Three Christian Origins Models: Some Theological Implications

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Introduction

In recent times the issue of biblical interpretation has become increasingly complex. In the pre-modern era (and often still today) people picked up the biblical text and interpreted it "automatically." That is to say, they took what appeared to be the "plain reading" of Scripture as the correct interpretation; the basic hermeneutic being that if it was possible to read the text literally, one should do so. And, only when the text became nonsense did the interpreter reach for some kind of symbolic hermeneutic. While some might long for a return to such an approach, it has to be admitted that even in the past Christian and Christian (or even Jew and Jew) did not always agree on when to allegorise or symbolise.

If the general interpretation of Scripture is vexed, the meaning of Genesis 1-3 is even more so. Christians disagree with each other as to whether the world was recently created or was fashioned over a long period of time. They also debate whether the Genesis creation account is to be read as history or as symbolic parable.[1] And, they argue over whether the scientific data can be—or should be—reconciled with the Bible.

It is now generally accepted that the reader's own background and preconceptions have a large impact on the hermeneutical process and on the results. Therefore, I wish to state a couple of important presuppositions that I am bringing to this study. First, all reading of Scripture requires interpretation. Even a literalistic interpretation of Genesis 1-3 is still an interpretation. As Fritz Guy points out, "It is always appropriate to ask of any interpretation even a literalistic one, what justifies it. No interpretation has a preferred status, much less immunity to rigorous criticism on literary, factual, logical, or theological grounds."[2]

Second, the theological themes or doctrines of Christianity are interconnected. That is, it makes a difference when the theological "chessmen" are moved on, or removed from, the theological "board." A single change in one arena of doctrine will have impacts on other doctrines.[3] However, one need not hold to a strict 'slippery slope' theory of theological change. While theological innovation will always have an impact, it is not necessarily true that every innovation sends everything out over the 'edge'.[4] For example, while there are biblical connections between the

idea of the primordial Eden and Eden restored[5], it does not follow that adjustments in protology dismantle the whole of eschatology.

The approach taken in this paper is to examine some of the theological implications of three Christian models (or theories) of origins via their influence on the doctrine of Scripture, the fall of humankind and the Sabbath. Of course, it would also be possible to look to some of the broader, overarching themes such as the character of God, the nature of humankind and the meaning of salvation. However, I've chosen a narrower approach which fits better the scope of this paper and provides the possibility of viewing more specific details. In addition, the three areas chosen arise quite naturally out of the first few chapters of Genesis. The creation story arouses questions as to what kind of book the Bible is. And, humankind's fall into sin and the Sabbath appear as central themes in those early chapters.

The three Christian models of creation that this paper examines are young earth creationism, old earth (or progressive) creationism and theistic evolution[6]. It will be immediately observed that there is no intention of dealing with the theological implications of the non-theistic evolutionary theory. While this theory does have theological implications, the theory itself does not have a theology. In fact, quite the contrary; God's interaction is not acknowledged as necessary in order to explain the natural world.

Young Earth Creationism

Definition and Exponents

Paul Nelson and John Mark Reynolds rightly point out that "young earth creationism" is the view that is most commonly labelled "'creationism' by the majority of scientists, educators, and the press . . . ."[7] They characterise the recent creation view in the following way: (1) an approach to science that is open to the possibility of God's design and interaction in nature; (2) a belief that "[a]ll basic types of organisms were directly created by God during the creation week of Genesis 1-2"; (3) a conviction that the fall of Genesis 3 has "profoundly affected every aspect of the natural economy"; and (4) the concept that Noah's flood was "a historical event, global in extent and effect."[8] So, this appears to be an approach which reads the Genesis accounts of origins, the fall and the flood very literally.

The major international proponents of young earth creationism are the Creation Research Society, the Geoscience Research Institute and the Institute for Creation Research, although there are numerous other local bodies promoting recent creationism.

Theological Implications for the Doctrine of Scripture

Young earth creationists generally claim to take the position that their view—and only their view—takes the plain meaning of Scripture seriously. For instance, the genealogies of Genesis 5 are read in terms of real years which indicate that the world is relatively young.[9] Thus, the text is interpreted literally even if such a reading provides one with conflicts in regard to how to fit the scientific data into the Genesis account. Proponents of this view usually follow a strict approach to the Bible. Scripture is the authoritative Word of God which reveals exactly how God made the world and everything in it.[10] If there is a discrepancy between the Bible and science, science will need to be re-interpreted, perhaps as humans gain a clearer picture of the facts.

What does this say about the divinity of Scripture? Often the Bible is seen as God speaking directly to us. If the Scriptures "say it", God says it! Little space is given for notions of historical conditioning or divine accommodation. In fact, it is almost expected that God would have spoken about the creation week in terms that are understandable to the 21st century scientific mindset. After all, God is God; and he has given us all we need to know about origins (and everything else). The role of the biblical writer is downplayed in favour of the true divine author.

However, an overly divine view of Scripture creates problems of its own. For one thing, God does not appear to have exercised that kind of control over other portions of Scripture. We are not even told how Moses[11] wrote the creation story. Did he write what was already "recorded" in oral tradition? Did God reveal the events of the creation week in visions or dreams? And how could anyone, including Moses, write a completely "accurate" account of the awesome events we have described for us in Genesis 1 and 2?[12] While it might appear like respect for the authority of Scripture, it seems to me that we demean the God of the Scriptures to claim that he could not have used humans and genuine human modes in the writing of his Word.

Additionally, it is doubtful that even the most literalistic interpreter reads the Genesis accounts consistently. For instance, what does one do with the cosmology of the creation story? A natural reading of the text sees no chronological gap between Genesis 1:1 and verse 2.[13] And, what does one do with the sun, moon, and stars all being created on the 4th day; when the text does not really allow the construal that God "made the stars also" (KJV) at a previous time?[14] It appears that even the young earth creationist viewpoint is an interpretation of the biblical text, importing some of its presuppositions from a scientific world view, while rejecting other concepts of that world.

Theological Implications for the Doctrine of the Fall of Humankind

The young creationist view of Scripture leads quite naturally to the idea that the fall narrative of Genesis 3 is to be read literally. Adam and Eve were real people. There was a real tree and a real serpent. Eve (and Adam) took the forbidden fruit and failed the test; thereby bringing sin and death on the whole human race.

There is no doubt that this is the simplest and most direct way of reading the story. It is clear that the humans who came from God's hand and mouth as his "image" and "likeness" no longer completely represent or clearly resemble their maker. For example, the two who had been made to be in fellowship with their creator, in relation to each other and in solidarity with the rest of the created world,[15] now find themselves hiding from God, ashamed in each one another's presence, and at odds with even the earth from which they had come. Yet, while the "image of God" has been distorted, it was not obliterated.[16]

Further, the story of the fall contains a "seed" of hope for the human race (Gen 3:15). Paul intentionally picks up this theme in Romans 5. It is through "one man" that "sin entered the world . . . and death through sin" (Rom 5:12). A literalistic reading of the fall narrative provides the clearest connections to the story of salvation. However, the connections are primarily those of contrast rather than of equivalency. For instance, Paul goes on to say: "For if the many died by the trespass of the one man, how much more did God's grace and the gift that came by the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, overflow to the many!" (vs. 15).[17]

It should be observed, however, that such a reading of the fall narrative comes with what some see as a deficit. Clark Pinnock, for example, remarks that if we were to read the story of Genesis 3 in any other book we would immediately assume that it is a symbolic story. He points to such features as the snake, the two trees and the simple test of monstrous proportions as indicative of symbolism.[18] Even when one does not follow Pinnock down this track, it is necessary to note that those who employ the literalistic approach of the young creationist viewpoint are possibly more likely to ask questions relating to what happened and when, rather than those having to do with the existential meaning of Genesis 3. Perhaps, we need both kinds of questions.

Theological Implications for the Doctrine of the Sabbath

While there are clear lines of connection between the biblical story of the fall and the human need for salvation, there are also very strong links between a literal understanding of the six days of creation and the

Sabbath. At the same time, though, it is obvious that not all young earth creationists believe that the Sabbath has contemporary relevance.

The Sabbath appears as the climax of the primary creation narrative (Gen 2:1-3). In fact some theologians see the blessing of the seventh day as the point of the story.[19] Yet, Genesis does not explicitly state that God gave the Sabbath to humans. Rather, it is God who rests, blesses and hallows. However, as the representative of God in the world, humans are to do as God does. This is certainly the import of the fourth commandment: "Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. . . . For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy" Exod 20:8-11).

Undoubtedly, six literal creation days followed by a literal Sabbath provide the clearest case for a theology of the Sabbath. Just as God worked and rested, so humans are to work and sabbath. In this view, the Sabbath stands as a "literal" symbol that points back to God's activity in creation. As such, it is a reminder that we are valuable because we have our origin in God; that we have solidarity not only with other human beings, but also with the rest of creation; and that what God makes he cares for and rescues.[20] It remains for us to see what theological implications might arise should one not find the young creationist viewpoint palatable.

Old Earth (or Progressive) Creationism

Definition and Proponents

The Old Earth creationist viewpoint—sometimes called progressive creationism—is the idea that "God's activity in creation occurred in a progression—a number of steps over a long period of time in which God established and perfected each level of the environment before he added a higher level that rests (so to speak) upon the preceding levels."[21] There are, in fact, several versions of this position. The so-called "gap theory" stands between the young earth position and the old earth position. Proponents of this view hold that God created the earth and the universe in the distant past (Gen 1:1), then it became formless and void (Gen1:2), possibly as a result of Satan's rebellion. The remainder of Genesis 1 then describes "the restoration of the earth just a few thousand years ago in six literal days." This view, found in the original *Scofield Reference Bible* means that "geologists are looking at the original creation and Genesis is looking at the restoration."[22]

Other variations on progressive creationism can be categorised in regard to "how the days of Genesis are to be understood." Some see the days

as standing for "long periods of time (day-age view)." Others understand the days as literal, but "separated by long periods (intermittent-day view)." And, still other interpreters regard the days as "a literary device rather than an actual chronological sequence (framework hypothesis)."[23] The theme that ties these variant perspectives together is the concept that the biblical narrative is at least somewhat open to the findings of science, particularly in the area of long geologic ages.

Some of the proponents of old earth creationism include theologians such as Charles Hodge, Bernard Ramm and Wayne Grudem, as well as Gleason Archer (an Old Testament scholar), not to mention some scientists of Christian persuasion.[24]

Robert Newman describes his own view as fitting into the intermittent-day type. Before day 1 of the creation narrative, God had formed the raw materials of the universe. Then each day "opens a new creative period." The first day "starts the formation of atmosphere and ocean." The second day, "the formation of atmosphere and ocean." The third day, "the oxygenation and clearing of the atmosphere."[25] Interestingly, however, Newman's scenario differs from the Genesis account when we come to the fourth day. Day 4, for him, sees God forming the air and sea animals. Then, on the fifth day, God makes the land animals and human beings. The sixth day provides for the redemption of humankind, while the Sabbath rest is still future.[26]

Theological Implications for the Doctrine of Scripture

It seems to me that the old earth creationist point of view attempts to read the text of Scripture and the findings of science together. Such an approach is admirable. However, the costs in regard to one's doctrine of Scripture may be too high. This approach to the Bible is much more flexible than that espoused by the young earth creationist camp. Instead of reading the creation narratives literalistically, they are viewed symbolically. This surely means that the amount of human input into the Scriptures is increased, while divine control in their writing is decreased.

Science appears to play a key role in interpretation and—especially in Newman's case—may even hold the upper hand. After all, the biblical text itself does not appear to favour long ages or gaps between the "days" of creation week. As well, one must ask what the result would be if all of the Bible were to be read in the same way. If divine control in biblical inspiration is loosened, is it not legitimate for us to amend the biblical text at any point where it might seem inconvenient to read it literally?

Theological Implications for the Fall of Humankind

Such an approach to Scripture has

large implications for the doctrine of the fall. Where, in the old earth creationist scenario does the fall occur? And the question is not just "where?" but what did it mean? Newman, himself, obviously places the fall inside the creation "week," for he has redemption within that "week" as well. It is more than likely that one holding to an old earth creationist viewpoint would also see the fall in a symbolic framework. Certainly, it would be seen as alienation between God and humankind, between humans and humans, and between humans and their environment; but what the basis of the alienation actually was, we probably do not know.[27]

It almost goes without saying that when one modifies one's doctrine of the fall, there are ramifications along the theological "track." Nowhere is this more so than in the intersection of the doctrine of humankind and the doctrine of salvation. Old earth creationism leaves us with large questions regarding the nature of the fall. Did it occur with an original Adam and Eve? If not, in what way were a later pair or pairs or groups, representative of all of humankind. And, what, then is the nature of sin? Was it, in some sense, a "fall" upwards? In contrast, the New Testament perspective of the fall seems to be based in the idea that Adam was representative of the whole human race, and that his fall into sin was disastrous for the whole human race. By contrast, Christ's righteous death was also representative, bringing benefit to all of humankind.

Theological Implications for the Doctrine of the Sabbath

While the old earth creationist standpoint might seem to lose touch with a coherent doctrine of the fall of humankind into sin, the same may be said for the doctrine of the Sabbath. As has been pointed out already, Newman does not appear to hold to a literal Sabbath. Rather, the eternal rest to which the creation narrative points is in the future. This position does not take seriously enough the text itself which speaks of God resting after finishing his work. Nor does it take account of the explicit commands for human beings to keep the Sabbath, because of God's completed creative work (Exod 20:8-11) and the re-creation of humankind in his rescue of his people from Egypt (Deut 5:12-15).

Still, it should not be thought that the old creationist standpoint rips away any theological basis for the Sabbath. For instance, some of the other variants of the view are more consonant with a literal weekly Sabbath than is Newman's perspective. The "gap theory" would allow the Sabbath to fit into its scenario without any difficulty. And, perhaps even the "day-age" concept might be "stretched" in order to accommodate the Sabbath. It could be argued that the Sabbath itself is symbolic; that is, it points

to something beyond itself and symbols—by their very nature—do not require an absolute equivalency between the symbols and what they symbolise. For example, baptism is a symbol of the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus and our own death, burial and resurrection in him (Rom 6:1-5), yet it is obvious that baptism is analogous to death, but not equivalent to it.

At the same time, though, it seems to me that the connections between the Sabbath and creation are made more tenuous as views of creation week become more symbolic. Why, for example, should we keep the seventh day? Why not any day or days of our own choosing? Of course, it could be argued that Christians are to do what Jesus did. He kept the Sabbath, so we should! For me, this is a very persuasive argument; in fact, it is with the example of Jesus that I begin my own case for the Sabbath. Yet, it seems inescapable that the meaning of the Sabbath and Sabbath-keeping, for Jesus, were based squarely in a literal reading of the Genesis story.[29] All too often an overly symbolic view of the Sabbath ends in no view, and that leads to losses that are heavy in terms of theology and Christian life.

Theistic Evolution

Definition and Proponents

While old earth creationism aimed to narrow the gulf between Scripture and science, theistic evolution has attempted to close the gap entirely. In fact, the Genesis narratives are read through the spectacles of evolution. What is interesting—and even ironic—is that some very conservative Christian scholars allow for this approach. Such was the case with Benjamin B. Warfield, the father of the doctrine of the inerrancy of the original autographs of Scripture and one of the leading lights in early Fundamentalism.[30]

Howard Van Till, professor of physics at Calvin College, Michigan, provides a well-argued case for theistic evolution. Van Till claims (with Christians of every age, he believes) that he (1) holds "to the historic and biblically informed Christian doctrine of creation." That is, he believes that everything that is not God has been given being by God. (2) "Atoms, molecules, cells, and organisms . . . posses not only properties but also the capabilities to act and interact in a remarkably rich diversity of ways." (3) Such "creaturely capabilities" were instilled in matter and organisms by God. (4) Every scientific discovery of these capabilities engenders praise, but not surprise. Van Till expects a wealth of capabilities. (5) Creation has "been gifted with all of the capabilities that would be necessary to make something like biotic evolution possible . . . ."[32]

From the theistic evolutionary standpoint, the conflict between creationists and evolutionists is the result

of a "misunderstanding" that the only possible positions are "special creationist theism and evolutionary naturalism." Van Till rejects both![33]

Theological Implications for the Doctrine of Scripture

It must be stated that theistic evolutionists do not build an explicit case for their views from Scripture itself. Van Till, for instance, does not provide any exegesis of Genesis 1-3. Yet, he does have a doctrine of Scripture. He states: "I believe the Scriptures to be divinely inspired and therefore to be 'useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness, so that the man [and woman] of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work' (2 Tim.3:16-17)."[34] For Van Till, the Bible is "an authentic account of the divine-human encounter", but it does not provide inerrant, binding information to us on all subjects. What does this mean? First, it implies that Christians wishing to interpret Scripture should take adequate account of the "historical and cultural context of the Scriptures as first written." Second, it means that we must guard against the "failure to acknowledge and appreciate the rich and varied literary artistry found in the Scriptures." And third, it forces us to the conclusion that the Bible constitutes "but one of the sources provided for our intellectual growth."[35]

While most conservative Christians would agree somewhat with these conclusions, for Van Till they mean that he can read the Genesis creation narrative as "storied theology" or inspired parable. And, again, the most careful biblical scholars have acknowledged that the creation accounts are theology, not science.[37]

Van Till's theology of creation has the effect of loosing almost entirely the tension between human freedom and divine sovereignty in the production of the Scriptures. For him, inspiration becomes the "fossil records" of a divine-human encounter. As with neo-orthodox theology, the focus is not on the Holy Spirit's "carrying along" of the writers of Scripture (2 Pet 1:21), but on the Spirit's work in "inspiring" us as the readers to engage in similar encounters. Some of Van Till's critics point out that his theology proper is deistic.[38] My own perspective is that his doctrine of Scripture is deistic as well. God initiates the encounter with humans, and then leaves his writers to "do their own thing" while he remains totally at a distance. The result is that Scripture appears to be just one of the ways that God communicates with humankind and is perhaps equivalent to natural revelation. Certainly, Van Till's current understanding of science appears to dominate his interpretation of the Bible.[39]

Implications for the Doctrine of the Fall

While Van Till's theistic evolution impacts his view of Scripture, it must

also have influence over the doctrine of the fall of humankind. Again, Genesis 3 could only be read in terms of a parable. And, along with that arise the same sort of questions that faced us in regard to the old earth creationist standpoint. However, there are other implications arising from Van Till's view. For instance, if God has fully gifted his creation, were humans predestined in that "gifting" to self-destruct?

What sort of "gracious" gift was that? Were sin and death "built into the system" as it came from God's "hand" (so to speak)? Of course, the very idea of theistic evolution must imply a "falling" upward with consequent problems for the usual evangelical doctrine of salvation, not to mention theology proper.

Implications for the Doctrine of the Sabbath

In the theistic evolutionary view of creation, there is no concept of a "creation week," let alone days of creation. So, connections between the Sabbath and creation are stretched almost to breaking point. While not agreeing with Van Till, I take seriously his claim that his view is a doctrine of creation. It is not the same as naturalistic evolution. Therefore, one might build a case for Sabbath observance as a symbol of God's creative gifting of matter and organisms with evolutionary capabilities. Again, as with old earth creationism, one might begin with Jesus Christ.

Fritz Guy comments in regard to how we could maintain "the spiritual validity and theological significance without affirming a literal six-day process of creation followed by a day of divine rest": the "Sabbath is important to us first of all because it was important to him [Jesus]. To understand the nature of Jesus' Sabbath, we then go to Genesis 1 and the Fourth Commandment, noting that the Sabbath is a symbol not only of creation, but also of liberation (Deut.5:15)."[40]

Conclusion

The three Christian origins theories have differing, but dramatic, implications for theology. Especially, is this the case for Seventh-day Adventist theology. The young earth creationist viewpoint has provided a strong biblical foundation for many of Adventism's most distinctive theological emphases. Yet, at the same time an unquestioning literalistic approach to Genesis 1-3 may "set us up" for a view of Scripture that does not take adequate account of the creative tension between divine control and human freedom in the process of inspiration. And, perhaps while finding a strong basis for the doctrines of the Fall and the Sabbath in Genesis, we may merely ask the "when," "what" and "how" questions, while ignoring the question as to what these things "mean."[41]

The old earth creationist viewpoint

appears to offer some respite to those caught in the line of fire between the biblical creation account and scientific evidence for the age of the earth and life on it. However, while doubting (as a scientific neophyte) that it provides adequate answers to the scientific dilemmas, progressive creationism also has some major implications for theology. How is one to "get around" the biblical text? Where is one to fit a coherent view of the fall into such a scenario? And, can one maintain a doctrine of the Sabbath if the story itself is only symbolic or metaphoric?

Again, the theistic evolutionary perspective appears to hold some attraction for those wishing to bring science and the Bible together. But, what impact will such an approach have on our reading of Scripture when we leave the Book of Genesis? And, will we have any basis for a view of the fall of humankind, except a general feeling of bewilderment and unease that humans can be so amazingly good and so devilishly bad (and often in the same person)? Then, what of the Sabbath when seen in relation to theistic evolution? Will it retain its value only to those who can think abstractly in terms of symbols and metaphors? At the same time, though, symbols and metaphors only have meaning because they have some basis in reality.

The young earth viewpoint appears to be the one closest to a literal reading of the Genesis account, yet the awesome mystery of the events of creation point to symbol and metaphor as the only means of description. Therefore, it is best to remain open to further insights from both Scripture and science. In the meantime, it is vital to remember that while not everything is lost when we change the "when?", "how?" and "what?" on the origins playing field, the consequent changes in meaning are dramatic; and perhaps, depending on the scope of the changes, dire!

Questions for discussion

1. How might a theistic evolutionist construct a viable biblical theology of the Sabbath?
2. What practical strategies might one put in place so that personal faith can be sustained while acknowledging the role of scientific enquiry?
3. What picture of God lies at the foundation of the three origins models discussed in this article?
4. Where might a Christian begin a conversation with a person who espouses a naturalistic evolutionary viewpoint?

References

1 For convenience sake, I will usually refer to the creation "story" or "narrative" (singular), although I am very aware of the various documentary theories.

2 Fritz Guy, "Interpreting Genesis One in the Twenty-first Century," *Spectrum* 31/2 (Spring 2003) 7.

3 For an example, examine the differences between Clark H Pinnock's two works on the inspiration and authority of Scripture: *Biblical Revelation: The Foundation of Christian Theology* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1971) and *The Scripture Principle* (San Francisco, CA: Harper and Row, 1984). And, for an analysis of Pinnock's shift in soteriology which seeped into his doctrine of Scripture (and other doctrines) see my own *Clark H Pinnock on Biblical Authority: An Evolving Position* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1993).

4 This seems to be implied in John T Baldwin's (ed.) *Creation, Catastrophe, and Calvary: Why a Global Flood is Vital to the Doctrine of the Atonement* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2000). See especially Baldwin's chapter: "The Geologic Column and Calvary: The Rainbow Connection—Implications for an Evangelical Understanding of the Atonement," pp108-123.

5 For instance, Gen 1:1 and Rev 21:1.

6 There are, of course, many permutations within these three models. For instance, it is obvious that not all young earth creationists agree in the details. See, for instance, the diversity apparent in the materials produced by Answers in Genesis (www.answersingenesis.org/intro.asp) and the Adventist Geoscience Research Institute (www.grisda.org). Note that I will be using extensively the portrayals of the views as expressed in J P Moreland and John Mark Reynolds, eds., *Three Views on Creation and Evolution* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1999). This work is easily accessible and provides the views of well-known exponents of the three positions.

7 See Paul Nelson and John Mark Reynolds, "Young Earth Creationism," in J P Moreland and John Mark Reynolds, p41. Note also the reticence with which Nelson and Reynolds accept the label of "young earth" or "recent" creationism (*ibid*).

8 *Ibid*, p42. For an explanation of what is meant by an "open philosophy of science," see pp43-44 and 56-62.

9 This is not to say that various textual difficulties and discrepancies are not acknowledged. However, among young earth creationists, there is agreement that Genesis is describing real history. For a convenient discussion of the Genesis genealogical

material see "Did People Live to be Hundreds of Years Old Before the Flood?" in Ronald F Youngblood, ed., *The Genesis Debate: Persistent Questions about Creation and the Flood* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1986, 1990) 166-83. The "Yes" case is taken by James A Borland, while the "No" case is explained by Duane L Christensen.

10 For instance, the Creation Research Society Statement of Belief #1: "The Bible is the written Word of God, and because it is inspired throughout, all its assertions are historically and scientifically true in the original autographs. To the student of nature this means that the account of origins in Genesis is a factual presentation of simple historical truths" (see www.onthenet.com.au/~winckle/creationbelief.htm).

11 I do not ignore the debate regarding the authorship of Genesis, but am most comfortable with treating the book from the perspective of a "holistic final form." See Laurence A Turner, *Genesis* (Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000) 12.

12 Ellen White is correct in describing the language of Scripture as breaking down under the largeness of the ideas being presented (*Selected Messages*, book I [Washington DC: Review and Herald, 1958] 22).

13 Turner and others see Gen 1:1 as a summary statement for the rest of the passage (see Turner p21).

14 Some commentators, in fact, stress that the almost off-handed reference to the stars is an implicit denial of the power of astrology in Ancient Near Eastern civilisations. See, for instance, Nahum M Sarna, *Genesis*, The JPS Torah Commentary (Philadelphia, PA: Jewish Publication Society, 1989) 10; and Bruce K Waltke with Cathi J Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2001) 62-63.

15 See Gen 1:26-28 and 5:1-2.

16 See such texts as Gen 5:3; 9:6; 1 Cor 15:49; 11:7; and Jas 3:9.

17 See also Rom 5:16-19.

18 Clark H Pinnock, *Tracking the Maze: Finding Our Way Through Modern Theology from an Evangelical Perspective* (San Francisco, CA: Harper and Row, 1990) 194-6. Note that Pinnock refers to the doctrine of the fall as "the most empirical of all the Christian doctrines" (p195).

19 Turner remarks that "This final day, unique in its content and narrative form, forms the apex and goal of God's creativity" (p35). See also Gerhard von Rad, *Genesis: A Commentary* (London:

SCM, 1961) 59-61.

20 See Deut 5: 12-15.

21 See, for instance, Robert C Newman, "Progressive Creationism," in Moreland and Reynolds, 106.

22 *Ibid*.

23 *Ibid*.

24 *Ibid*. According to Newman, scientists holding to an old earth creationist view include geologists Davis Young and Daniel Wonderly; biologist Pattle Pun; chemist Russell Maatman; physicist Alan Hayward; and astronomers E W Maunder and Hugh Ross. Old creationist works published in recent years include Alan Haywood, *Creation and Evolution* (Minneapolis: Bethany House, 1995) and Hugh Ross, *The Fingerprint of God*, 2nd ed. (Orange, CA: Promise, 1991). Bernard Ramm's *The Christian View of Science and Scripture* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1954) was a watershed work within evangelicalism.

25 Newman, 106.

26 *Ibid*. While there are some attractive features to Newman's perspective, I have difficulties with the amending of the biblical text from day 4 onwards. While determined to fit the biblical text to scientific findings, Newman has ignored the literary construction of the Genesis narrative.

27 While not holding to the old creationist viewpoint, myself, it is instructive to remember that even those who read Genesis 3 literally, do not have a full picture of why sin arose. Note Ellen White's view that the rise of sin is a mystery and could reasons for its existence be found, it would be excusable (*The Great Controversy* [Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1888, 1950], 493).

28 Rom 5:12-21.

29 For instance, Mark 2:27-28 probably refers to God's giving of the Sabbath to the first human beings and hence to all following. Note also the breadth of Jesus' Sabbath sayings in Matt 12:3-8, 11-12; John 5:17; Luke 13:15-16; Luke 14:3; Mark 3:4; John 9:13-16, 37-41.

30 Benjamin B Warfield, in a 1911 statement, says that "'evolution' cannot act as a substitute for creation, but at best can supply only a theory of the method of divine providence" (*Biblical and Theological Studies* [Philadelphia, PA: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1952] 238).

31 Observe that Van Till does not choose to label his view as theistic evolution because, for him, the emphasis is on the wrong dimension. "God" is only an

adjective describing evolution. Thus, Van Till prefers the term "Fully Gifted Creation." SeeVan Till's chapter, "The Fully Gifted Creation," in Moreland and Reynolds, p172.

32 *Ibid*, 170-171.

33 *Ibid*, 161-64.

34 *Ibid*, 206.

35 *Ibid*, 208-11.

36 *Ibid*, 210.

37 See Gerhard Hasel's "The Polemic Nature of the Genesis Cosmology," *Evangelical Quarterly* 46 (1974): 81-102, which makes the point that Genesis 1 is written with a view to deconstructing Ancient Near Eastern creation mythology.

38 This is the view of Walter L Bradley, "Response to Howard J Van Till," in Moreland and Reynolds, 224; and Vern S Poythress, "Response to Howard J Van Till," in Moreland and Reynolds, 237.

39 I acknowledge that this judgment may be somewhat unfair. It may be that Van Till allows Scripture the primary voice in matters of theology and Christian living. But, doesn't the doctrine of creation rate as theology as well?

40 Fritz Guy, "Interpreting Genesis One in the Twenty-first Century," *Spectrum* 31/2 (Spring 2003) 13.

41 For instance, it seems to me that Adventist theology has moved past (but not beyond) the question of "Which day is the Sabbath?" to "What does the Sabbath Mean?" Observe the difference in perspective between J N Andrews' and L R Conradi's, *History of the Sabbath and the First Day of the Week* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1912), and Samuele Bacchiocchi's, *Divine Rest for Human Restlessness* (Berrien Springs, MI: Samuele Bacchiocchi, 1980). Perhaps a similar personal pilgrimage might be traced in the writings of Bacchiocchi.