jenson describes God’s time (and God’s very being) as “temporal infinity”. This definition keeps God from being

is “now”. For Kim (2010: 158), one of the “... most implausible thoughts is that, as Helm says, the temporal world itself is co-eternal with the eternal God in tenseless sense. If [...] God created the world ex nihilo, how then can the world be co-eternal with the Creator?” ” (Verhoef 103)

⁶ Jackelén appeals to the work of Dalferth, who argues against God and time being antithetical and supports this with the following points:

1-the notion of god’s timelessness is no of judeo-christian origin, it rather entered theology by way of neoplatonism

4- if god is timeless, then the notion of a creator interacting with creation is then (philosophically) impossible

⁷ Jackelén: “Nearness means unavailability and not-yet present. However, it also means presence as that which is coming and, this, as an interruption of liner chronology” (229).

⁸ Antje Jackelén also happens to be the Archbishop of the Church of Sweden (Lutheran)

⁹ Ted Peters, (2016), “Time in Eternity and Eternity in Time.” 10.1007/978-3-319-23944-6_1, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/300125267_Time_in_Eternity_and_Eternity_in_Time

Jackelén frames eternity as “the other of time”. It is however important for Jackelén that God’s eternity cannot simply be the negative Other of time. That will make God timeless and will not result in a positive relation between God and time (temporal world). (Verhoef). So, for Jackelén, eternity is not a negative but a positive other to time. (Jackelén)

¹⁰ Time is internal to God’s enveloping consciousness (Verhoef 89)

¹¹ For example, Jenson (1995: 40) mentions: “Time [...] is the accommodation God makes in his living and moving eternity, for others than himself.” (96)

subject to the limits of time without extracting Him from history, where we see God acting time and again in scripture.¹² #

So that's a little taste of some theological alternatives to the notion of God being timeless, which I'll come back to and say a little more about. But one cannot discount that the timing of many of these criticisms of divine timelessness and new understandings of time & eternity have emerged *after* the many paradigm-shifting scientific discoveries about time that took place in the 20th century. And I'd like to cover a little of that tonight.

We've talked about the understanding of time in classical philosophy & theology, but there is also classical physics. And the definition of time in classical physics comes from Isaac Newton (1642-1727), who made all his advances in physics in the late 17th and early 18th centuries operating with the assumption that time is absolute.¹³ So, for Newton, time was static, always marching forward; the way we all generally experience it as we go about our lives: time is what we measure with clocks! Although, Newton could never prove his view of absolute time scientifically, he just assumed it and it intuitively makes sense to people, as it seems to match our experience of life in this world. So, for Newton, space and time were like the stage that the drama of the universe takes place on.¹⁴ And this was the view for two and a half centuries. But, in the 20th century, the defects of Newton's absolute time became obvious "when physicists began to deal with the very small (and) the very large, (and the very fast)"¹⁵: the very small, being the study of the particles within an atom, the very large being the study of planets & stars in astronomy, (and the very fast being the particular study of the speed of light).

And all of these were the subject of study for Albert Einstein (1879-1955). Some of you might have seen Einstein depicted in the recent movie *Oppenheimer*, involving the field of Quantum Physics, which is the study of the subatomic particle-sized world. And 20th century advances in Quantum Physics,¹⁶

¹² The term "temporal infinity" demonstrates God's self-liberation from temporal contingencies without extracting him from history. This description of God's time is, for Jenson, more biblical than the Greek concept of timelessness... He prefers to use the term "infinity" (limitlessness) instead of "timelessness" about God, because God is not infinite in the sense that he "extends indefinitely, but because no temporal activity can keep up with the activity that he is" (Verhoef 83,87)

¹³ Newton: "'Absolute, true, and mathematical time, of it self and from its own nature, flows equably without relation to anything external, and by another name is called 'duration'; relative, apparent, and common time is some sensible and external (whether accurate or unequable) measure of duration by means of motion, which is commonly used instead of true time, such as an hour, a day, a month, a year.'" (T&E 125)

¹⁴ And God, of course, is outside of the stage - holding it up, as it were (maybe God is the theater in this analogy?) - as God's duration is from eternity to eternity.

¹⁵ Jackelén

¹⁶ Quantum physics defines time quite precisely: "One second is not simply 1/86,400 of a day but rather 9,192,631,770 oscillations of a special caesium atom" (Jackelén), which is in contrast to the Theory of Relativity, as we shall see. And the two have still not been reconciled. A "Theory of everything" in physics remains out of reach for now.

especially in the area of Thermodynamics,¹⁷ and even Chaos Theory,¹⁸ have revealed a lot that relates to time. But given our time constraints and the limits to how much information we can take in at once, I'm gonna leave aside the very small for my footnotes, for (the very fast and) the very large, which is the subject of the Theories of Relativity.

In 1905, Albert Einstein (1879-1955) published his Special Theory of Relativity. Now, this theory revealed a lot of different things about reality.¹⁹ But what's important about it for our purposes is that it proved time and space are not separate concepts, but rather one 4-dimensional inseparable space-time.²⁰ Hence, time is like the 4th dimension to our three spatial dimensions.²¹ So, there is not space and there is not time, but only space-time.

¹⁷ Relevant and significant findings of Thermodynamics are

1. That time is not reversible: "In the Copenhagen Interpretation, which is widely used in physics at university level, we say that a wave function (describing different probable states of a particle) will collapse to a single state when measured. This process is not time-reversible, as we cannot "uncollapse" the state again."
2. Entropy proves time has an arrow: "In physics, the irreversibility of all macroscopic processes is known as the second law of thermodynamics. It more specifically says that entropy can only grow or stay constant — but never be reduced." "If a system is left alone, it will be much more likely to settle in a disordered state, which means higher entropy." Time having an arrow forward contradicts Agustings's belief that the arrow of time pointed backward from the eschaton to the present.
3. "Applied to the universes as a whole, the theorem of ever increasing entropy means that the order in the universe is moving toward decay - inevitable heat death of universe" (Jackelén 167). Ted Peters explains it this way: "The physical cosmologists project two scenarios: freeze or fry. The universe as a whole, due to the second law of thermodynamics, popularly known as entropy, may freeze as the original heat of the big bang dissipates and every physical thing becomes devoid of energy. Or, if more matter exists in the universe than we currently perceive, the force of gravity may stop the expansion process at some point and compel a recontraction, a sucking of all the galaxies, stars and planets back into a very dense and hot singularity." (Ted Peters, "God Happens: The Timeliness of the Triune God," <https://www.religion-online.org/article/god-happens-the-timeliness-of-the-triune-god/>) Peters notes that in neither scientific scenario of freeze or fry do we see anything like the biblical promise of new creation. He notes that Jackelén agrees: "Is the Christian promise of eschatological fulfillment consonant or dissonant with the projections of the future offered by scientific cosmologists? Jackelén would say dissonant. Jackelén says scientist is cosmic in scope where Christian eschatology that seems geocentrically parochial... in neither scientific scenario of freeze or fry do we see anything like the biblical promise of new creation." However, this sets the stage for God to intervene. (Peters, "Time...", 9-10).

(Alex Schuckert, "How chaos drives the arrow of time," <https://medium.com/many-body-physics/how-chaos-drives-the-arrow-of-time-317ec40e771f>
Lenka Otap, "3 Perspectives on Time in Physics." <https://medium.com/predict/3-perspectives-on-time-in-physics-de73e7207acc>)

¹⁸ In addition to what is stated in the previous footnote, Chaos theory shows that the future is determined by so many factors that it is unpredictable because it is complex. But, Chaos Theory does not mark the end of determinism... chaotic processes are still deterministic though they are just not predictable because of complexity. A relatable example of this is the inconsistency in weather forecasts, due to there being too many variables (that determine the weather) to take into account.



¹⁹ The Special Theory of Relativity shows that

- motion is always relative.
- distant simultaneity – whether two spatially separated events occur at the same time – is not absolute, but depends on the observer's reference frame.- "For example, a car crash in London and another in New York appearing to happen at the same time to an observer on Earth, will appear to have occurred at slightly different times to an observer on an airplane flying between London and New York. Furthermore, if the two events cannot be causally connected, depending on the state of motion, the crash in London may appear to occur first in a given frame, and the New York crash may appear to occur first in another. However, if the events can be causally connected, precedence order is preserved in all frames of reference."
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Relativity_of_simultaneity#:~:text=In%20physics%2C%20the%20relativity%20of,on%20the%20observer's%20reference%20frame.
- light always travels at the same speed (186,000 miles per second) and no material object can ever travel as fast as light, which has a constant speed for all observers, no matter their motion. The speed of light is thus the "speed limit" of the universe.
 - Jackelén: "Where for Newton time was absolute, for Einstein the speed of light was absolute."
- that mass and energy are the same physical entity and can be changed into each other.

Visit <https://kids.britannica.com/students/article/relativity/276687> for a simplified explanation of much of this :).

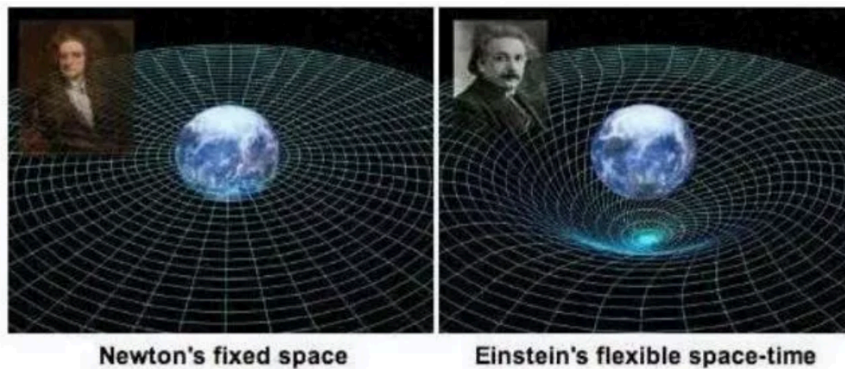
²⁰ "For Einstein, time and space are still distinguishable and each itself has significance but not an objective significance. Both are much less concrete than in classical physics.: (Jackelén 148)

²¹ Otap

 <p>Newton</p> <p>Mass & energy are very different things.</p> <p>Space & time are very different things.</p>	 <p>Einstein</p> <p>Mass & energy are interchangeable: $E = mc^2$</p> <p>Space & time are interchangeable: part of 4-dimensional space-time.</p>
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Then, a decade later, Einstein added gravity into the mix with his General Theory of Relativity (1916). This theory also revealed a lot of different things about reality,²³ but what's important about it for our purposes is that it proved that very large objects²⁴ will change the geometry of this 4-dimensional space-time.²⁵ The effects of this can be best observed with very large objects - like planets - because it is caused by gravity, which is actually a very weak force.



source: NASA

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And, related to this, time is relative in the sense that every point in the 4D space-time has its own “clock” based on the strength of the gravitational field at that point. This means that clocks run slower as they approach the mass that is producing the gravitational field. So, for example, a clock ticks more slowly the closer it is to earth, and it's not due to the mechanics of the clock but because time literally moves more slowly there (this is known as “time dilation”).²⁷

²² https://images.slideplayer.com/14/4374050/slides/slide_15.jpg

²³ The General Theory of Relativity

- explains that Gravity is not really a force, but a field
- shows that massive objects tend to fall toward more massive objects (explaining the orbit of the planets around the sun)
- describes such large-scale physical phenomena as the movement of planets, the birth and death of stars, black holes, and the evolution of the universe.
- shows that light rays - and thus, space itself - are bent near massive objects

²⁴ This theory concerns gravity, one of the fundamental forces in the universe. But gravitation is a very weak force. For this reason, its distinctive effects are evident only on very massive objects.

²⁵ So “space-time tells matter how to move and matter tells space-time how to curve.” The Euclidean geometry we learned in high school may hold true on small scales, but not in astronomy.

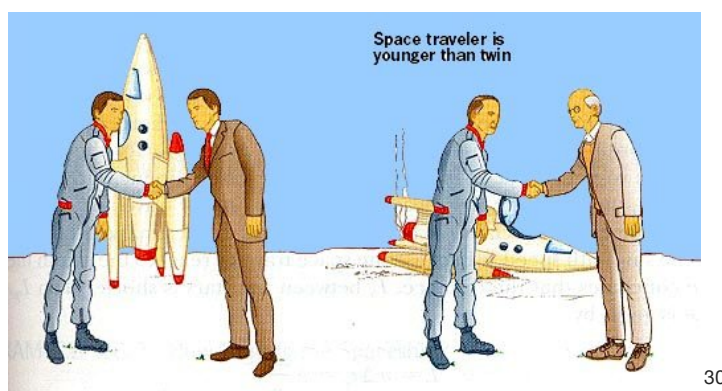
²⁶ <https://image2.slideserve.com/5127446/general-relativity-and-grade-9-astronomy-l.jpg>

²⁷ According to general relativity, atomic clocks at different elevations in a gravitational field tick at different rates. This effect has been demonstrated repeatedly; for example, NIST physicists measured it in 2010 by comparing two independent atomic clocks, one positioned 33 centimeters (about 1 foot) above the other.



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And this is illustrated by what's called the twin paradox: that "a twin who takes a journey into space at high speeds will be younger upon (their) return than the (sibling) who remained at home."²⁹



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Therefore, the Theories of Relativity disproved the notion of Absolute Time.³¹ Where Newton thought there was a universal "now", Einstein showed that there is not a universally valid time. #

So, returning to theology, Antje Jackelén suggests that this paradigm shift in science may shed light on how God's eternity is temporal:³² that God's eternity is not temporal in the sense of infinite duration, but in the sense of multi-temporality. That even though from our creaturely point of view any given moment will be either past or future, God's eternity unites a complexity of times. Well, that's pretty

(<https://www.nist.gov/news-events/news/2022/02/jila-atomic-clocks-measure-einsteins-general-relativity-millimeter-scale#:~:text=According%20to%20general%20relativity%2C%20atomic,stronger%20gravity%2C%20closer%20to%20Earth.>)

²⁸<https://lh5.googleusercontent.com/proxy/b9-RKL1Eg2qNKgCS8Rla7dhixKBP2u8oO907D0MxzeyONQnaSkamKrcPYjIGFeUUcpvXWT8veus6iivh0YTDhgKV5FHg8D-goVRSnWikA>

²⁹ "Similarly, one twin who was exposed to much stronger gravity on a heavenly body of higher density than the other was exposed to on earth finds on her return that the sister who stayed at home is older than she is." (Jackelén 145)

³⁰https://lh3.googleusercontent.com/blogger_img_proxy/AEn0k_u2ZN1RF2gcPMUN_5sjR0e5Rqy3ZJ1cBt5091PC4TUymbKsG_KIU1Va5ocOTF-2VxMFPoJParyq2IHJLdRJoHDtgLyeGZ0At918nMHRkHw4rAQiGa712DGE2dQsQJfW1vCsfd2RECRaRabfntT3yk=s0-d

³¹ I should note, like I did in my course on evolution that the word theory in science is often misunderstood with how we use the word theory in nonscientific language to mean a vaguely supported guess. But in science, the term theory is only used where there is a massive amount of evidence for it. That being said, "General relativity has passed all the experimental tests so far, but its applicability is expected to break down when [the] effects of quantum mechanics (the theory of the very small particles) should become dominant." <https://www.space.com/17661-theory-general-relativity.html>

³² "In Time and eternity Jackelén discusses time in Newtonian, relativistic and quantum physics, thermodynamics, and chaos theory, and concludes with a relational and multiplicity of time in physics which has supplanted the strong principle of causality and which is open toward the future – a more dynamic understanding of time than the Newtonian. Meisinger (2009: 983) mentions in this respect that "... the notion of chance also plays an important role because its scientific understanding can build up a creative tension to a theology in which there is a primacy of potentiality over against actuality/reality". An open understanding of time marked by the "already" and "not-yet" is therefore indispensable in Jackelén's theological reflection about time. (93)

hard to get our minds around. But one way this might become a little more concrete for us to understand is that both Jackelén and Jenson suggest that the fact that God is Trinity (triune) allows God to be multi-temporal. Just one example Jackelén shares of how this might be she takes from theologian Ingolf Ingolf Dalferth, who differentiates between in the timeless eternity of God the Father, who creates; the temporality of God the Son, who saves; and in the multi-temporal eternity of God the Spirit, who consummates relationship between humans & God and assembles the Church.³³ #

It's notable that in theories of physics we've discussed, whether Newton or Einstein, the idea of God they work with is very monotheistic, but certainly not Trinitarian. And Jackelén suggests that this overly simple conception of God may cause a real limitation for the theories that develop from their thinking, since if God is indeed Trinitarian - not just one, but three persons (related to one another) in one - it makes sense that this three-person 'construction' of God would have a bearing on how the physical world works, which God created and engages with.

And this certainly has an even further impact for how Jackelén thinks about time, because for her, just as God is relational - the three persons of God relating to one another (not to mention us), she wants to say that time is relational. "Time - and this is her final conclusion - is no abstraction but is 'lived time', dynamic and relational. Time is time of life with all its connections." And she says this is one reason time is difficult to define. Time can't be defined as an abstraction, but has to be experienced. Time is lived in relationship with one another, in community, and with God. And we live in an age where the eternity of God breaks into time - into our lives - through relationship to His Son. Therefore, in contrast to classical philosophy & theology where time is something to ultimately escape in death, for Jackelén death is not a last stop for us but rather an intermediate step into a new age of being, where God becomes all in all and God's transforming work of us is fully realized. #

So thinkers like Jackelén, and Jenson, are helpful in casting some doubt on the classical view that time is the opposite of eternity and God. And they've provided us with some new & different ways to think about time & eternity. Although, I should say that both Jenson and Jackelén are what is known as Open Theists³⁴ and Process Theists,³⁵ which some view as beyond the bounds of orthodoxy.³⁶ So, taking some of their particular ideas further, they call into question how determinative or omniscient God really is

³³ Jackelén follows the theologian Dalferth's formulation in this instance: "God is related to creation, in triune fashion, as a differentiated unity of Father, Spirit, and Son: as the timeless foundation of everything, as the multi-temporal companion of everyone, and as the temporal mediator of salvation in the specific life-time of Jesus Christ and of all who believe in him. God's eternity is the epitome of these time relationships and cannot be identified with any one of them as such" (Jackelén 2005: 100). (Verhoef 96)

Jackelén ultimately decides that Dalferth's model falls short, as it is weak on the role it assigns of the Holy Spirit. However, she says that "the proposed unity of timelessness and multi-temporality seems promising." (Verhoef 100)

³⁴ "Open Theism says that God does not know which choices we will freely make in the future, because there is nothing yet to be known."

<https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/eternity/>

"Jenson and Jackelén can easily be understood as "open theists" or "process theologians" who assert, based on their understanding of God and time, that God does not know the future. Although this might not necessarily be a philosophical problem, it does reveal a whole new wave of critique within the theology about God's omniscience and God's omnipotence.⁵⁴ (Verhoef 109)

³⁵ Process theism holds that "it is an essential attribute of God to be fully involved in and affected by temporal processes. This idea contrasts neatly with traditional forms of theism that hold God to be or at least conceived as being, in all respects non-temporal (eternal), unchanging (immutable,) and unaffected by the world (impassible)...Process theism does not deny that God is in some respects eternal, immutable, and impassible, but it contradicts the classical view by insisting that God is in some respects temporal, mutable, and passible."

<https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/process-theism/#:~:text=Some%20neo%2DThomists%20hold%20this,ake%20relationship%20with%20the%20world.>

³⁶ "Some both Jenson's and Jackelén's proposals will probably receive a great deal of critique from orthodox theology. Some of these critiques have already been mentioned in the separate discussions of Jenson and Jackelén. The most important one will be mentioned in this instance. The Patristic Fathers and the Reformers (and Karl Barth) always emphasized the difference between God and his creatures, God and his creation, God and time. They argued that for God to be God (Biblically), this distinction needs to be maintained. The problem is that by understanding God as temporal, God will thus be like his creatures, like his creation, and therefore there exists a strong traditional theological argument that God is timeless despite recent developments." . (Verhoef 108)

of the future and suggest that God can both change and be affected by what happens in the world.³⁷ But the notion that God changes or can truly experience pain - which implies change - this can appear to conflict with some scriptures like the four I've listed on your insert from Numbers, Malachi, James, and Hebrews,³⁸ though there may be more nuanced understandings of these scriptures than meets the eye. But it should be said that, aside from Jenson & Jackelén, there *are* theologians that deny divine timelessness but are *not* open theists.³⁹ Nevertheless, the field of science also shows that there is much more to still be discovered, but that it certainly has some illuminating light to shed on a theology of time.

But I think I've said enough on Time & Eternity for tonight. I apologize if what I've shared has been too unclear or convoluted to make sense of. But I hope, in the very least, you learned something about the Theory of Relativity or the History of Theology on this "phenomenon of 'time', (which) is so familiar to everyone, and yet so foreign."

Discussion Questions

1. Was there something that stood out as either confusing from the homily or concerning about the suggestion that God might be something other than timeless?

2. Was there something that was illuminating from the homily about the science or theology presented or something compelling about the notion that God and eternity are not necessarily the opposites of time?

³⁷ For example, Jenson: "God is not immutable or impassable: "He is therefore identifiable by his temporal acts of creation and redemption, but also infinite in the sense that he is not bound by temporality. The implication of this understanding of God is that he is not impassable or immutable, not immune to suffering and change, but a god who is alive and active and involved in the world and its history. God is present, loving, encompassing in our time and place – a timely and timeful God." (Verhoef 87)

³⁸ Scriptures often cited in support of God's immutability (and therefore impassibility):

- Numbers 23:19 - "God is not human, that he should lie, not a human being, that he should change his mind. Does he speak and then not act? Does he promise and not fulfill?"
- Malachi 3:6 - "I the Lord do not change. So you, the descendants of Jacob, are not destroyed."
- James 1:17 - "Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows."
- Hebrews 13:8 - "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever."

³⁹ See, for example, section 4.2.3 of <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/eternity/>

R.T. Mullins also seems to get into Calvinists and Molinists (who are not open theists) who deny divine timelessness. (R.T. Mullins, *The End of the Timeless God*, Oxford University Press, 2016.)