Ernest R. Sandeen laid a foundation for a contemporary concept of truth that was unique among evangelicals with a high view of Scripture. He proposed that the concept of inerrancy based on a literal method of interpretation was late in coming during the Christian era, having its beginning among the Princeton theologians of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. He ruled out their doctrines related to inspiration because they were based on rational thinking which he taught was absent from earlier Christian thought. Subsequent evaluations of Sandeen’s work have disproved his assumption that those doctrines were absent from Christianity prior to the Princeton era. Yet well-known Christian writers have since built on Sandeen’s foundation that excludes rationality and precision from an interpretation of Scripture. The Sandeenists criticize the Princetonians for overreacting in their response to modernism, for their use of literal principles of interpretation, for defining propositional truth derived from the Bible, and for excluding the Holy Spirit’s help in interpretation. All such criticisms have proven to be without foundation. The Princetonians were not without fault, but their utilization of common sense in biblical interpretation was their strong virtue. Unfortunately, even the Journal of the inerrantist Evangelical Theological Society has promoted some of the same errors as Sandeen. The divine element in inspiration is a guarantee of the rationality and precision of Scripture, because God, the ultimate author of Scripture, is quite rational and precise, as proven by Scripture itself.

* * * *

Several words related to an evangelical quest for truth have gained a negative connotation. Among them are the two words “rationality” and “precision.”
Since I used both words in a positive way in a recent article,¹ I was compelled to search for the source of this negativity. My probing took me into the clash between a group I will call the Sandeenists on one side and the defenders of the nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Princeton theologians on the other. In the former case, truth is ill-defined, in step with the postmodern tempo of today; in the latter, the truth is propositional and stable.

**Foundation for a Contemporary Concept Laid by**
**by Ernest R. Sandeen**

Ernest R. Sandeen Himself

The campaign endorsed by a number of evangelicals bears a remarkable similarity to one initiated by E. R. Sandeen three or four decades ago. Why such a battle continues to arise is a deep mystery, because the foundations laid for discrediting the so-called Scottish Common Sense Realism—i.e., rationalism—of the Princeton movement have themselves been so thoroughly discredited. The work of Sandeen on fundamentalism² has received much attention, both from those who buy into his theory partially or totally and from those who have shown the grievous shortcomings of his theory. Sandeen contended, “Most twentieth-century Fundamentalists and many twentieth-century historians have mistakenly assumed that Protestantism possessed a strong, fully integrated theology of biblical authority which was attacked by advocates of the higher criticism. As we shall see, no such theology existed before 1850.”³ He developed a theory that the millenarian—more commonly known today as dispensational premillenarian—literal method of interpretation of Scripture was essentially the same as that introduced into evangelicalism through the Princeton doctrine of the Scriptures, and concluded, “Both Princeton and themillenarians had staked their entire conception of Christianity upon a particular view of the Bible based ultimately upon eighteenth-century [i.e., Enlightenment] standards of rationality.”⁴

In the process of developing his theory, Sandeen raised three objections to conclusions of the Princeton theologians: their doctrine of verbal inspiration, their doctrine of biblical inerrancy, and their view that inspiration applied only to the

---


³ Ibid., 106.

⁴ Ibid., 131. According to Sandeen, Charles Hodge and Princeton Seminary “produced a wooden, mechanical discipline as well as a rigorously logical one” that did not allow the witness of the Spirit to play an important role in biblical interpretation (ibid., 118).
original autographs.\textsuperscript{5}

That such doctrines based on rational thought did not exist until the late nineteenth century has been soundly refuted a number of times since Sandeen published his work in 1970. Woodbridge and Balmer have shown that Sandeen’s version of the history of biblical authority in the Reformed tradition is misconstrued, that his portrait of the doctrine of biblical authority at nineteenth-century Princeton Theological Seminary is misleading, and that his separation of the Princetonians’ teachings about the infallibility of the original autographs from the wider context of American and European evangelical thought is erroneous.\textsuperscript{6} Contrary to Sandeen’s theory, William Whitaker in a 1588 publication and William Ames in 1624, 1627, and 1629 publications defended a Reformed position of biblical inerrancy.\textsuperscript{7} Nineteenth-century Princetonians did not play a major role in formulating the doctrine of inerrancy in the original autographs, and they did not neglect the role of the Holy Spirit as Sandeen contended. Rather, non-Presbyterian scholars are the ones who exerted major influence in this area.

Furthermore, Princetonians such as Charles Hodge did recognize the role of the Holy Spirit in attesting the authority of Scripture.\textsuperscript{8} Princeton’s position on the inerrancy of the original autographs was not innovative as Sandeen contended, but rather reflected a wider context of Reformed thought and the position of other Christian communions from Augustine to Calvin to Whitaker to Ames.\textsuperscript{9} On the basis of so much misinformation in Sandeen’s work, Woodbridge and Balmer call for a thorough revision of Sandeen’s work because of the way it has misled so many people.\textsuperscript{10}

Ronald F. Satta follows a different path in demonstrating fallacies of the theory defended by Sandeen, the theory which included the proposal that the evangelical community in America truly possessed no well-defined doctrine of bibliology—including inerrancy—until the later stages of the nineteenth century.\textsuperscript{11} He responds to the three major complaints of Sandeen against Charles Hodge and B. B. Warfield, the first of which pertains to verbal inspiration. Sandeen held the doctrinal teaching that the very words were inspired was nascent, but Satta shows conclusively

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{5}Ibid., 123-30.
  \item \textsuperscript{7}Ibid., 254-58.
  \item \textsuperscript{8}Ibid., 258-71.
  \item \textsuperscript{9}Ibid., 271-76.
  \item \textsuperscript{10}Ibid., 277-79.
  \item \textsuperscript{11}Ronald F. Satta, “Fundamentalism and Inerrancy: A Response to the Sandeen Challenge,” \textit{Evangelical Journal} 21/2 (Fall 2003):66-80.
\end{itemize}
that the doctrine was ancient, extending all the way back to the early fathers.\textsuperscript{12} Next, Satta responds to Sandeen’s contention that later Princeton scholars altered the emphasis of Charles Hodge’s theology when they taught that the inspiration of the Bible depended on inerrancy.\textsuperscript{13} Here he shows that, contrary to Sandeen, Hodge used the terms “infallible” and “inerrant” interchangeably, meaning that Hodge’s successors merely continued the teaching of their mentor.\textsuperscript{14} Sandeen’s third alleged innovation by Princeton Seminary was to focus on the non-extant original autographs so that no one could ever prove the existence of an error in Scripture.\textsuperscript{15} Satta responds to this aspect of Sandeen’s accusation with five observations: (1) this theory confuses preservation of the text with its inspiration; (2) Hodge and Warfield would not have appealed to this phenomenon if it was really new; (3) this focus on the autograph was vital to their defense of Scripture; (4) if this was a calculated “dodge” by Princetonians, it would not leave the Bible impregnable to attack; (5) inspiration of the autograph was not new to Reformed theology.\textsuperscript{16}

Sandeen concludes the section of his discussion on this subject with an interesting statement: “Both conservatives and liberals worked at the theological task, but the Princeton professors’ insistence that they were doing nothing new, while creating a unique apologetic which flew in the face of the standards they were claiming to protect, cannot be judged as a historically honest or laudable program.”\textsuperscript{17} Here is a classic example of the pot calling the kettle black. If anyone has distorted historical data and cannot be judged as “historically honest or laudable,” it is Sandeen. That is why it is inexplicable that so many contemporary evangelicals for support of their hermeneutical escapades are looking to Sandeen’s theory about the invention of rationalism through installing Scottish Common Sense Realism at Princeton Seminary in the middle-to-late 1800s.

**Examples of Sandeen’s Influence: the Sandeenists**

**J. B. Rogers and D. K. McKim.** Despite his “at best” careless or “at worst” dishonest handling of historical data, Ernest R. Sandeen has become a hero to a number of well-known writers. J. B. Rogers and D. K. McKim refer to his work frequently in their discussions of the authority and interpretation of the Bible. Like Sandeen, they trace a doctrine of the scientific inerrancy of the Bible to Princeton, specifically to John Witherspoon who became president of the College of New

\textsuperscript{12}Ibid., 67-70; cf. Sandeen, *Roots of Fundamentalism* 123-25.
\textsuperscript{13}Cf. Sandeen, *Roots of Fundamentalism* 125-27.
\textsuperscript{14}Satta, “Fundamentalism and Inerrancy” 70-75.
\textsuperscript{15}Sandeen, *Roots of Fundamentalism* 127-30.
\textsuperscript{16}Satta, “Fundamentalism and Inerrancy” 75-77.
\textsuperscript{17}Sandeen, *Roots of Fundamentalism* 130.
Jersey—an earlier name for Princeton College. Witherspoon began a conservative tradition that was very influential in America, they say, and commended “Scottish common sense philosophy as rationally more acceptable” than rationalistic deism. Witherspoon had unbounded confidence in human reason,” they write. He held that reason and Scripture were always in harmony with the principles of Scottish realism. Witherspoon’s influence continued when Princeton Seminary was founded.

Rogers and McKim parrot much of the same perspective as Sandeen when dealing with Charles Hodge. They portray Hodge as constantly changing his position on matters of inspiration because of opposing scientific theories that arose, theories such as Darwinism. Their concurrence with Sandeen’s approach surfaces when they cite his works regarding Archibald Alexander’s emphasis on the importance of reason in combating deism. They also cite him extensively, stating that Hodge was wrong when claiming that Princeton theology offered nothing new regarding the doctrine of inspiration that had not been held since the beginning of Christianity. They cite Sandeen again in criticism of Warfield’s definition of his inductive approach. Either intentionally or unintentionally, Rogers and McKim have used the work of a discredited historian as—at least in part—foundational for their own position, thereby discrediting themselves also.

G. M. Marsden. G. M. Marsden has relied heavily on Sandeen’s work in his attempt to define fundamentalism. Basically, he approves of Sandeen’s historical analysis of late nineteenth-century developments regarding the inspiration of the Bible. Marsden cites Sandeen frequently, portraying his work in a positive light almost exclusively, though sometimes differing with him on lesser points. He

---

11Jack B. Rogers and Donald K. McKim, The Authority and Interpretation of the Bible: An Historical Approach (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1979) 244.
12Ibid., 245.
13Ibid.
14Ibid., 246.
15Ibid., 245.
16Ibid., 285-89.
17Ibid., 311-12 nn. 38, 39.
18Ibid., 314-15 n. 89.
19Ibid., 375-67 n. 221.
21E.g., “Sandeen’s thesis has much to recommend it and his impressive study remains valuable. He is certainly correct in supposing that millenarianism and Princeton theology are two of the important keys for understanding fundamentalism” (ibid., 5).
concurs with him in allowing the strong influence of common-sense philosophy on views of inspiration at Princeton and regarding the role of the reaction against deism, Darwinism, and other outgrowths of the Enlightenment as the causes of those views.29 Never, however, does he directly point out Sandeen’s radical misuse of historical data.

**James Barr.** Another who fell victim to the influence of Sandeen is James Barr. Sandeen’s influence on Barr is reflected in Barr’s statement, “Sandeen argues, to me convincingly, that the fundamentalist leadership came from exactly the same social groups as the liberal leadership came from.”30 This is one of Barr’s repeated references to Sandeen’s work. Regarding the doctrinal stream of fundamentalism, Barr writes,

> It is a reasonable comment, therefore, to say that the fundamentalist conception of truth is dominated by a materialistic view, derived from a scientific age. This stress on the accuracy of the Bible in its *material-physical* reporting separates modern fundamentalism entirely from the older theology, such as the theology of Luther and Calvin, which it ill-informedly claims as its own forebear. It is possible to argue further that the chief doctrinal stream accepted in fundamentalism, the Princeton theology of the Hodges and Warfield, took its method expressly from the analogy of natural science, and that natural science as seen in a traditional Newtonian mould.31

He adds,

> They [i.e., conservative evangelicals] have no right to shrug off Ramm unless they are prepared to alter the doctrines of scripture and principles of interpretation upon which Ramm’s reasoning is based and which he is logically following out. Conservative evangelicals have to face the fact: by the doctrines of inerrancy and methods of interpretation upon which they insist, they are bound if they are honest to come up against exactly these questions.32

Regarding fundamentalism’s view of Scripture, Barr opines, “[T]he fundamentalist position has not been a non-philosophical or anti-philosophical one, but one built upon a strong and clear philosophical position, in which a very powerful, indeed a practically unlimited, role was accorded to reason in the vital matter of biblical interpretation.”33

---

29Ibid., 16-18.
31Ibid. 93.
32Ibid., 97.
33Ibid., 274-75.
Mark Noll. Another follower of Sandeen is Mark Noll. Noll writes, “Critics of Scottish Common Sense Phillosophy regularly condemn its advocates for being naive, for—that is—failing to recognize how thoroughly all human perceptions, even those of Scripture, are colored by local cultural circumstances.”34 Noll apparently concurs with Sandeen’s criticism. He adds, “[T]he Princetonians, as much as they sometimes appeared to deny it, were in fact children of their time, participating in the grand intellectual movements of their day.”35 Regarding the rift between fundamentalism and the Princeton theology, Noll’s opinion is,

Fundamentalists believed in the Bible, Modernists in reason, but the Princeton theologians had believed in both. . . . In sum, as American Protestants entered the 1930s and Fundamentalists and Modernists went their separate ways, the institutions of the Princeton Theology had ceased to exist and its convictions had been scattered to the winds.36

In noting the effect of culture on the Princeton theologians, Noll contends, “If a modern evaluator must render a negative judgment of those innovations, the judgment must fall as much upon that culture as a whole as on the Princetonians by themselves.”37 Noll’s respect for Sandeen is reflected in these words: “In this modern controversy over the Princeton conception of the Bible, Sandeen, Rogers, and McKim have successfully made the point that a conception of Scripture which was thoroughly at home in the intellectual world of the nineteenth century may not answer every legitimate question in the second half of the twentieth.”38

Alister McGrath. Alister McGrath numbers among those who have bought into Sandeen’s bogus theory.39 McGrath confuses secular logic with biblical logic.40 He also writes, “There is a tendency within evangelicalism to treat Scripture as simply a sourcebook of Christian doctrines, and to overlook, suppress or deny its narrative character,”41 as he speaks disparagingly of deriving propositional truth from Scripture. He adds, “There is a tendency to regard spirituality in terms of understanding the biblical text—that is, to reading it, making sense of its words and ideas, and understanding its historical background and its meaning for today. The emphasis

35Ibid., 34.
36Ibid., 38.
37Ibid., 39.
38Ibid., 43.
40Ibid., 171.
41Ibid., 173.
continues to be on reason.”

Again, he takes a negative view of the rationality of Scripture as he says, “We need to purge rationalism from within evangelicalism.” Regarding apologetics McGrath writes,

On the basis of the highly questionable assumption that ‘everyone agrees [on, sic] what is reasonable,’ the rational credentials of the Christian faith are set forth. This approach, however, has shown itself to be deeply flawed in two respects. First, it assumes that the appeal of Christianity is purely rational; second, it rests upon a network of universalizing assumptions which fail to relate to the strongly particularizing environments in which the gospel must be proclaimed at the global level.

Regarding evangelism he notes, “It is a travesty of the biblical idea of ‘truth’ to equate it with the Enlightenment notions of conceptual or propositional correspondence, or the derived view of evangelism as the proclamation of the propositional correctness of Christian doctrine.”

Donald Bloesch. Though his index shows no citations of Sandeen, Donald Bloesch is in tune with the temperament of the Sandeenists in downplaying rationalism: “Scripture is authoritative by virtue of its relation to the living Word, not by virtue of its truthfulness as such. This is because its truth is only understood in relation to Christ by the work of the Holy Spirit, not because of any rationalistic hermeneutic.”

Bloesch speaks disparagingly of “the capacity of reason to judge the truth of revelation.” He continues,

The knowledge of faith is not an empirical objectifying knowledge but a knowledge in which we are lifted above reason and sense into communion with the living God. . . . Historical research can show the historical probability of certain events happening, but it can give only approximate, not final, certainty. The ground of certainty is not what reason can show or prove but what faith grasps and knows as the human subject acted upon by the Holy Spirit in conjunction with the reading or hearing of the biblical word.

---

41Ibid., 174.
42Ibid., 175.
43Ibid., 176.
44Ibid., 177.
46Ibid., 268.
47Ibid., 268-69.
He continues, “In seeking understanding, faith must be on guard against making its cardinal doctrines too clear and distinct (à la Descartes), since this serves to undercut or deny the mystery in revelation.”49 Among the “heresies on the right,” he includes dispensationalism and hyperfundamentalism, with the explanation, “Even the doctrine of sola Scriptura, understood in the Reformation sense, exists in tension with the current evangelical stress on personal religious experience as well as the fundamentalist appeal to arguments from reason and science in support of total biblical reliability.”50

Bloesch is opposed to basing the authority of Scripture on the inerrancy of the writing and then supporting inerrancy with canons of scientific rationality.51 He denies that the Bible is fallible or untrustworthy, but wants to limit the Bible’s infallibility to matters of faith and practice.52

John M. Hitchen. A recent piece by John M. Hitchen started my search for the beginning of this evangelical disdain for “rationality” and “precision.” In his discussion of “What It Means to Be an Evangelical Today,” Hitchen takes his cue from John Stott’s three evangelical priorities: “the revealing initiative of God the Father, the redeeming work of God the Son, and the transforming ministry of God the Holy Spirit.”54 In commenting on “The Authority of God in and through the Scriptures—The Revealing Initiative of God the Father,” Hitchen remarks, “Proper attention to the role of the Holy Spirit in illuminating the Scriptures for the believer will move us beyond wooden, rationalistic approaches to inspiration and revelation.”55 He cites approvingly the statement of Donald Bloesch that disparages revelation of right-wing, scholastic orthodoxy as “frozen into a propositional formula.”56 Hitchen continues,

By recapturing the relevance of interpreted narrative for our identity and authority as the people of God, and by allowing the Scriptures themselves to take the place of the discredited assumptions of the Enlightenment worldview as our basis for what is credible

49Ibid.
50Ibid., 276.
51Ibid., 270.
52Ibid.
53John M. Hitchen, former Principal of Christian Leaders Training College of Papua New Guinea and National Principal of Bible College of New Zealand, is currently Lecturer in Mission at BCNZ and at Pathways College of Bible and Mission, Auckland, New Zealand.
56Ibid., 103, citing Donald Bloesch, Essential of Evangelical Theology, Vol. Two 273-75.
and real in the world—i.e., as our plausibility structure—we can offer an alternative set of interpretive keys for this otherwise meaningless contemporary society.\textsuperscript{57}

He speaks of “moving beyond a concept of truth that assumes that I can define truth once for all in unchangeable propositions, such that anyone who disagrees with my definition must, ipso facto, be in error.”\textsuperscript{58} Hitchen’s underlying message is that we take advantage of postmodernity’s openness to an evangelical alternative by freeing ourselves from “the abrasive, defensive dogmatism” that has characterized the evangelical movement of the past.\textsuperscript{59}

As I read these words, I could not help thinking of the widespread revolt among contemporary evangelical scholars against static biblical inerrancy and its necessary counterpart, grammatical-historical hermeneutics. Phrases such as moving “beyond wooden, rationalistic approaches to inspiration and revelation,” “frozen in propositional formula,” “recapturing the relevance of interpreted narrative,” “discredited assumptions of the Enlightenment worldview,” and “moving beyond a concept of truth that assumes that I can define truth once for all in unchangeable propositions” recall the all-out war currently being waged against alleged Princetonian teachings that purportedly arose in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, teachings such as a rational approach to Scripture through following “scientific” principles of interpretation and a clear-cut stand on biblical inerrancy such as is currently professed by those who subscribe annually to the doctrinal basis of the Evangelical Theological Society.

\textbf{Response to the Sandeenists}

Sandeen and His followers seem to raise at least four issues regarding developments at Princeton at the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century. (1) One is the alleged overreaction of Princeton scholars in response to modernism that was arising in various forms at the time. They paint the picture of a group who went to an unneeded extreme in order to refute abuses of biblical teaching through an undue attention to science rather than Scripture. Their preunderstanding of correct doctrine caused them to turn to the philosophy of Descartes and Cartesianism, which exalted human reason.\textsuperscript{60} That led them into a

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{57}Ibid., 103.
  \item \textsuperscript{58}Ibid., 104.
  \item \textsuperscript{59}Ibid., 104-5.
  \item \textsuperscript{60}Rogers and McKim, \textit{Authority and Interpretation} 167-69, 235. Rogers and McKim give the following as the purpose of their book: “It is the burden of this book to document the fact that rationalism and mysticism are not the only available alternatives. Our hypothesis is that the peculiar twists of American history have served to distort our view of both the central Christian tradition and especially of its Reformed branch. . . . Not rational proofs, but the Holy Spirit persuaded people of the Bible’s authority. . . . To erect a standard of modern, technical precision in language as the hallmark of biblical authority was totally foreign to the foundation shared by the early church” (ibid., xxi-xxii). McGrath
\end{itemize}
faulty understanding of Scripture.

What the Sandeenists fail to recognize is that all or at least almost all advancement in orthodox doctrine throughout the centuries of Christianity have been in response to heresy. In that setting, to codify the doctrine of inspiration more specifically was completely in line with church history. The Princetonians sought to correct errors imposed by the Enlightenment. Such is a credit to the Princetonians rather than a fault.

(2) Sandeen and company were also critical of principles of literal interpretation, characterizing it by such expressions as “a wooden mechanical discipline.”61 What else could the “scientific principles of interpretation” and the “literal” interpretation that Sandeen refers to62 be but grammatical-historical hermeneutics espoused by the Princeton scholars? Sandeen felt that such principles were too restrictive to allow for mysteries of the leading of the Holy Spirit in biblical interpretation. In keeping with the postmodern spirit of not limiting interpretation of a single passage to one meaning, Sandeen felt such as the principle of single meaning to be an innovation of late-nineteenth century scholarship and not the traditional Christian view.

His view was eventually deemed to be inconsistent with biblical inerrancy as attested in the findings of the Council on Biblical Inerrancy in 1978, which vouched for grammatical-historical principles as inseparable from inerrancy.63 That evaluation befits Sandeen’s intentions, one of which was to disprove the biblical inerrancy espoused by the millenarians and the Princeton scholars.

(3) In arguing against principles of grammatical-historical hermeneutics, Sandeenists rejected the principle of single meaning along the same lines they rejected modernism and embraced postmodernism. In that spirit, Hitchen writes,

Proper attention to the role of the Holy Spirit in illuminating the Scriptures for the believer will move us beyond wooden, rationalistic approaches to inspiration and revelation. . . . This means moving beyond a concept of truth that assumes that I can define truth once for all in unchangeable propositions, such that anyone who disagrees with my definition must, ipso facto, be in error. . . . Postmodernity gives us as much right

says, “The primary feature of the movement [i.e., the Enlightenment] may be seen as its assertion of the omniscience of human reason” (A Passion for Truth 163). For him, that feature constitutes a link with evangelicalism.

61Sandeen, Roots of Fundamentalism 118.
62Ibid., 117-18.
63Article VIII, “Articles of Affirmation and Denials, The Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy,” International Council on Biblical Inerrancy (Chicago, 1978); cf. also Article XV, “Articles of Affirmation and Denials, The Chicago Statement on Biblical Hermeneutics,” International Council on Biblical Inerrancy (Chicago, 1982). See also Article XVI of the former statement which reads, “We affirm that the doctrine of inerrancy has been integral to the Church’s faith throughout its history. We deny that inerrancy is a doctrine invented by scholastic Protestantism, or is a reactionary position postulated in response to negative higher criticism.”
as anyone openly to present Gospel alternatives for national, societal, family and personal living.\textsuperscript{64}

To embrace postmodernism is to dismiss all possibilities of defining propositional truth from Scripture, because truth cannot be limited to what is defined by grammatical-historical principles. Sandeenists never acknowledge that the illuminating work of the Spirit is discernible only in light of what the Scriptures teach when rightly interpreted in light of rational principles.

The impossibility of obtaining propositional truth is associated with the claim that the “common sense” position is an outgrowth of the Enlightenment worldview. Such a claim flows from an assumption that both modernism—stemming from the Enlightenment—and fundamentalism build on the principle of being able to define truth once for all in unchangeable propositions.\textsuperscript{65} The difference between both of these and postmodernism is that postmodernism disallows that propositional stance. That comparison of modernism and fundamentalism is, of course, ridiculous. In contrast to fundamentalism, modernism’s proposition built upon a very loose doctrine of biblical inspiration, which allowed all sorts of opportunities to question the integrity of the text. Fundamentalism on the other hand held a high view of Scripture that required a literal interpretation of the text. One can hardly say with a straight face that the “common sense” approach is an outgrowth of an Enlightenment worldview.

Since Sandeen’s approach leads inevitably to a more subjective approach to interpretation rather than a grammatical-historical one, it encourages a looser view of narrative portions of Scripture. Hitchen expresses it this way:

\begin{quote}

The return to understanding Scripture as narrative offers a way to bring a fresh presentation of an evangelical understanding of Scripture as God revealing himself authoritatively while avoiding charges of absolutism and lack of respect for the historical particularity both of the text and of our human contexts. . . . By recapturing the relevance of interpreted narrative for our identity and authority as the people of God, and by allowing the Scriptures themselves to take the place of the discredited assumptions of the Enlightenment worldview as our basis for what is credible and real in the world—i.e., as our plausibility structure—we can offer an alternative set of interpretive keys for this otherwise meaningless contemporary society.\textsuperscript{66}
\end{quote}

This premise allows contemporary Christians to read their own situations into the text at will, with no restrictions placed on the text’s meaning by authorial—human and divine—intention. What humans deem as the illuminating work of the Spirit is often merely a human inclination, unless it coincides with criteria yielded by interpretation.

\textsuperscript{64}Hitchen, “What It Means” 102, 104-5.
\textsuperscript{65}Ibid., 104.
\textsuperscript{66}Ibid., 103.
of Scripture according to rational principles.

(4) A fourth issue raised by Sandeenism relates to how the Holy Spirit is involved in the interpretation of Scripture. How can a person know whether he is being led to a certain conclusion by a spirit of error rather than by the Holy Spirit? He can know only through what the Bible teaches. He can know what the Bible teaches only through rational principles of hermeneutics. As has been exemplified all too often, a person can make the Bible say whatever he wants it to say by erecting his own set of interpretive principles. What makes a set of principles wrong? Their irrationality.

The objection comes often that rationality to the Western mind will not coincide with rationality in other parts of the world. If one honors that type of evasion, so many different definitions of rationality would emerge that the Bible would conflict with itself. The Bible itself builds on its own definition of rationality, and that is the rationality that has prevailed in countries where Christianity and the Bible have had a prolonged impact on culture. The Bible is not an irrational book and must be interpreted according to rational principles. God is a rational being. The Holy Spirit who inspired biblical writers is rational, and His work must be treated in a rational light.67

The Princeton Theologians

The heavy focus in this debate on the Princeton theologians warrants a closer look at the weaknesses and the strengths of these men.

Their Weaknesses

Sandeenists have faulted the Princeton theologians for concessions they made to the Enlightenment. One of these concessions was their attempt to integrate the Bible with the findings of secular science such as Darwinism. In this the Sandeenists furnish a valid criticism.

For example, Noll characterizes B. B. Warfield as a theistic evolutionist.68

67For another view on rationality in biblical interpretation see Hitchen, “What It Means to Be an Evangelical Today—An Antipodean Perspective, Part One—Mapping Our Movement,” EQ 76/1 (2004):47-64. Hitchen writes, “Donald Bloesch suggested, and others like Alister McGrath have taken up his concern, that we need ‘to call into question the bent towards rationalism in current evangelicalism’, listing Carl Henry, John Warwick Montgomery, Norman Geisler and Francis Schaeffer as successors to the rationalistic tendencies within the ‘Protestant scholastic orthodoxy of the Princeton School’, championed in earlier generations by the Hodges and Benjamin Warfield. From another quarter, Leslie Newbigin also critiques fundamentalism and evangelicalism’s understanding of scripture. He sees the claims to have an absolute certainty of truth expressed in inerrant propositions as an unconscious surrender to the rationalistic ‘plausibility structures’ of the Enlightenment paradigm” (ibid., 54-55; cf. McGrath, Passion for Truth 170).

68Noll, Princeton Theology 45.
In the course of his [i.e., Warfield’s] wide scientific reading, he brought to a conclusion A. A. Hodge’s earlier efforts to make peace between the Princeton Theology and modern science. Eventually Warfield took special pains to transcend the antithesis which Charles Hodge had perceived between creation and evolution. He wrote in 1911, “‘evolution’ cannot act as a substitute for creation, but at best can supply only a theory of the method of the divine providence.” Evolution, that is, was one of the possible “interpretations” for the “facts” of nature which did not violate the “facts” of Scripture.69

Barr majors in this line of criticism of the Princetonians: “It is possible to argue further that the chief doctrinal stream accepted in fundamentalism, the Princeton theology of Hodges and Warfield, took its method expressly from the analogy of natural science, and that natural science as seen in a traditional Newtonian mould.”70 He later adds,

Hodge [i.e., Charles Hodge] did not think there was any ultimate conflict between religion and science. Theologians should learn the lesson of the Copernican revolution, and know that it is unwise to array themselves needlessly against the teachings of science. One should let science take its course, assured ‘that the Scriptures will accommodate themselves to all well-authenticated scientific facts in time to come, as they have in time past’. The wording, that the scriptures would ‘accommodate themselves’, is worth noting.71

The Sandeenists were right in this criticism of the Princetonians. As I have earlier expressed, evangelical Christians have no justification for integrating the Bible with findings of such secular disciplines as science.72 In that kind of endeavor, the Bible is always the loser. Science cannot be used to correct grammatical-historical principles of interpretation.

Their Strengths

Where critics of the Princeton theologians stray from the truth, however, lies in their insistence that biblical inerrancy is limited to matters of faith and practice. They claim that the Princetonians in their emphasis on common sense relied upon integrating their system with Scottish Common Sense Realism. Charles Hodge and others of that school, however, maintained that a reliance on common sense in interpreting Scripture was not something they had invented.73 In citing Hodge's

---

69Ibid., 289.
70Barr, Fundamentalism 93.
71Ibid., 273.
72See Robert L. Thomas, Evangelical Hermeneutics: The New Versus the Old (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2002), especially the chapter on “General Revelation and Biblical Hermeneutics” 113-40.
73In celebrating his fiftieth year as professor at Princeton, Charles Hodge stated, “I am not afraid to say that a new idea never originated in this Seminary” (A. A. Hodge, Life of Charles Hodge, D.D. LL.D., cited by Rogers and McKim, Authority and Interpretation 276).
disclaimer, Sandeenists such as Rogers and McKim attribute a reliance on common sense to the Princetonian reliance on the Cartesian “Common Sense” philosophy. Their charge against Hodge is unfounded, however.

As far back as the second century A.D., the church father Irenaeus used common sense to defend the truthfulness of Luke’s reporting with the words, “It follows then, as of course, that these men must either receive the rest of his narrative, or else reject these parts also. For no person of common sense can permit them to receive some things recounted by Luke as being truth, and to set others aside, as if he had not known the truth.” Irenaeus, of course, came long before a Cartesian approach to reason existed. The fact is that Hodge himself rejected a purely Cartesian approach to rationality when he cited Rom 1:21-23 to show that human reason and conscience are inadequate guides in relation to the things of God. Descartes would never have endorsed such a position as that surveys the entire Christian era before Princeton to show that Christians used common sense to defend the inerrancy of Scripture.

Along with their assertions as to the reasonableness of Scripture, the Princeton theologians insisted on the precision of Scripture. Otherwise, they could not have advocated verbal inspiration of the same. An article antedating the Princetonians read as follows:

[T]he scriptures were designed to be translated into different languages, this made it more necessary that they should be written, at first, with peculiar accuracy and precision. Men always write with exactness when they expect their writings will be translated into various languages. And upon this ground, we may reasonably suppose, that the Divine Spirit dictated every thought and word to the sacred penmen, to prevent, as much as possible, errors and mistakes from finally creeping into their writings by the translation of them into other languages.

The Princetonians upheld the same view of the original writings of the Bible, recognizing that later copying of the autographs would introduce errors into those copies.

In their minds, the rationality and precision of Scripture were necessary companions. They did not need to incorporate Enlightenment philosophical tenets into their understanding of the Bible, because the Bible itself dictates the need for Spirit-guided reason in order to understand the precise meaning of the words

74Rogers and McKim, Authority and Interpretation 245-46.


76Charles Hodge, Systematic Theology 1:363-64.

77Woodbridge, Biblical Authority 13-118.

originally penned.

The Truth about Rationality and Precision

The central issue for the Sandeenists has been the inerrancy of Scripture, which of necessity is the counterpart of biblical rationality and precision. That raises a serious question: Why have some evangelicals who profess to be inerrantists been so ready to fall in line with the Sandeenists in questioning the rationality and precision of the Bible?

What the Truth Is Not

Rationalism and precision go hand-in-hand with the inerrancy of Scripture. Sacrifice rationalistic and precise understanding of the Bible, and you have opted for an errantist understanding of the Bible. Yet, surprisingly, the lead article in a recent journal of the inerrantist Evangelical Theological Society raises some of the same issues as do the Sandeenists. 79 In the article, Joel Green reflects a disdain for a number of the same objects as the critics of the Princeton theology. Four examples of this similarity will suffice.

Green shows the same proclivity to emphasize the narrative portions of Scripture and how these should shape the lives of Christians when he writes, “[T]he bulk of Scripture comes to us in the form of narratives, rather than with a preoccupation with the rational essence of the faith, its dogmatic essentials, so characteristic of theology in the modern period,”80 and “[T]he notion of ‘inhabiting the world of biblical narrative’ is important when it claims that ‘the story that most decisively shapes our lives must be the biblical story.’”81 That perspective strongly resembles what Hitchen has written about “recapturing the relevance of interpreted narrative for our identity and authority as the people of God.”82 Instead of adopting the proposition of biblical inerrancy, this approach to narrative highlights the practical effect of Scripture on the lives of Christians.

Green also shows the same disdain for rationalistic approaches to revelation. His words cited just above speak against “a preoccupation with the rational essence of the faith, its dogmatic essentials.” That perspective strongly resembles that of Sandeen who charged that Charles Hodge and Princeton Seminary “produced a wooden, mechanical discipline as well as a rigorously logical one” that did not allow the witness of the Spirit to play an important role in biblical interpretation.83 For

80 Ibid., 392.
81 Ibid., 393 (emphasis in the original).
82 Hitchen, “What It Means, Part Two” 103.
83 Ibid., 102, 104-5.
Green, this disdain for a rational approach to Scripture includes a ruling out of traditional quests for objectivity in interpretation.\textsuperscript{84} Like the Sandeenists, Green also reflects a disdain for deriving propositional truth from Scripture: “This means that the primary agenda of theological study of Scripture would not be the construction of systematic theology, in the restricted sense of organizing and restating the central propositions of the biblical witnesses.”\textsuperscript{85} Such is a position very much like that of Hitchen when he speaks of “moving beyond a concept of truth that assumes that I can define truth once for all in unchangeable propositions.”\textsuperscript{86}

Green also moves away from supporting the precision of narrative portions of Scripture when he writes about the inadequacy of “foundationalism”: In the environment that developed, in order for data to be “hard,” it needed to be historical; that is, secure foundations for theological discourse were historically defined. How much historical data would be required was a matter of debate, but, for example, historical Jesus studies have been energized in the twentieth century through attempts . . . to demonstrate that the church’s faith rests securely and squarely on the strong pillars of what Jesus actually did and said. This sort of foundationalism, formed deep in the superheated core of historical positivism, has suffered from the tectonic movements in the philosophy of history.\textsuperscript{87}

This view of interpreted narrative as distinguished from factual narrative is quite similar to Hitchen’s description of “recapturing the relevance of interpreted narrative for our identity and authority as the people of God, and . . . allowing the Scriptures themselves to take the place of the discredited assumptions of the Enlightenment worldview as our basis for what is credible and real in the world.”\textsuperscript{88} Such a view of narrative shows a total disrespect for the precision of Scriptural accounts.\textsuperscript{89}

\textbf{What the Truth Is}

Given its rightful place of priority, the divine element in the inspiration of Scripture guarantees both its rationality and its precision, because the God of the Bible is both rational and precise.

\textsuperscript{84}Green writes, “I recognize that, in mapping this path, I have vacated biblical studies of the sorts of claims to scientific, neutral analysis that have been its bread and butter” ("Practicing the Gospel" 391).
\textsuperscript{85}Ibid., 395.
\textsuperscript{86}Hitchen, “What It Means, Part Two” 102, 104-5.
\textsuperscript{87}Green, “Practicing the Gospel” 390.
\textsuperscript{88} Cf. quote cited by n. 66 above.
\textsuperscript{89}For other illustrations of evangelical abuse of Scripture’s precision, see Thomas, “Rationality, Meaningfulness, and Precision” 192-97; Robert L. Thomas and F. David Farnell, eds., \textit{The Jesus Crisis} (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1998) 17-27, 356-68. Evangelicals are all too ready to allow that the Gospels contain only approximations of what Jesus said and did.
Some of my earlier words about the rationality of God and of Scripture clarify the difference between secular logic and biblical logic:

Two kinds of logic prevail in the world. Secular logic is to be expected among humans who are outside the body of Christ, but that logic is inevitably self-centered because of the blindness that fell on the whole race when Adam disobeyed God’s command. The other kind of logic is biblical logic, the logic of reality because it is God’s logic, a logic that appeals to man’s rational faculties enlightened by the new birth and the illumination of the Holy Spirit. Scripture appeals to this latter kind of mind.

“Come now, and let us reason together,”
Says the Lord,
“Though your sins be as scarlet,
They will be as white as snow;
Though they are red like crimson,
They will be like wool” (Isa 1:18).

To the obedient child of God, those words make perfect sense, but to the disobedient unbeliever they are utterly irrational.

To point out the blindness and irrationality of the unbeliever in the realm of biblical logic is hardly necessary. The apostle Paul wrote, “[A] natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised” (1 Cor 2:14). The absence of the Spirit’s illumination in such a person’s life renders the natural man helpless when it comes to comprehending “the deep things of God” (1 Cor 2:10b) as found in His Word. That fact is regrettable, but it is explainable. What is not explainable, however, is how those who profess to be God’s children can attribute irrationality to the Scriptures. Yet such is commonplace among today’s evangelicals.

The logic of Scripture is ultimate reality because of the divine element that prevailed over the human element in its inspiration.

Part of my earlier discussion of biblical precision is also relevant to the denial thereof by the Sandeenists.

- In Matt 5:18 Jesus said, “For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter (i.e., yodh) or stroke (i.e., serif) shall pass away from the Law, until all is accomplished.” In other words, neither the smallest letter nor the smallest part of any letter will pass away from the OT until all is accomplished, i.e., until heaven and earth pass away.

- In Matt 22:31-32 Jesus said, “But regarding the resurrection of the dead, have you not read that which was spoken to you by God, saying, ‘I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob’? He is not the God of the dead but of

---

"Thomas, “Rationality, Meaningfulness, and Precision” 176. For a more detailed explanation of the Bible’s rationality and additional examples of evangelical violations thereof, see the broader context of that article."
the living.” The Lord’s proof of a future resurrection resides in the present tense versus the past tense of the verb: “I am” rather than “I was.”

- In Matt 24:35 Jesus said, “Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words shall not pass away.” Jesus assigned a permanence to the words that He spoke just as He did to the words of the OT.

- In Gal 3:16 Paul recalls, “Now the promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. He does not say, ‘And to seeds,’ as referring to many, but rather to one, ‘And to your seed,’ that is, Christ.” That Paul advocates a precise handling of the OT is unquestionable. By inspiration of the Spirit the author cites the explicit significance between a singular and a plural.

- In Jas 2:10 the author wrote, “For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles in one point, he has become guilty of all.” Our God is a God of precision. He is interested in details. Showing respect of persons is in the eyes of the inspired writer the one point that condemns a person as a breaker of the whole law.91

Without question, the Bible itself insists on the ultimate in precision for its contents, because its Author is a God of precision.

Therefore, the truth about truth is that it is both rational and precise, therefore propositional, not postmodern. The myth that those conclusions resulted from the Princetonians adoption of Enlightenment thinking is merely a smoke screen for those whose inclination is to veer away from the inerrancy of Scripture. That so many evangelicals who profess to be inerrantists are buying into Sandeenist principles is sad. Principles that are inconsistent with biblical inerrancy have no place on an inerrantist agenda.

---

91Ibid., 185-86. For a more detailed discussion of biblical precision, see 184-207 of that article.
Can Satan Raise the Dead?
Toward a Biblical View of the Beast’s Wound

Gregory H. Harris
Professor of Bible Exposition

If the beast referred to in Rev 13:3-4 is an individual, is it God or Satan who raises the beast from the dead? Either answer raises issues to be settled. Some sources leave the issue unresolved, but biblical evidence indicates that God the Father has given His Son power to raise the dead. A third position seeks a compromise between the two positions. The text of Revelation does not resolve this issue directly, but whatever answer one gives has implications for the book’s teaching about the beast in Revelation 13 and 17. When Christ returns to judge the lost, the only two humans who will be cast into the lake of fire while living are the two beasts. The two will be the first to inhabit the lake of fire, a punishment that will require special bodies to keep them from being annihilated while there. They will probably receive those supernatural bodies in connection with the resurrection of the first beast in Rev 13:3, but certainly no later than the action of Rev 19:20. The beast’s ascent from the abyss could not refer to a revival of the Roman Empire, which would not attract worldwide amazement as a resurrected person would. If the beast can survive being in the lake of fire, he surely can survive the abyss, so Rev 17:18 is probably another reference to his resurrection. The text has no reference to a resurrection of the beast from the earth, but his relegation to the lake of fire before the Great White Throne judgment implies that he too must die and be raised.

** ** **

In a recent article on the death and resurrection of the satanic beast, Thomas Ice notes the tension between two diametrically opposed explanations of Rev 13:3-4.¹

John wrote about the fatal wound of the first beast and his subsequent return to life:

“And I saw one of his heads as if it had been slain, and his fatal wound was healed. And the whole earth was amazed and followed after the beast; and they worshiped the dragon, because he gave his authority to the beast; and they worshiped the beast, saying, ‘Who is like the beast, and who is able to wage war with him?’”

Multiple questions about these verses have arisen through the centuries and continue to arise even among those with a futuristic understanding of the Book of Revelation. Is this actually the death and return to life of a future individual, or is it a reference to the future return and revitalization of the Roman Empire? Furthermore, if Rev 13:3-4 does refer to an individual, a core issue is raised: Who brings the first beast back to life, Satan or God? This is a pertinent question since, as will be shown, often the interpretation of who or what comes back to life is based on what Satan can do.

Since the Antichrist will be the pinnacle of Satan’s power and deception, some hold that Satan is the one who brings back from the grave the beast from the sea (Rev 13:1), i.e., the Antichrist. Such is LaHaye’s position:

Verse 3 indicates that the beast, or Antichrist, will be given a deadly wound. . . . Revelation 17:8 indicates that his spirit will go down into the pit of the abyss where it belongs, but he will be resurrected. One must keep in mind that this beast is the Antichrist. In other words, he will try to duplicate everything Jesus Christ has done. . . . Christianity is unique in that we worship a resurrected, living Lord. . . . This power will be all but nullified by the nefarious work of Satan through the resurrection of the Antichrist. As far as I know, this will be the first time that Satan has ever been able to raise the dead. His power and control of man is limited by God, but according to His wise providence He will
Can Satan Raise the Dead?

permit Satan on this one occasion to have the power to raise the dead.6

However, if the above statement is true, multiple questions and concerns are raised if John did, in fact, witness a return to life of one who actually died, especially a return to life wrought by Satan. In an attempt to refute this position, Hanegraaf and Brouwer respond to LaHaye’s interpretation of Rev 13:3:

What is at stake here is nothing less than the deity and resurrection of Christ. In Christian worldview, only God has the power to raise the dead. If Antichrist could “raise [himself] from the dead” and “control the earth and sky,” Christianity would lose the basis for believing that Christ’s resurrection vindicates His claim to deity. Further, if Satan possesses the creative power of God, this would subvert the post-resurrection appearances of Christ in that Satan could have masqueraded as the resurrected Christ. Moreover, the notion that Satan can perform acts that are indistinguishable from genuine miracles suggests a dualistic worldview in which God and Satan are equal powers competing for dominance.7

Both positions raise valid points to consider; both have issues of their own to address. Hanegraaf and Brouwer raise legitimate concerns about anyone other than God being the author of life. Jesus affirmed as much, such as in John 5:21: “For just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, even so the Son also gives life to whom He wishes.” Morris comments on the importance of this verse: “The Father (he and no other) raises people from the dead and gives them life. This is the teaching of the Old Testament (Deut. 32:39; 1 Sam. 2:6; 2 Kings 5:7). It would have been accepted without question by Jesus’ hearers. There was no matter for marvel in this. What is marvelous is the next assertion, the Son also gives life.”8

Because of verses such as these, it is certainly valid to question the assumption that Satan could at any time possess and exercise the creative power of God, which is what will be true if Satan brings his dead Antichrist back from the grave.9 However, to LaHaye’s credit, he at least allows the text to speak for itself and seeks to explain the wound of the first beast in harmony with other references in the Book of Revelation, including the worldwide amazement and ultimate worship of the beast and of Satan.10

---

9Hanegraaf and Brouwer’s other concerns such as how this relates to the deity of Christ will be addressed later below.
10Ryrie likewise understands Revelation 13:3 as reference to the fatal wounding of the Antichrist since “it is the exactly the same phrase used as is used in 5:6 in reference to the death of Christ” (Charles C. Ryrie, Basic Theology (Wheaton, Ill.: Victor, 1986) 471. Ryrie does not comment on the source of the
It should be noted, however, that concern about the raising of the first beast as a resurrection of an individual is not restricted to opponents of a futuristic understanding of the Book of Revelation. Numerous premillennial stalwarts have also raised many of the same questions and concerns. John Walvoord, who held virtually the same approach to the Book of Revelation as LaHaye, wrestled with the same basic problem if the Antichrist is killed and then Satan brings him back to life: “The wounding of one of the heads seems instead to be a reference to the fact that the Roman Empire as such seemingly died and is now going to be revived. . . . It is questionable whether Satan has the power to restore to life one who has died, even though his power is great.”

Walvoord likewise responded against the position of the death and return to life of the future Antichrist with similar concerns. Based on the promise that the dead are brought out of the grave by the voice of the Son of God (John 5:28-29), the first beast’s return in Rev 13:3-4 cannot refer to an individual. “Satan does not have the power to give life. Since Christ alone has the power of the resurrection, Satan could not bring one back to life.” To sum up his position, he continues: “Since all the references to this individual present him as a man, not as a supernatural being, it seems impossible to hold that he is a resurrected individual. It would be concluded that the Beast will not be a resurrected individual.”

Others have wrestled with the dilemma of attempting to allow the text to speak for itself, while at the same time struggling with the ramifications of what such an interpretation would entail. Usually they conclude that a future resurrection of an individual will transpire, at least in appearance, but leave the means undecided. Seiss is such an example. About the language used in Rev 13:14 of “the beast who had the wound of the sword and has come to life,” he writes,

The expression is so strong, definite, and intensified, that nothing less can be grammatically made of it than that real death meant to be affirmed. It is further described as a sword-wound, ‘the stroke of his death,’ or a stroke which carries death to him who experiences it. A man who has undergone physical death is therefore in contemplation. Whether he comes up again in literal bodily resurrection, or only by means of an obsession of some living man, we may not be able to decide. Whatever the mode, it will be in effect the same as a resurrection.

11Walvoord, The Revelation of Jesus Christ 199. Later in reference to the second beast giving breath to the image in Rev. 13:15-17, Walvoord again raises the primary concern: “Expositors usually hold that the extraordinary powers given by Satan to the false prophet do not extend to giving life to that which does not possess life, because this is a prerogative of God alone” (ibid., 208).

12Pentecost, Things to Come 335.

13Ibid., 335-36.

14Seiss, The Apocalypse 325.
MacArthur likewise, in arguing that the first beast in Revelation 13 is most likely an individual, leaves room for the details to unfold during the Tribulation:

Whether the death is real or faked (cf. v. 14; 2 Thess. 2:9) is not clear. It may be that the Antichrist is really killed, and God, for His own purposes allows him to be resurrected. More likely, Antichrist’s alleged death and resurrection will be a counterfeit of Christ’s death and resurrection, staged, as one of the ‘lying wonders’ perpetrated by the false prophet (13:12-15; 2 Thess. 2:9 NKJV). Antichrist’s death will be phony since he never really died.  

The purpose of this article is to present a third position, one that is between the two opposing positions. It will address the concerns of those who consider it a biblical impossibility for the Antichrist to die and return to life. It will also offer an alternative proposal and solution for those who hold that the return of the first beast will, in fact, be an authentic death and return to life of the Antichrist performed by Satan, and it will attempt to support this biblically.

Preliminary Considerations

As an initial consideration in addressing the positions, one should note that John wrote what he saw (e.g., Rev 1:2; 13:3), as he had earlier been instructed by the Lord (Rev 1:11, 19). Scripture does not disclose who brought the first beast back to life in Revelation 13. God revealed that future event to John, who recorded what God revealed to him, but neither God nor the apostle identified the agent causing the beast’s return or its significance. John himself may not have understood at the time how the fatal wounding of the beast and his subsequent return to life would transpire, such as when he marveled about the great whore of Rev 17:6-7. Identification of the agent in the beast’s resurrection, if it is identifiable at all, must come from related passages, especially those found within Revelation.

Furthermore, Revelation 13 is not an isolated sequence. Whatever position one takes for the wound of the first beast in Rev 13:3, will reflect on other matters related to the beast, particularly his ascent out of the abyss, which is actually mentioned before his Revelation 13 advent into the world. That first reference is in 11:7, where the text describes him as “the beast that comes up out of the abyss,” who will make war against God’s two witnesses. Without additional explanation, the verse simply says the beast will rise from the abyss. More details about the ascent will come in Revelation 13 and 17. The first reference, Rev 11:7, “gives no time frame for his ascent from the abyss (Lenski, Caird), but later discussion will suggest it

Thomas, Revelation 8–22

For an excellent introduction on the Book of Revelation and related matters, see Robert L. Thomas, Revelation 1–7: An Exegetical Commentary (Chicago: Moody, 1992) 1-46. Of special relevance for this article are the sections on “Prophe tic Style of the Apocalypse” (23-29) and “Hermeneutics for Interpreting the Apocalypse” (29-39). For significant and severe ramifications of attempting to have the book’s prophetic events occur in the first century A.D., see Dennis M. Swanson, “International Preterist Association: Reformation or Retrogression?,” The Master’s Seminary Journal 15/1 (Spring 2004): 39-58.

Such as Herman Hoeksema, Behold He Cometh (Grand Rapids: Reformed Free, 1969) 634, who about the first beast and false prophet being cast into the lake of fire writes, “There is no question of the fact that they are here represented as very concrete and individual persons. But this does not necessarily indicate that there shall be but one person who is the Antichrist and another individual who is the false prophet. It denotes rather, in the first place, that here we have the end of the deviltry and rebellion and antichristian power. Without any form of trial they are destroyed forever.” Actually, the two are not destroyed but cast living into the lake of fire, and are still tormented there one thousand years later in Rev 20:10. Hoeksema does not explain how a system itself can be tormented in the lake of fire, nor how a system could exist without its adherents who are killed at this time but not thrown into the lake of fire.

The Master’s Seminary dedicated the entire issue of its Fall 1998 journal to presentations of the biblical doctrine of hell. It likewise responded to the alarming increase in the rejection of biblical tenets concerning hell by those who consider themselves evangelicals. For articles relevant to this study see Richard L. Mayhue, “Hell: Never, Forever, or Just for Awhile?,” TMSJ 9/2 (Fall 1998):129-45; Larry D. Pettegrew, “A Kinder, Gentler Theology of Hell?” TMSJ 9/2 (Fall 1998):203-17; Trevor P. Craigen,
Further, previous articles have dealt with many arguments against the supernatural nature of signs and wonders repeatedly predicted for the Tribulation. This includes both the return to life of the beast of Revelation 13:3\textsuperscript{20} and the authenticity of the satanic miracles during the Tribulation.\textsuperscript{21}

Even though previous studies have dealt with this, one statement should not be lightly set aside as unimportant: the Tribulation will be a unique time in history and unparalleled in satanic evil, power, and worldwide deception.\textsuperscript{22} The Bible not only presents repeated statements with specific details about the unprecedented deception that will occur during the period; it also presents multiple strong warnings regarding the coming deception and how to avoid it. The worldwide magnitude and unprecedented nature of the predicted deception must be kept in mind when studying the Tribulation.\textsuperscript{23}

**The Judgments of God’s Enemies at Christ’s Return**

Since the ultimate fate of the first beast is not debated among premillennialists, his death is a useful place to begin in addressing other issues related to him. The return of Jesus Christ to earth begins a series of judgments and blessings that culminate with the Great White Throne judgment, followed by the new heavens and new earth. That the judgments commence at the Lord’s return should not be surprising since Jesus had taught that in John 5:22: “[N]ot even the Father judges anyone, but He has given all judgment to the Son” (\textit{ajlla; th\textbackslash n krivsin pa\textbackslash san devdwken tw/\ u\textbackslash njw/’}), the perfect active indicative \textit{devdwken} indicating the permanency of the Son’s right to execute “all judgment.” Morris comments on this verse:

\begin{quote}
The thought moves on to that of judgment. Arising out of the life-giving activities of the Son comes the thought that the Father does not judge people. This was something new to Jews. They held that the Father was the Judge of all people, and they expected to stand
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{20}“Eternal Punishment in John’s Revelation,” \textit{TMSJ} 9/2 (Fall 1998):191-201.

\textsuperscript{21}See Gregory H. Harris, “The Wound of the Beast in the Tribulation,” \textit{Bibliotheca Sacra} 156 (October-December 1999):459-68, for different views concerning the fatal wound of the first beast and his return to life.

\textsuperscript{22}Gregory H. Harris, “Satan’s Deceptive Miracles in the Tribulation,” \textit{Bibliotheca Sacra} 156 (July-September 1999):308-24. Since Hanegraaf and Brouwer particularly questioned the Antichrist’s control of the sky and how this would severely undermine the deity of Christ (Hanegraaf and Brouwer, \textit{The Last Disciple} 394), see within the article fire called down from heaven (314-15) and the giving of breath or spirit (not life) to the image (\textit{kai; ejdovn\ au/\jw/’\ dou/\nai pneu/’ma\ th/’\ eijkovni tou’ qhrivou, 315-17}).

\textsuperscript{23}Gregory H. Harris, “Satan’s Work as a Deceiver,” \textit{Bibliotheca Sacra} 156 (April-June 1999):190-202. For biblical statements about the deception of the Tribulation, see 196-197; for the multiple warnings about tribulational deception, see 198-99.

\textsuperscript{24}For a listing of the biblical references regarding the massive extent of the deception of the Tribulation, see ibid., 199-202.
before him at the last day. Jesus tells them now that the Father will exercise his prerogative of judging for the express purpose of ensuring that people give the Son the same honor as they do to himself. . . . This is very close to an assertion of deity.\textsuperscript{24}

Later in the same chapter Jesus expanded on the judgment that He will accomplish: “Do not marvel at this; for an hour is coming, in which all who are in the tombs shall hear His voice, and shall come forth; those who did the good deeds to a resurrection of life, those who committed the evil deeds to a resurrection of judgment” (John 5:28-29).

Revelation 19:19-21 describes the first judgment Jesus will perform after His return to earth:

And I saw the beast and the kings of the earth and their armies, assembled to make war against Him who sat upon the horse, and against His army. And the beast was seized, and with him the false prophet who performed the signs in his presence, by which he deceived those who had received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image; these two were thrown alive into the lake of fire which burns with brimstone. And the rest were killed with the sword which came from the mouth of Him who sat upon the horse, and all the birds were filled with their flesh.

Only the first beast and the false prophet receive immediate eternal judgment at Christ’s return as they are cast living (\textit{zw'nto}) into the lake of fire. This is the first biblical occurrence of the expression “lake of fire” as a description of hell. In the OT the Bible teaches that those who die without the Lord await a final judgment of being confined in Sheol, which is generally synonymous with the NT use of Hades.\textsuperscript{25} Walvoord’s point is valid and considered standard among premillennialists: “By comparison with other scriptures, it seems that the beast and the false prophet are the first to inhabit the lake of fire,”\textsuperscript{26} and “These who were Satan’s masterpieces precede Satan himself to this final place of everlasting punishment into which he is cast a thousand years later (20:10).”\textsuperscript{27}

The final judgment of Satan occurs later, after one thousand years, at the end of the Millennial Kingdom, and after his final rebellion. Revelation 20:10 states, “And the devil who deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are also; and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.” For those who do not incorporate their own theology or philosophical presuppositions and allow the text to speak for itself, Mayhue states the

\textsuperscript{24}Morris, \textit{The Gospel According to John} 279.

\textsuperscript{25}Walvoord, \textit{The Revelation of Jesus Christ} 280.

\textsuperscript{27}Ibid.

pertinent conclusion as it relates to the eternality of hell: “In Rev 19.20, the beast and the false prophet are thrown alive into the lake of fire. One thousand years later they are still alive (20:10). The phrase in 20:10, ‘tormented day and night forever,’ indicates that what their previous tormented experience had been for a millennium would continue throughout eternity.”\(^{28}\) Walvoord concurs:

In the divine act of judgment which casts Satan into the lake of fire, he joins the beast and the false prophet who preceded him by one thousand years. The text should be understood as teaching that both the beast and the false prophet are still in the lake of fire when Satan joins them, a thousand years after being cast into it. It is most significant that the verb [shall be tormented] is in the third person plural, indication that the verb should be understood as having for its subjects not only Satan but also the beast and the false prophet.\(^{29}\)

The final judgment depicting all the remaining lost will be the Great White Throne judgment of Rev 20:11-15:

And I saw a great white throne and Him who sat upon it, from whose presence earth and heaven fled away, and no place was found for them. And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead which were in them; and they were judged, every one of them according to their deeds. And death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire.

Here is the final judgment of the eternally damned, as they are thrown into the lake of fire.\(^{30}\)

Inasmuch as the first resurrection was completed before the thousand year reign began (Rev. 20:5), “the dead” referred to in Revelation 20:11-12 can only be those who were left behind at the out-resurrection [i.e. the resurrection of the righteous] from the dead ones and who constituted those that are raised up unto damnation. The second resurrection, better termed the resurrection of the damnation, includes all who are raised to eternal condemnation.\(^{31}\)

---

\(^{28}\)Mayhue, “Hell: Forever, Never, or Just Awhile?” 139.

\(^{29}\)Walvoord, The Revelation of Jesus Christ 304.

\(^{30}\)Hoekema considers this a judgment for both the saved and unsaved alike. “The Scripture future teaches that all human beings who ever lived will have to appear before this final judgment seat” (Anthony A. Hoekema, The Bible and the Future [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979] 257). “If all men are to appear before the judgment seat, this must include all believers” (ibid.). For rebuttal of a view of a single resurrection including both the saved and the lost, see Pentecost, Things To Come 398-407.

\(^{31}\)Ibid., 398 (emphasis added).
Chafer concluded the same: “All the wicked dead are here resurrected and stand before God to be judged. That the Judge is the Lord Jesus Christ Himself is clear from John 5:27, where it states that the Father ‘hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man.’”

It is also evident that with death and Hades emptied of all their inhabitants, no refuge will remain for the unredeemed to escape their final judgment:

The intermediate state, personified in the double title “death and Hades,” (20:13), releases its grip with the result that the unrighteous dead are raised for their individual accounting. The use of the personification a second time (v. 14) may simply refer to the end of death and the intermediate state, that is, death will meet its end and will not be there to disturb the new heavens and the new earth. Thus, none of the unrighteous dead will escape sentencing.

Walvoord writes of the evident necessity for the unsaved to undergo a transformation of their bodies in order to endure eternal hell, similar to the resurrected bodies the redeemed will have received:

Like the righteous, they are given bodies which cannot be destroyed. But while the righteous receive bodies that are holy and suited for the presence of God, the wicked dead receive bodies that are indestructible and suited for eternal punishment. They are still wicked and still in rebellion against God. The Scriptures are very clear that if anyone’s name is not found in the Book of Life, he will be thrown into the lake of fire.

With no additional details, Jesus had alluded to the body aspect of the final judgment in Matt 10:28: “And do not fear those who kill the body, but are unable to kill the soul; but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.” So the Great White Throne judgment concludes the totality of God’s judgments against Satan, his angels, and unredeemed mankind.

**Impact of Revelation 19 on Revelation 13**

As already noted, enduring the lake of fire necessitates bodies fit to endure such punishment vastly beyond present human capabilities. However, in agreement with what has previously been written in reference to the unsaved receiving bodies fit for eternal damnation, the same thing must be true for the Antichrist and the false prophet. In order for the Antichrist and the false prophet to be two genuine human beings, at some time—either before or at Rev 19:20—they must likewise receive

---


bodies fit to endure the everlasting torment God has promised. Simply put, at some point the two beasts must change from human to superhuman capacity. This must occur or else the two could never endure the lake of fire for even a fraction of a second, and certainly they would not still be there one thousand years later when Satan is cast into hell, “where the beast and the false prophet are also; and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever” (Rev 20:10).

The first beast being cast alive into the lake of fire and still being alive when Satan is thrown in makes the restoring to life of the slain beast in Revelation 13 much more plausible. Since the two designated agents of Satan must ultimately receive a supernatural transformation and do so before the transformation of the remainder of the damned, Revelation 13 has the best biblical answer for when this will transpire. Thomas shows the cohesion of these verses:

It is best to identify this restoration to life with an end-time satanically controlled king who will come to the world as a false Christ. This allows for the interchangeability of the head with the whole beast—i.e., the king with his kingdom—as vv. 12, 14 require. It coincides with further details to come in 17:8 [the beast coming out of the abyss]. It agrees with a final climactic appearance of the beast in history as a person, in concert with the vision’s focus on the future (Kiddle). This means a future sequence that will be a close counterfeiting of Christ’s death and resurrection. The climax of history will include a healing . . . of an individual that closely approximates the resurrection of Christ from the dead. The question as to whether Satan has the power to restore a dead person to life (Walvoord) requires no answer here. Whether the beast performs this marvelous feat through deception or through power permitted by God, it still brings him into the limelight as never before.35

In answer to Thomas’ question about the extent of Satan’s power, this article intends to determine whether God or Satan restores the first beast to life. Attempting to accomplish this may be extremely ambitious, but biblical references give clear indication of whether this is an authentic resurrection or not and of who accomplishes it. Beyond what has already been examined, one very significant deduction warrants consideration: The Antichrist and the second beast are the only two unsaved individuals who will be permitted by God to bypass the Great White Throne judgment (Rev 20:11-15). In keeping with the divine promise that all judgment (ήν θέραμα πᾶσαν) has been given to the Son, exempting these two from the Great White Throne judgment is solely God’s doing—not Satan’s. The devil has nothing whatsoever to do with God’s judgments other than enduring what God has prepared for him and his angels (Matt 25:41). Furthermore, Satan will already be in the lake of fire, joining the two previous inhabitants, before the White Throne judgment begins. Since all judgment has been given to the Son, this obviously is the Son’s ultimate will and accomplishment. He Himself will seize the Antichrist and the false prophet and cast them into the lake of fire. He Himself has already determined that,

35Thomas, Revelation 8–22 158-59.
unlike the remainder of the unredeemed, the Antichrist and the false prophet—although genuine human beings—will not stand with all lost people before Him in judgment at the Great White Throne. Satan has absolutely no part in this; only God does. Certainly no “dualistic worldview” exists “in which God and Satan are equal powers competing for dominance.”

Before being cast into the lake of fire in Rev 19:20 and before the Millennium, the two beasts must receive from God bodies fit for enduring such torment, as will anyone else thrown into the lake of fire. Just as those going to eternal torment must receive resurrected bodies in order to endure,37 so also must the Antichrist and the false prophet. In fact, these two staunch enemies of God most likely will have received their resurrected bodies before this since no indication is made of any kind of transformation of the two beasts at the Lord’s return. Instead of being slain with the remainder of lost humanity and then thrown into the lake of fire, the two will not be killed, but will be thrown living (ζω’ντε”) into the lake of fire.38

That the two beasts must receive supernatural bodies one thousand years before the rest of the lost factors into the interpretation of related verses regarding the first beast. For instance, in part the rationale that the wound of the beast and his return to life cannot be an individual is based on the chronology of judgments in Scripture. In reasoning that a resurrection in Revelation 13 could not be a return to life of a human being, Pentecost asserts, “The wicked are not resurrected until the Great White Throne (Rev 20:11-15). If a wicked one were resurrected at this point it would set aside God’s divinely ordained program of resurrection.”39 But such would by no means disrupt God’s chronology. Only a slight altering of the usual chronology of God’s judgment among premillennialists is necessary to include the unique judgment of the two beasts, but often the specified judgment of the two beasts in Rev 19:20 is missing from lists of God’s future judgments.40 Revelation 19:20 is

34 So Hanegraaf and Brouwer, The Last Disciple 394.
36 Some have supposed a discrepancy between the fate of these two and that of the man of lawlessness in 2 Thess. 2:8 (Beckwith), but harmonization of the two accounts of Christ’s return is quite easy. The verb ajnelei' (analei, “destroy”) used by Paul does not necessarily mean physical death. It can also refer to relegation to the lake of fire, because the literal force of αὐτοφέο (anaireo) is ‘I make an end of.’ The agent(s) for casting the two to their fiery destiny is unnamed, but presumably it is He with whom they came to do battle” (Thomas, Revelation 8–22 397).
37 Pentecost, Things to Come 335.
38 For instance, though not arguing against the resurrection of the individual beasts in his chart on the judgments of God, Ryrie does not refer to the unique judgment of the Antichrist and the false prophet (Ryrie, Basic Theology 516). Chafer fails to also. In listing the different categories of the final judgments that will occur, including those of Satan and the demons, he makes no reference to the judgment of the Antichrist and false prophet (Lewis Sperry Chafer Systematic Theology [Dallas: Dallas Theological Seminary, 1948] 4:415-18). Likewise, Walvoord in his chart entitled “Major Divine Judgments,” omits the judgment of the Antichrist and false prophet (Walvoord, The Prophecy Knowledge Handbook 468). He does this also in his chart entitled “Order of Events of Biblical Prophecy” (ibid., 385).
Can Satan Raise the Dead?  

a part of end-time events that is not disclosed earlier in Scripture. Either the Son uniquely judges the Antichrist and the false prophet at His return in Revelation 19, one thousand years before any other humans, or else the two prophetic characters are only symbolic representations of evil systems. Of course, the two beasts will be genuine human beings, as their fate indicates.

The fact that they enter into this fate while alive \( (zw'nte) \) \( (zōntes, \) “living”) increases the horror of the picture (cf. Num. 16:30; Ps. 55:15) (Swete). This indicates that the warrior-King has captured them alive on the field of battle and sends them off to their eternal destiny in full consciousness and that the two are more than just human, because the rest of the lost will not enter the lake until the judgment of the great white throne \( (20:12-15)\).

Probably the best biblical option for the time of this required change from human to a supra-human is Rev 13:3, which will have occurred three-and-one-half years earlier than Rev 19:20.

**The Impact of Revelation 19:20 on the Ascent Out of the Abyss**

**The First Beast an Individual, Not an Empire**

If the Antichrist and false prophet attain a supernatural status before the events of Rev 19:20, the ascent of the beast from the abyss in Rev 17:8 should be reconsidered. This is particularly true since many of the arguments for the beast being an empire instead of a person apply here also. In other words, often the interpretation of Rev 13:3-4 influences the understanding of 17:8 (and vice versa) as well as the interpretation of Rev 9:11 and 11:7. Since Revelation 9 contains the first reference to the abyss in Revelation, who or what comes from it affects interpretations in related passages. Specifically, part of the rationale for the empire interpretation regarding the abyss is the inference that no human could ever be in the abyss; that conclusion should be reconsidered. For instance, in proposing that the beast of Rev 13:3 is the future empire instead of an individual, Pentecost thus supports his interpretation: “Satan is called the ‘angel of the bottomless pit’ or the ‘abyss’ in Revelation 9:11, so that Revelation 17:8 does not teach that the head of the empire rose out of the abyss, but rather that the empire itself was brought about ‘from the abyss’ or by Satan.” Walvoord agrees: “Only Satan himself actually comes from the abyss. The world government which he promotes is entirely satanic in its power and to this extent is identified with Satan. It is the beast as the world government which

41 Thomas, Revelation 8–22 397.
42 An extended discussion of the identity of the leader of the demons who come from the abyss is beyond the scope of this article. For different views and their supports, see Thomas, Revelation 8–22 26-38. His conclusion is that Abaddon/Appolyon is not a name for Satan but for another demon.
43 Pentecost, Things to Come 335.
is revived.""\(^4\) It is further concluded, "[T]he thing that caused the world to wonder was the rise to power of an absolute monarch over the ten kingdom federation who wielded absolute power."\(^5\) This reasoning combines relevant verses from Revelation 9, 13, and 17: The beast’s return to life cannot be a resurrection in Revelation 13 because he cannot come from the abyss (17:8), because only Satan can come from the abyss (9:11).

However, the above approach has problems that need to be addressed. Part of its difficulty is in explaining how the totality of the unsaved world during the Tribulation, who will have strongly rejected God’s Word as truth, will even know the abyss exists or be cognizant of any activities related to it. Even if the first beast is a reference to the empire, without divine revelation no one would know that the beast descended into the abyss or that he arises from it. Humans will not witness anything related to this; such is a divinely revealed truth. Without the revelatory truth of God, a person has no way to know that this happens. Yet the unsaved of the Tribulation will not only know about the beast coming from the abyss, they will respond in utter amazement after they witness it, as Rev 17:8 reveals:

The beast that you saw was and is not, and is about to come up out of the abyss and to go to destruction. And those who dwell on the earth will wonder, whose name has not been written in the book of life from the foundation of the world, when they see the beast, that he was and is not and will come.

Also, since, as noted above, the Antichrist and false prophet will have supernatural bodies no later than Revelation 19, and most likely in Revelation 13, the same could be argued about entering and leaving the abyss in Revelation 17. In other words the text does not require that Satan be the one uniquely linked with the abyss.\(^6\) No human could ever go to the abyss; no human could survive the abyss; no human could escape from there—and yet the beast does just that in Rev 17:8, as Seiss notes: "Ordinary men do not come from thence. One who hails from that place must be either a dead man brought up again from the dead, or some evil spirit which takes possession of a living man."\(^7\)

The resurrected bodies the Antichrist and the false prophet will have (by no later than 19:20) make them suitable for this. If one can endure the final lake of fire, he can endure the abyss. As before, that is not Satan’s doing; God in His sovereignty

---

\(^4\) Walvoord, _The Revelation of Jesus Christ_ 250.

\(^5\) Pentecost, _Things to Come_ 322.

\(^6\) One item that needs to be explored by those who hold that Satan is current sovereign of the abyss is the response of the demons of Luke 8:31. When the legion of demons quaked before Jesus, “they were entreating Him not to command them to depart into the abyss.” If Satan were the current master of the abyss, it seems most improbable the demons would be fearful of going there. Besides, if Satan ruled the abyss, he could simply send them back out into another field of endeavor.

\(^7\) Seiss, _The Apocalypse_ 325.
permits it, ultimately even causing it. Since the beast and the false prophet have to receive a resurrected body at some point to endure the lake of fire, from the information disclosed in Scripture, this is the most feasible option.

**Resurrection of the False Prophet**

Still one important item needs addressing: Rev 19:20 discloses that “these two [οἱ δύο] were thrown living into the lake of fire.” Yet only one beast has the fatal wound in Rev 13:3 and only one beast comes from the abyss in Rev 17:7-8:

And when they have finished their testimony, the beast that comes up out of the abyss will make war with them, and overcome them and kill them. The beast [τὸ; qhîrîvîn] that you saw was and is not, and is about to come up out of the abyss and to go to destruction. And those who dwell on the earth will wonder, whose name has not been written in the book of life from the foundation of the world, when they see the beast, that he was and is not and will come.

Connected with this is one final matter that should be considered but is often overlooked. Although not specifically stated in the text, somehow the other beast which John saw (α[λλο qhîrîvîn), the false prophet of Rev 13:11, must have a supernatural status. Why does the text not say that the beasts (plural) instead of the beast (singular) come out of the abyss? The two, not just one, are thrown living into lake of fire. Thomas muses, “The joining of the false prophet with the beast in this doom is surprising, but not completely unexpected, though, because of his evil sign-working powers.”

In attempting to understand this, one should remember that the Bible often presents the spiritual realities behind what takes place on earth. Those on earth, especially those who do not accept the revelation of God, see only the physical events, yet the spiritual side is the real reason that the events occur. One of the examples is the serpent (what Adam and Eve saw) and the serpent of old (the satanic reality behind the serpent) in the Garden Eden, showing both the physical and the spiritual realities. Two others are the events surrounding the birth of John the Baptist and Jesus in Luke 1–2 (the physical births and the supernatural action behind the births), and the earthly opponents (Luke 22:1-2) and the spiritual opponent (Luke 22:3) who lead to Jesus’ arrest.

So it is with Revelation 13. Revelation 12–14 is a unique segment within the book. In Revelation 12, God discloses the spiritual realities, totally hidden from the lost world, before the visible events of Revelation 13 occur:

The method of narration beginning at this point differs from anything previous, because it focuses on the secret maneuvers that lie behind the visible conflict to be portrayed under the seven bowls (Kiddle). That future struggle is merely the outworking of a conflict

---

48 Thomas, Revelation 8–22 398.
between God and Satan that has lasted throughout history since Satan’s fall.\textsuperscript{49}

Before the pinnacle of Satan’s man of sin emerges in Revelation 13, God uncovers the spiritual background from which the events will emerge in Revelation 12:

Previously John has predicted the future objectively, but at this point he pauses to focus upon the inner movements that lie behind the conflict that will mark the climax of world history. He points out that the future struggle is merely the climax of a struggle that has gone on throughout earth’s history and that what transpires on earth is a mere reflection of the conflict between the forces of God and the forces of Satan.\textsuperscript{50}

Chapter 12 reveals the preliminary defeat of Satan as he is cast down from heaven and the woe to the earth that follows in Rev 12:7-12:

And there was war in heaven, Michael and his angels waging war with the dragon. And the dragon and his angels waged war, and they were not strong enough, and there was no longer a place found for them in heaven. And the great dragon was thrown down, the serpent of old who is called the devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him. And I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, “Now the salvation, and the power, and the kingdom of our God and the authority of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren has been thrown down, who accuses them before our God day and night. And they overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb and because of the word of their testimony, and they did not love their life even to death. For this reason, rejoice, O heavens and you who dwell in them. Woe to the earth and the sea, because the devil has come down to you, having great wrath, knowing that he has only a short time.”

To summarize, Revelation 12 includes (1) Satan being cast down from heaven, (2) the pronouncement of the pending kingdom of Christ, (3) the victory of the overcomers by the blood of the Lamb, (4) the woe to the earth because of Satan’s wrath, and (5) Satan’s realization that his time is short. By no means will the lost of the Tribulation know about any of these preliminary defeats of Satan, and by no means will the preeminent liar (John 8:44) disclose them to the lost world. The world will see only the physical beings and events before them; they will not ascertain the spiritual realities that precede the events, and especially will they not grasp their significance. Simply put, the world at large will marvel at the Antichrist and be amazed by the signs and wonders performed by the false prophet, as the predicted worldwide deception occurs.

That scenario presents a distinct possibility to consider: it may very well be that the false prophet is killed, perhaps at the same time the first beast receives his

\textsuperscript{49}Ibid., 117.

mortal wound, and that the first beast brings him back to life—that is, again, from the perspective of those on earth who will witness this. God will give the two resurrected bodies, but it will seem to a thoroughly deceived world that the first beast performs this by his own power. Such harmonizes with the uniqueness of the Tribulation as well as the multiple warnings of the deception of that period. Beyond this, it suits Satan’s design. Satan does not desire so much world dominion, which he does have to a degree and what the Antichrist will exercise because it will be given to him (Rev 13:4, 7). Both the beast—and ultimately Satan—desire to be worshiped as God, as seen in the temptation of Jesus (Matt 4:9), the worship of the beast and the dragon (Rev 13:4), and the Antichrist’s presentation of himself to the world that he alone is God (2 Thess 2:4).

Those deceived during the Tribulation will respond to the Antichrist in worshipful adoration, as Rev 13:8 shows: “And all who dwell on the earth will worship him, everyone whose name has not been written from the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb who has been slain.” Anyone who persuades the entire unsaved population of the world that he himself is God must support his claims by overwhelmingly convincing means. The Tribulation will be devoid of both atheists and agnostics. Since the Antichrist will present himself as greater than Jesus, he must at the very least equal what the Bible claimed about Jesus. For instance, when John the Baptist questioned Jesus about whether He was the promised one or should they look for another, part of Jesus’ answer related to the dead being raised: “Go and report to John what you hear and see: the blind receive sight and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them” (Matt 11:4-5). For the Antichrist to present himself as God and be believed in by the collective lost, that he would bring one back to life (as the world views it) would not be unexpected.

Many have noticed that with Satan, the Antichrist, and the false prophet, a satanic trinity emerges:

It will be observed that the Revelation, in relating the second beast to the first, presents him as subservient to the first. He is called “the false prophet” (Rev. 16:13; 19:20; 20:10), who ministers in connection with the first beast as his prophet or spokesman. We are presented, then, with a Satanic trinity, the unholy trinity, or the trinity of hell: the Dragon, the Beast, and the False Prophet (Rev. 16:13). That place occupied by God in His program is assumed by Satan, that place of Christ is assumed by the first Beast, that ministry of the Holy Spirit is discharged by the False Prophet.\(^\text{51}\)

While often noted, members of this satanic trinity should not be taken lightly, nor should their capacities be automatically diminished, especially with the parameters under which they will operate during the last three-and-one-half years before the Lord’s return. If the Antichrist is supposedly to be God in the flesh and exalted above Jesus, whom the Bible repeatedly presents as raising the dead, that the

---

\(^{51}\) Pentecost, *Things to Come* 337.
Antichrist (again from the world’s perspective) will raise the dead at some point should not be unexpected. The healing of the false prophet from the dead would accomplish this. It would also explain the latter’s supernatural status that he has in Rev 19:20. Yet even beyond this, it would answer another question which must be raised: Why are only Satan and the Antichrist worshiped during the Tribulation and not the false prophet? He, too, will have a supernatural body when he is cast living into the lake of fire. That another heals him would also explain why the world will worship the first beast and worship the dragon (Rev 13:4), but not worship the false prophet. It would also harmonize with the previously noted Satanic trinity. One returns from the abyss; and one is returned to life in a supernatural form, giving worldwide witness and credit to the one who raised him from the dead and leading the entire lost world to worship him as God.\(^{12}\)

All this ultimately originates with God. From the world’s understanding, the Antichrist and the dragon accomplish divine acts and are worthy of worship and praise. From the biblical perspective, God alone does the acts and is worthy. In fact, the rise of the Antichrist in Revelation 13 comes only after the preliminary defeat of Satan in Revelation 12. No true dualism exists; only the erroneous perception of dualism by the lost during the Tribulation.

**Conclusion and Significance**

The realization that the Antichrist and the false prophet will be judged uniquely and exclusively by the Son in Rev 19:20 and will be mandated by God to bypass the Great White Throne judgment has far-reaching implications. First, it permits a more natural understanding of the language of the Book of Revelation, something which those who hold to the premillennial reign of Jesus Christ frequently emphasize. Realizing that a change from the human to the supernatural must occur for the Antichrist and the false prophet by this point certainly adds to the possibility that it may be sooner, such as in Rev 13:3 and 17:8. It further explains the marveling of the unbelieving masses that is predicted for the Tribulation and how they will respond in abject amazement. Since the lost will marvel with abject wonder at the return of the first beast from the abyss, obviously they will not be expecting his return from the dead. Having brazenly rejected the truth of God, when the Antichrist returns from the grave, the deceived of the Tribulation will embrace the lie, “with all the deception of wickedness for those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth so as to be saved. And for this reason God will send upon them a deluding influence so that they might believe what is false, in order that they all may be judged who did not believe the truth, but took pleasure in wickedness” (2 Thess 2:10-12). This underscores the absolute sovereignty of God in all areas, including even a

\(^{12}\)However, even with this, something still needs to be addressed. A future article will perhaps consider why the beast from the earth went down to the abyss rather than to Hades, which is where lost humanity goes to await the final judgment.
supernatural return from the dead. Even in the pinnacle of Satan’s reign on earth, God remains fully in control. Although Satan and the Antichrist will take credit for it, this will come about only by God’s sovereign doing, something, of course, which the deceived world will in no way acknowledge at that time.

Second, premillennialists should amend slightly their theology concerning the final judgments of God, especially in reference to Rev 20:11-15. All the unredeemed will appear before Jesus at the Great White Throne judgment, all except two, and this by God’s sovereign design and disclosure. This by no means undermines a premillennial understanding of God’s judgments. It actually strengthens it in that it allows the text to speak for itself, as God has revealed a unique judgment in store for two of His unique opponents.

Thirdly, God being the ultimate source of the first beast’s return and of the two resurrected bodies in Revelation 19:20 refutes every criticism and concern that Hanegraaf and Brouwer raise regarding the return to life of the beast. Only God has the power to raise the dead, not Satan. The Antichrist does not raise himself; God raises him. Satan by no means possesses creative power; God alone does, although Satan will lie about this in the future, receiving worship that is not properly due him (Rev 13:4). So though it will appear to the unbelieving world not so much that God has no equals but rather that Satan has no equals, Scripture plainly indicates that is never so. Satan operates only when God allows and only to the degree God allows. By no means whatsoever could such a view be considered a dualism between God and Satan whereby they exist as competing equals. They are not; they never have been; they never will be, even in the height of the Tribulation and the accompanying predicted deception.

When the unsaved masses respond in bewildered adoration at the return of the beast from death, asking in Rev 13:4, “Who is like the beast? Who is able to make war with him?,” God has already provided the answer in His Word. The One who is able to wage war with the beast is the one whose attributes have already been delineated in detail in Revelation 1–5, in particular in Rev 1:5 where Jesus is called “the ruler of the kings of the earth,” which, of course, includes the Antichrist. Even more so, the one who is able to wage war with the beast is the one to whom all judgment is given. He is also the one who declares, “and I have [ἐξ, present active indicative] the keys of death and of Hades” (Rev 1:18), which, incidentally, is further evidence that the return of the first beast from death is not Satan’s doing, but solely God’s.
IS IT TIME TO CHANGE? OPEN THEISM AND THE DIVINE TIMELESSNESS DEBATE

Marshall Wicks

The recent popularity of Open Theism in evangelical circles has raised questions regarding the traditional doctrine of divine eternity, timelessness, or atemporality. The questions necessitate a three-part investigation of the subject. Part one investigates the present status of temporality studies which define time as either tenseless or dynamic. Part two compares the temporal position with the atemporal. The classical position has been that God is timeless, but some recent evangelical scholars have come to view God as a temporal being, with some others theorizing that He is both temporal and atemporal. The temporal position criticizes atemporalism in three ways: (1) the Bible presents God as a temporal being; (2) the modern consensus is that God is temporal; (3) atemporality is a result of the influence of Greek philosophy on Christian doctrine; (4) the idea of a timeless God is incoherent. In each case, the criticisms prove to be invalid. Part three examines positions that attempt to maintain temporality and atemporality simultaneously, but the composite approach proves to be nothing but another way of stating the atemporal position. A successful defense of the atemporal position proves Open Theism to be an unorthodox version of theism that should be rejected.

* * * * *

No generation in Christian history has debated like ours about whether God is timeless or whether he has unending duration, that is, whether temporal existence extends interminably forward and backward.1

---

1Marshall Wicks is Professor of Bible at the Word of Life Bible Institute. He has a Th.M. degree from Grace Theological Seminary and is a Ph.D. candidate at Baptist Bible Seminary.

Significant portions of Process Theology have been imported into evangelical thinking through the medium of Open or Freewill Theism. Though Open Theism claims to be significantly different from Process Theology, enough similarities exist to make the astute observer suspicious. In keeping with postmodern maxims regarding tolerance, most critics of Open Theism have attempted to see both positives and negatives in their analyses. This is in many ways very commendable. However, the result has been widespread confusion throughout the evangelical camp with regard to several traditional attributes of God. Some were already deemed redundant or misleading. Others were subjected to new and more intense analysis than previously accorded. The purpose of this article is to look at one of these divine attributes, divine eternality or timelessness, and to ascertain whether it needs to be rejected, redefined, or reaffirmed in light of recent philosophical and exegetical contributions.

The nature of this doctrine is such that for the most part it is a take-it-or-leave-it proposition. A major argument made by Open Theism is that all theological camps modify omniscience and immutability in some very noticeable ways. Open theists then claim that they are simply taking those necessary adjustments to a new but still orthodox level. Divine eternality may not be susceptible to such arguments. There do not seem to be any partially timeless constructs that are both biblical and coherent. If this doctrine and its implications for divine omniscience can be established as a necessary truth, it will certainly follow that Open Theism is outside the parameters of acceptable theism.

Divine eternality, timelessness, or atemporality goes back to Augustine and was later embedded into classical theism by Boethius, Anselm, and Thomas Aquinas. It was initially introduced as a logical concomitant of impassibility, immutability, and omniscience. Even though it is difficult to segregate these divine attributes, because

---

2Ronald Nash lists eight core attributes that form classical theism “(1) pure actuality, (2) immutability, (3) impassibility, (4) timelessness, (5) simplicity, (6) necessity, (7) omniscience, and (8) omnipotence” (Ronald H. Nash, The Concept of God [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1983], 20). He discards simplicity and impassibility and suggests that Process Theology and Open Theism want to alter immutability, timelessness, and omniscience substantially.

3Early classical theists would argue that all the essential attributes are logically interdependent in such a way that a denial of even one is a denial of the existence of God. “Is God’s timelessness—the traditional orthodox understanding of divine eternity—then a necessary truth? Is it a predication logically implicit in the very idea of God? Is it known to man intuitively, independently of and prior to special Judeo-Christian revelation? Augustine and Anselm apparently thought so; man, they said, has innate knowledge of God by creation. God is identical with each of his attributes, they taught, and since each attribute entails every other, to forfeit any one divine perfection would logically erase God. In this view God’s timeless eternity is not a contingent attribute; God cannot have temporal duration and yet be God” (Henry, God, Revelation and Authority 259). However, though recent theists have tended to combine the essential attributes somewhat more loosely, there is universal acknowledgement that any change to one attribute does have varying ripple effects for at least some of the other attributes. Nash suggests that because some of these attributes are seriously compromised, an all or nothing approach may be the Achilles’ heel of classical theism. This approach must be abandoned or the likelihood exists that Process
Open Theism has questioned the traditional understanding of the whole cluster, this article will attempt to deal with timelessness accepting Open Theism’s reformulations and rejections regarding omniscience and immutability. If God’s eternity can be entailed without appealing to the classical understanding of these associated attributes, it should follow that Open Theism has failed in all of its present reformulations.

Additionally, the issue has been somewhat complicated by several recent writings which have tried to integrate the advantages of temporality with those of atemporality. These posit God to be experientially temporal but ontologically atemporal. Most view this temporality as a voluntary limitation but others argue that this is a necessary circumstance grounded in the act of creating a temporal universe. Such a God is exactly what Open Theism craves. Since most open theists argue for a voluntary limitation’ of omniscience, a voluntary limitation to finite time would most certainly strengthen their argument regarding God’s knowledge of the future.

Hence, the purpose of this article is to establish atemporality in a strong sense as an entailment of orthodox theism. In order to accomplish that purpose it is first necessary to survey the present status of temporality studies. Part two will attempt to set forth the case for a necessarily atemporal deity. Part three will endeavor to quiet all claims to a bi-temporal deity. If this can be demonstrated without appealing to omniscience, immutability, and impassibility, then a great portion of the open theist’s argument will be mooted since many of the arguments used against omniscience and immutability are also used against atemporality.

**Part One: God and Time**

God’s timelessness is not the easiest attribute to define, much less to require
in a strong sense. There is certainly much more and much clearer biblical data available for formulating immutability and omniscience. Nevertheless, open theists do use God’s relationship to time as a launching pad for many of their arguments against these more familiar attributes. Unquestionably, the doctrine of divine timelessness as traditionally held is anathema to Process Theology and Open Theism. This makes it very tempting to side with atemporality simply for apologetic reasons. On the other hand, both Process Theology and Open Theism have raised some issues that classical theism must address. The most logical first order of business is, therefore, to examine the present status of timelessness studies.

Defining Time

Here exegete and philosopher alike face a significant problem. The Bible does not define time. Oscar Cullman attempted to extract such a definition from the *lemma* of the New Testament, but James Barr correctly and definitively laid to rest all such diachronic arguments. If we are to build a biblical picture of time it must come from the statements of the Bible, not the meanings of individual words. Given this underdetermined status of the biblical evidence, modern writers tend to view time in one of two ways. These positions are not mutually exclusive, and many writers would claim to hold to a composite. Based on a work by J. M. E. McTaggert, the present designations are A-theory or B-theory time.7

A-Theory Time

This view of time, preferred by atemporalists, is also referred to as block, static, or tenseless time. Time is categorized by the concepts of earlier than, simultaneous, and later than. Each category has its own ontological status. The present is simply a highlight on the chronological reality that men refer to as time. There is some sense in which the past and the future exist ontologically and are accessible to any atemporal entity.

B-Theory Time

The view of time most frequently held by temporalists is the B-type, tensed, or dynamic definition of time. Time is viewed as past, present, and future. Proponents of this view argue that the present is ontologically privileged. The past

---

7There are two camps regarding the nature of time. First are what J. M. E. McTaggert called ‘A-theorists,’ those who believe that time is ordered by the determinations of past, present and future. Second are McTaggert’s ‘B-theorists,’ those who believe that time is ordered by the relationships if earlier than, simultaneous, and later than. . . . Ontologically, A-theorists believe that past and present are real (or, for the presentist version of the A-theory only the present is real) while the future is not. B-theorists, as ontological egalitarians, deny this. They believe there is no such thing as temporal becoming, what Donald Williams calls ‘the myth of passage’” (Garrett DeWeese, “Timeless God, Tenseless Time,” *Philosophia Christi* 2 [2000]:53).
and future are meaningful only so far as they relate to the present. They are inaccessible because they are non-existent.

Analysis
There seems to be very little objective reason to privilege either of these positions. The definitions do provide a useful tool for those already predisposed to a particular view of God’s eternal nature. However, those analytical philosophers/theologians who have no theological ax to grind seem to be equally as divided on the subject but for different reasons. It should be acknowledged, however, that man’s common experience tends toward a B-theory approach to time.

*Divine Atemporality*

The classical position held by the church and the Reformers is divine timelessness. God is outside of time, and lives in a timeless now. God is not excluded from time but is unaffected and unrestricted by it. Time came into existence at the beginning. God has equal access to all time, just as He has equal access to all space.

Pros
The upside of divine atemporality is significant. It is supported by the traditional interpretation of several passages of Scripture. It is the traditional position of evangelical believers presently and historically. It augments and is augmented by other traditionally held doctrines. It magnifies God’s transcendence. According to some, it provides a potential solution to the divine-sovereignty/human-responsibility debate.

Cons
The downside is also considerable. It appears to excommunicate God from any responsive activity within His creation. It appears to contradict certain passages that ascribe temporal qualities and actions to God. It appears to be logically incoherent.

*Divine Temporality*

Recently a number of scholars have discarded the doctrine of divine timelessness. Obviously, Process Theologians and Open Theists would fit into this category, but increasingly those who would call themselves traditional theists are raising questions about the viability of an atemporal God. Unfortunately, this onslaught is so recent that no consensus has been reached yet as to exactly how God is temporal. Three major approaches to divine temporality seem to exist: sempitemporality, pantemporality, and omnitemporality. Each has its own strengths
and weaknesses, but they are similar enough that it will be possible to present an integrated analysis after defining each variant.

**Semipetemporality**: Often referred to as sempiternity, this is the opinion that God exists everlasting and experiences succession in the same way that the creation does. Time is characterized as an uncreated and an essential correlate of personal existence. It might be thought of as an attribute of God.

**Pantemoparlarity**: This is the proposal that God experiences time in its fullness but is not controlled or ruled by time. In a sense, time becomes an extension of God’s being and is almost equal to God. Process thought seems to favor this model.

**Omnitemporality**: This is the conviction that God experiences his own divine temporality or that God is only presently in time and the Lord of time. In either case, God is in reality experiencing succession. His succession is not constrained or controlled by the created succession, but is privileged. God has a different vantage point but experiences similar temporal phenomena.

**Pros**

A temporal God fits best with man’s common view of reality and time. It fits with many of the narrative passages that describe God as acting within time, and allows God to be genuinely responsive to the prayers and actions of His people. It fits with the more open view of God that is currently being proposed by some pastors and teachers. It appears to be the default position assumed by most current writers. It emphasizes God’s immanence.

**Cons**

It demotes God from a strongly infinite to a moderately infinite being. It opens the door for a reduced knowledge of the future. It breaks with a long-standing tradition of the church. It has its own incoherencies. It is closely allied with a libertarian view of human freedom. It is awkward in its handling of many reflective

---

48 For, however surprising it might be, one can coherently maintain both that God is timeless (in a significant sense of timeless) and that states of the divine mind are successively ordered. This follows from the fact that God might be located at a time (or times) not temporally related to the present moment (or at any moment so related to the present moment)” (Douglas K. Blount, “Swinburne and the Doctrine of Divine Timelessness,” *Philosophia Christi* 2 [2000]:36-37).

49“Once time begins at the moment of creation, either God becomes temporal in virtue of his relation to the temporal world or else he exists just as timeless with the creation as he does without it. If we choose the first alternative, then, once again God is temporal. But what of the second alternative? Can God remain untouched by the world’s temporality? It seems not. For at the first moment of time, God stands in a new relation in which he did not stand before (since there was no before)” (William Lane Craig, “Timelessness and Omnipotence,” *Philosophia Christi* 2 [2000]:29).

Is It Time to Change? Open Theism and the Divine Timelessness Debate

passages of Scripture.

Divine Bi-temporalness

More recently the proposal has come that God is both temporal and atemporal in a very real sense. While on the surface such a proposal appears patently contradictory, at least two credible writers are now promoting it as both philosophically\(^1\) and theologically\(^2\) sound. Both tout this as the “Lord of Time” view. The strength of this view is that it does not force the exegete to anthropomorphize all the passages of Scripture in which God communicates or refers to Himself in temporal terms. On the other hand, it seems to face the negatives elicited by both atemporal and temporal views of God. There are certainly many reasons for opting for such a solution; the big question is whether or not the reasons are compelling enough to defuse the many inconsistencies associated with the position.

Part Two: Temporal versus Timeless

This problem is best analyzed by looking at the two extremes. Before one deals with composite proposals, it is incumbent that he or she examine the extremes. It is possible, especially when dealing with God, that one extreme or the other may in fact be true. Since the strength of the temporal position seems to be its criticisms of the more traditional atemporal position, this article will arrange the discussion around the standard criticism raised against a timeless deity.

Criticism #1: The Bible Presents God as a Temporal Being

This criticism began with Oscar Cullmann who argues, “[P]rimitive Christianity knows nothing of a timeless God.”\(^3\) Though James Barr effectively moots Cullman’s diachronic analysis,\(^4\) similar assertions continue to proliferate throughout the academic community until it has become the consensus that the Bible

---


\(^4\)Since 1961, a paradigmatic shift has taken place across all evangelical scholarship from diachronic to synchronic linguistics. “The current adaptation to biblical studies of what is being learned about language generally within the dual disciplines of linguistics and semantics is a positive sign of the vitality of biblical scholarship today. The modern debt to James Barr, whose monumental study *The Semantics of Biblical Language* ‘demythologized’ Kittel’ (as one writer has put it), simply cannot be tallied. The veritable flood of recent publications which employ the theories and techniques of modern linguistics in biblical studies is clear indication of the success of Barr’s pace-setting effort” (David Alan Black, “Hebrews 1:1-4: A Study in Discourse Analysis,” *Westminster Theological Journal* 49/1 [1987]:175).
is underdeterminative as to whether God is in or outside time.\[15\] “Since the evidence is not clear, and we seem forced to conclude with James Barr that ‘if such a thing as a Christian doctrine of time has to be developed, the work of discussing it and developing it must belong not to biblical but to philosophical theology.’”\[16\] This may be too extreme a concession since many of the recent arguments by temporalists and open theists contend that a straightforward reading of the text clearly denies an atemporal deity.\[17\]

Before addressing specific texts, a word concerning hermeneutics is necessary. First, the open theists’ arguments are very compelling on the surface. Clearly a perfunctory reading of the text presents God as authentically interacting with humans in a give-and-take, temporal way. But it also presents God as having arms, eyes, a mouth, etc. “At the heart of the theological differences between the Christian eternalist and temporalist is a different estimate of what constitutes such a good reason as not to take some scriptural representation of God literally.”\[18\] Opponents of divine timelessness want the text to be taken literally unless there is just cause to relegate it to anthropomorphism. While this initially seems like a responsible thing to do, it does place a heavy burden on the interpreter’s ability to decide just cause.\[19\]

A more responsible standard may be that one should be completely open as to how a text is accepted. Different genres require different guidelines. John Calvin, who may rightfully be afforded the title, Father of the Modern Exegetical Method,\[20\]

---

\[15\] “A number of things are important here. First, in my view God’s timeless eternity is consistent with the teaching of Scripture. That teaching is, with respect to our question, somewhat underdetermined; that is, the language of Scripture about God and time is not sufficiently precise so as to provide a definitive resolution of the issue one way or the other. So it would be unwise for the eternalist to claim that divine timelessness is entailed by Scripture. But a lack of entailment need not alarm us, because such situations quite commonly arise with the careful, reflective construction of Christian doctrine” (Helm, “Divine Timeless Eternity” 31).

\[16\] Craig, “Timelessness and Omnitemporality” 132.

\[17\] “I conclude that the situation for God’s immutability is like that for God’s timelessness: there are no passages in Scripture which can be cited as supporting the doctrine” (Nicholas Wolterstorff, “Unqualified Divine Temporality,” in Four Views: God and Time 193).


\[19\] “I think it naïve to take Scripture’s representation of God as literally true unless one has good reason not to. By ‘good reason not to’ Nick apparently means, judged by his method, some teaching in Scripture to the opposite effect. . . . Nick concludes that we should take the temporal descriptions of God literally. But this hermeneutic is insensitive to the genre(s) of Scripture” (William Lane Craig, “Response to Nicholas Wolterstorff,” in Four Views: God and Time 222).

certainly would have rejected any principle of interpretation that indiscriminately privileged the literal meaning of any text. Narrative texts in particular are notorious for anthropomorphizing God’s interactions with man. Calvin asserted that all Scripture was written for man to understand and, as such, must be held as an accommodation to his weakness.  

In his article “Hellenistic or Hebrew,” Michael Horton presents a rather balanced approach to this matter. Building on the Creator-creature relationship espoused by Calvin, he suggests that analogy is not a “fall-back strategy” to be used when the interpreter finds something that he does not like. “Rather it is the warp and woof of their covenantal approach, a necessary implication of the creator-creature relationship as they understand it. All of God’s self revelation is analogical, not just some of it. This is why, for instance, Calvin speaks of God’s ‘lisping’ or speaking ‘baby talk’ in his condescending mercy.” Paul Helm concurs:

On the eternalist view, in revealing his will God must accommodate himself to human spatiotemporal conditions by the use of sensory, figurative, anthropomorphic language about himself, particularly by using the language of change. So at the heart of the divine accommodation is a logical point: it is a logically necessary condition of God’s dialogue with his creatures that the divine dialogue partner must recognize that such creatures must act and react in time.  

Second, for theological reasons it would appear more appropriate to allow more reflective materials to weigh in more significantly than narrative. Obviously

---

21 In the Institutes alone this concept occurs at least 20 times. Four times it is used of the human writer himself in accommodating to his audience, three times of the Scriptures, once of the sacraments, but most frequently of God or the Spirit, e.g., 1:11:1; 13:1; 17:13; etc. He follows Irenaeus to understand this as the method of divine revelation through the incarnation: “In this sense, Irenaeus says, that the Father, who is boundless in himself, is bounded in the Son, because he has accommodated himself to our capacity, lest our minds should be swallowed up by the immensity of his glory” (II:6:4). For Calvin as for Augustine, this doctrine becomes the explanation for why there is not more extensive and explicit emphasis on predestination in Scripture: “For it has been shrewdly observed by Augustine, (de Genesis ad Literam, Lib. 5) that we can safely follow Scripture, which walks softly, as with a mother’s step, in accommodation to our weakness,” III:21:4. See also T. H. L. Parker, Calvin’s New Testament Commentaries (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971) 57-59.


23 Paul Helm, “Response to Critics,” in Four Views: God and Time 79.

there is significantly less reflective material available, but how many reflective statements are required to change one’s exegesis of a narrative account. Conceding that many narrative texts exist that, when taken in a straightforward way, seem to imply that God is in time, this article will concern itself with the more reflective literature in an attempt to see if the temporalists have been inappropriately biased in their handling of such texts.25

Genesis 1:1; John 1:1

These two passages, along with other “in the beginning” passages, clearly imply a start to all created things. Only God is present at the ultimate causation of created things. Unless one is willing to argue that time is uncreated, then it follows that time begins at Gen 1:1.

Genesis 1:1, which is neither a subordinate clause nor a summary title, states, “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” According to James Barr, this absolute beginning, taken in conjunction with the expression, “And there was evening and there was morning, one day” (v.5) indicating the first day, may very well be intended to teach that the beginning was not simply the beginning of the physical world but the beginning of time itself, and that, consequently God may be thought of as timeless. This decision is rendered all the more plausible when the Genesis account is read against the backdrop of ancient Egyptian cosmology. Egyptian cosmology includes the idea that creation took place at “the first time” (sp ty). John Currid takes both the Egyptian and the Hebrew cosmologies to involve the notion that the moment of creation is the beginning of time.26

Moreover, if one rejects the idea that time has a beginning, that one is forced to explain an actual infinity. If God existed for an infinite number of moments prior to creation, then creation has not yet occurred. This is part of the Kalam cosmology—

25“Open Theism in practice, if not always in intent, makes ectypal knowledge archetypal and analogical language univocal. God’s being for us is his being in and for himself” (Horton, “Hellenistic or Hebrew?” 337).

26William Lane Craig, Time and Eternity (Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway, 2001) 17. Note also David Braine: “The importance of the ‘in the beginning’ is yet plainer, Genesis leaves no place for a time before God made heaven and earth, and therefore no idea of time as a vessel without beginning containing both God and creation” (“God, Eternity and Time, An Essay in Review of Alan G. Padgett, God, Eternity and the Nature of Time,” Evangelical Quarterly 66 [1994]:339).

Some have tried to avoid this incoherence by postulating a non-
metric, non-divided or an amorphous kind of time prior to the creation. If such a kind
of time exists, it does not seem to be much different from timelessness.29

John 8:58
The grammar of this passage is striking. One would normally expect Jesus
to say, “Before Abraham was, I was.” However, He says, “Before Abraham was,
I am.” The temporalist claims that Jesus is simply invoking the divine name. This
makes little sense in context, however. The Jews were asking Jesus about his age.
They wanted to know how he could know Abraham personally. Christ’s answer
unmistakably places him in a different relationship to time than the onlookers. It was
not the morphology of the statement that caused the crowd to attack Jesus; it was the
meaning. Yes, they recognized this as a claim to deity; not because he had spoken
some sacred syllables, but because he had made a claim that only God could make:
he is outside of time. Jesus
deliberately picked up the present and put it back before Abraham, but still referred to that
distant period in the present tense. Though it was centuries ago, to Christ it was ‘now.’
Even if He were here today, he would still refer to the time before Abraham as the
‘present’ time. Why? Because He is God and with God there is no passage of time, but
all is ‘present.’30

Revelation 13:8
Arthur Custance argues that the “lamb slain from (ajpov)31 the foundation
of the world” is another case of temporal inversion.32 Taken in a straightforward
way, one would expect that the time of execution was simultaneous with creation.

30“Some have claimed that a God who exists in time, without beginning or end, would embody an
‘actual infinitive,’ that is, an infinity of actual events in temporal sequence, past and future. . . . But if an
infinity of days elapsed before creation, then creation never took place. . . . I cannot detect a flaw in this
argument, but I would hesitate to give it doctrinal weight, in the absence of biblical teaching” (Frame,
Doctrine of God 552).

31“The problem is that such a changeless, undifferentiated state looks suspiciously like a state of
timelessness!” (Craig, “Timelessness and Omnitemporality” 159).

32Arthur C. Custance, Time and Eternity (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1977) 40. Leon Morris
concurs, “It is eternity of being, and not simply being which has lasted through several centuries” (The
agrees: “Over against Abraham’s fleeting span of life (see Gen. 25:7) Jesus places his own timeless

33The phrase “from the foundation of the world” occurs ten times in the NT. In these ajpov is used
seven times and prov three. Since the phrases are generally considered to be synonymous and since the
prepositions have considerable semantic range, it would seem that the more dominant idea is “from”
versus “before” creation. This would support a timeless perspective since there was no “before” (a
temporal term) before creation.

34Custance, Time and Eternity 41.
This is almost universally understood to mean that the crucifixion of Christ was planned, but not necessarily accomplished at that point. That, however, understands the text analogously, which is exactly what the temporalist object to in narrative passages. An atemporalist may not wish to understand this passage in a literal way but he has no problem in doing so. A temporalist must understand it metaphorically.

2 Peter 3:8; Psalm 90:4

In both of these passages the literal meaning is clearly that time has no significance for God. Second Peter 3:8 (“one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day”) cannot mean that time passes slower or faster, because both extremes are avowed. “The general truth underlying both is that the measures of time are relative to man; to the Eternal, who is omnipresent in time as in space, all times are equally near.” 33 Psalm 90:4 (“For a thousand years in thy sight are but as yesterday when it is past, and as a watch in the night”) seems even clearer in this respect.

In verse four, Moses again focuses on God’s timelessness. His point is that time has no meaning with God. To illustrate that point rather graphically, he says, For a thousand years in thy sight are but as yesterday when it is past. What is a thousand years in God’s sight? Moses uses two phrases to describe what a thousand years is in God’s sight. The first phrase is, but as yesterday when it is past. In other words, a thousand years with God is like only a night in the life of man. It is not even a full 24-hour day, only a 12-hour night. The first comparison he makes, then, is that a thousand years—a very long period from man’s perspective—is to God merely about 12 hours. Moses then points out that 12 hours is even a bit too long, and the second phrase he uses to make his point is, as a watch in the night. In Moses’ time, the night was divided into three watches; in comparison to God’s eternity, man’s life is only one watch out of three, only a part of the night. Thus, the Psalmist reduces the thousand years of God to only four hours of human life. What is a thousand years with God? Merely four hours of human life! However, Moses goes further, emphasizing that this is not four hours of the day, but four hours of the night. It is four hours of the night of which the sleeper takes no reckoning, four hours that have vanished upon the sleeper’s awakening. This is the time that people sleep, and people do not reckon time while they are sleeping. While we are fast asleep, there is, in fact, no awareness of the passing of minutes and hours. 34

Jude 25; Titus 1:2; 2 Timothy 1:9

The Jude passage reads, “to the only God our Saviour, through Jesus Christ


34Arnold Fruchtenbaum, “Psalm 90: An Exposition,” Chafer Theological Seminary Journal 4 (1998):3-4. Note also Jack Deere: “It is futile to argue for a symbolic meaning of ἐκ πάθει in Revelation 20:4–6 on the basis of Psalm 90:4 or 2 Peter 3:8, for the latter are not saying that a thousand years are a day. Rather they point to God’s transcendence in respect to time” (“Premillennialism in Revelation 20:4-6,” Bibliotheca Sacra 135 [1978]:70).
our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion and power, before all time, and now, and for evermore.” If there was a “before all time” (pro; panto; τοῦ αἰώνο) and if God is without beginning, then God must have existed prior to time and therefore be outside of time. Titus 1:2 (“in hope of eternal life, which God, who cannot lie, promised before times eternal”) and 2 Tim 1:9 (“but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before times eternal”) make similar statements. Second Timothy is particularly poignant. It reads literally “before age-long time” (pro; εἰρηνών αἰώνων). Craig comments on the Jude passage: “The passage contemplates an everlasting future duration, but affirms a beginning to past time and implies God’s existence, using an almost inevitable façon de parler, ‘before’ time began.”

Ecclesiastes 3:15-16

From the perspective of at least one writer, Ecclesiastes is the only philosophically reflective writing in the Bible. These verses (“I know that, whatsoever God doeth, it shall be for ever: nothing can be put to it, nor anything taken from it; and God hath done it, that men should fear before him. That which is hath been long ago; and that which is to be hath long ago been: and God seeketh again that which is passed away”), while somewhat enigmatic, clearly affirm that God has a different relationship to time than do mere mortals. This cannot refer to the supposed circularity of human history; the passage clearly has to do with the purposes and plans of God. A straightforward reading of the passage seems to indicate that God created not just the material universe but history itself. These verses claim that in the past the future already existed for God.

Criticism #2: The Modern Consensus Is that God Is a Temporal Being

This seems to be a fact conceded by almost all philosophers of religion. But this is not as powerful an argument when taken in a broader context. It is also almost universally admitted that the traditional position of the church is atemporality (Duns Scotus and William of Ockham are notable exceptions). Were one to consider the church in a more pantemoral way, temporalism appears to be more of a temporal

---

35Craig, Time and Eternity 19.

36Referring to 3:1-15, Walter C. Kaiser writes, “For all the affairs of life, argues Qoheleth, God has set a time. The length of time and the particular events along that time band are each ordained in the providence of God” (Ecclesiastes: Total Life [Chicago: Moody, 1979] 62).

37“From Augustine through Aquinas, the position held overwhelmingly by philosophers was that God is atemporal. God, on this view, is outside time. Most philosophers today disagree. While affirming that God is eternal, they understand his eternality as his being temporally everlasting” (Gregory E. Ganssle, “Introduction: Thinking about God and Time,” in God and Time: Essays on the Divine Nature 3).
anomaly than a consensus. Furthermore, it is only a consensus among a particular category of writers. Theologians who do analytical philosophy clearly favor temporality and are doing the majority of the writing on the subject. Asserting that the biblical evidence is indeterminative or underdeterminative, modern philosophical theology has tirelessly generated analysis and opinions on the subject.

Those who are writing from a more systematic vantage are much different. Millard Erickson, Charles Ryrie, Wayne Grudem, Carl F. H. Henry, C. S. Lewis, and Louis Sperry Chafer all affirm atemporality. The lone voice for a fully temporal position is John Feinberg.

It would also appear that most of those who are working from a more philosophical vantage also have a strong commitment to human libertarian freedom. The inherent nature of the discipline itself necessitates a predilection to the autonomy of human reason. Such predilections are usually accompanied by a strong view of human freedom. John Frame in a sense recognizes this truth. “It seems to me that once we deny the existence of libertarian human freedom, all the relevant considerations favor atemporality, and none favor temporality.” In fact, William Hasker demands that any view of divine atemporality must have as one of its two central purposes to “provide a solution to the problem of freewill and foreknowledge.” This close association between libertarian freewill and divine temporality should not a priori diminish the arguments for divine temporality; however, this is important in light of temporalists’ attempts to discredit atemporality by associating it with Platonic philosophy as discussed in the next subsection.

Criticism #3: Atemporality Is a Blatant Infiltration of Greek Philosophy into Christian Theology

Of late, it seems to be somewhat in vogue to accuse the early church of wholesale surrender to Platonic thought. It also seems that most atemporalists meekly accept such claims as if they are essentially accurate. Undoubtedly, ancient Greek philosophy exerted a significant influence on the church fathers. Augustine

---

38“The God of Christian Orthodoxy is timelessly eternal as mainstream theologians like Augustine, Anselm, Aquinas, the Protestant Reformers, and, in fact, most Christian theologians affirm” (Henry, God, Revelation and Authority 239).

39“I am not sure that this is a valid protasis, but it is certainly an almost universally accepted one.

40Frame, Doctrine of God 557.


42“The basic problem that I had to deal with here is the fact that the classical model of Christian theism, shaped so decisively by Augustine under the influence of Pagan philosophy located the biblical picture of a dynamic personal God in the context of a way of thinking about God that placed high value on the deity’s being timeless, changeless, passionless, unmoved and unmovable” (Clark H. Pinnock, “From Augustine to Arminius: A Pilgrimage in Theology,” in The Grace of God and The Will of Man, ed. Clark H. Pinnock [Minneapolis: Bethany House, 1989] 23).
in particular was well versed in Neo-Platonic thought. This should not however in
and of itself invalidate his conclusions.

It may be that the conceptual apparatus of eternalism owes much to the language of Neo-
Platonism; it is undoubtedly true that the classical formulas of classical trinitarianism owe
much to the language of Greek metaphysics. But though perhaps Neo-Platonism
influenced the way eternalism is formulated and expressed, it would be hasty to suppose
that the use of such language signals a takeover of biblical ideas by pagan ideas. The
relevant question is, does the use of such ideas help us to summarize and epitomize the
thought of the biblical writers in ways that, because of their situation, they were not able
to do themselves. And do such formulations help us rule out certain types of inferences
about God that are unscriptural. It is the claim of many eternalists that eternalism is a
better approach to the relevant scriptural data than any of its rivals and that it prevents us
from making certain types of false inferences about God.43

Everyone who thinks, thinks according to some “philosophic” format. Analytical philosophy is just as much a philosophy as was Platonism or Neo-
Platonism. How does one know the modern way is a better way to think? He does
not. In order for this charge to stand, two facts must be established. First, it must be
demonstrated that the influence of Greek thought in the formulation of divine atemporality is inherently detrimental to constructing proper theology.

The modern theological contrast of Greek philosophical abstractions with concrete
biblical truths is, however, often prejudiced by an encounter theory of truth. While critics
deplore Aristotle’s view of time as Greek abstraction they seem to ignore his definition
of time as the numerical aspect of motion. One may of course call this abstraction, but
so is all science; so, for that matter, is justification by faith, if one’s philosophy admits
of any abstraction. The fact is Plato and Aristotle had no abstract ideas.44

Secondly, it must similarly be established that present formulations for
divine temporality are not themselves the result of man’s philosophy and merely the
intrusion of present biases into what may be sound doctrine.45 Even if one were
willing to call the first charge a draw, a significant number of evangelicals would not

---

43Helm, “Divine Timeless Eternity” 32-33. Nicholas Wolterstorff, himself a significant, if not the
most significant, temporalist agrees, “It is not infrequently said, by those who oppose the doctrine of
God’s timelessness, that in embracing the doctrine the church fathers were succumbing to the power of
Greek philosophical thought and that later theologians, on account of the prestige of tradition, then
followed in the footsteps of their predecessors. From this claim I insist on disassociating myself, and that
for a number of reasons. For one thing, not everything the Greek philosophers said was false; . . . more
importantly, the objection distorts what happened in the formation of Christian theology” (Wolterstorff,
“Unqualified Divine Temporality” 211-12).

44Henry, God, Revelation and Authority 251.

45Pinnock openly espouses modern thinking to that of the ancient Greeks in respect to theism at
least. “Curiously in this respect at least modern culture, which values history so much, is closer to the
biblical view than classical theism” (Pinnock, “From Augustine to Arminius” 24).
be open to accept the strong sense of libertarian freedom\footnote{What then do philosophers and theologians mean by the concept of a libertarian view of freedom. Simply stated, the most basic sense of this view is that a person’s act is free, if it is not causally determined. For libertarians this does not mean that our acts are random or arbitrary. Reasons and causes play upon the will as one chooses, but none of them is sufficient to incline the will decisively in one direction or the other” (Stephen J. Wellum, “Divine Sovereignty-Omniscience, Inerrancy, and Open Theism: An Evaluation,” Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society 45 [2002]:259).} that many temporalists are promoting.\footnote{John Frame gives a strong critique of a libertarian view of human freedom in No Other God (Phillipsburg, N.J.: P & R, 2001) 122-31.} If Open Theism and its definition of human freedom are to survive as a legitimate option for evangelicals, then it is clear that atemporality must go. There does not seem to be any such compelling philosophical agenda urging classical theists to defend divine timelessness. It, therefore, seems palpable that the charge of ulterior motives is much more germane to the contemporary temporalist camp.

Criticism #4: The Concept of a Timeless God is Incoherent

How much weight ought to be afforded incoherence as a criticism is not clear. Carl Henry would certainly consider it significant. Cornelius Van Til would not. In either case, out of respect for those who do weight these formulations more heavily, it seems prudent to give careful consideration to such objections. Though multiple variations for each argument exist, this article will condense the types of objections into five categories: arguments concerning consistency with other attributes, arguments concerning simultaneity, arguments concerning personhood, arguments concerning the incarnation, and arguments concerning the nature of time.

Arguments Concerning Consistency with Other Attributes

This is sometimes referred to as the indexical argument. “A number of different authors have offered arguments which attempt to show that the assumption of God’s timelessness is inconsistent with certain other truths about God which are central to Christian theism.” In their simplest forms such arguments assert that if God is timeless, he cannot be omniscient for there are certain common facts that God’s creatures would know, but God could not. It is argued that an atemporal God cannot know what time it is. God could know for example that it is sunny in Pottersville, New York, at 7 a.m. on August 8th, but he could not know that it is sunny now. All time is equally present for God; therefore, He cannot experience moment-by-moment knowledge. He cannot know now; therefore he cannot know the time. The argument is generally formulated somewhat like this.

1. There are essentially tensed truths (e.g., those expressed by sentences containing the temporal indexical “now”).
2. A timeless being cannot know essentially tensed truths.

\footnote{DeWeese, “Timeless God, Tenseless Time” 54.}
3. Therefore, if God is timeless, there are truths he cannot know.\footnote{Ibid.}

These arguments seem to be more about the way one formulates a truth statement than about knowledge itself. Nelson Pike, himself a temporalist, concludes his discussion of this matter: “So far as I can determine, all that has been established is that there are certain forms of words that a timeless individual could not use when formulating or reporting on his knowledge.”\footnote{Nelson Pike, \textit{God and Timelessness} (New York: Schocken Books, 1970; reprint, Eugene, Ore.: Wipf and Stock, 2002) 95.} Paul Helm notes that making God temporal only trades one problem of omniscience for another. “The temporalist is in a parallel position with respect to the issue. For if God is in time, then there are also types of propositions that such a temporal God cannot know, propositions that express knowledge of the universe from the perspective of a timeless eternity.”\footnote{Helm, “Divine Timeless Eternity,” in \textit{Four Views: God and Time} 41. He also writes, “What I have shown is that the claim that God exists in timeless eternity enables one to trade off one particular mode of divine knowledge, a mode which requires the use of temporal indexical expressions, for an enlargement of the range of God’s knowledge, a range which encompasses God’s knowledge of the future, that which is future to those who are in time. And as trading away a particular mode of knowledge does not decrease God’s knowledge in any material respect, and enlarging the range of God’s knowledge increases it, and as God is by definition omniscient, the trade-off is worth making” (\textit{Eternal God: A Study of God Without Time} [New York: Oxford University, 1988] 94).}

A second argument has to do with present dissatisfaction with the doctrines of impassibility and simplicity. In some senses this is a guilt-by-association argument but in other ways it raises some real issues. How can a timeless God be an interactive and responsive God? Care needs to be taken here. Many of the objections to these doctrines are raised against the present formulations as opposed to the original constructs. God is clearly not temporally-specific responsive. He answers prayers before they are asked (Isa 65:24). One’s problem with these attributes is inversely proportional to one’s favor toward sovereignty. Open Theism requires a temporally responsive God; Reformed theism does not.

On the other hand, some theological truths seem to require a timeless God. The atonement is such an example. Though considerable discussion pertains to the number of people for whom Christ died, little question exists regarding the quality of the penalty that was paid. Clearly Jesus paid at least the saints’ sin debt in full. Since the wages of sin is eternal death, how could Jesus pay an eternal penalty in three hours or three days? The most plausible answer is that He is a timeless being.\footnote{See Custance, \textit{Time and Eternity} 48-49. His argument is slightly different, but moves in the same direction.}

For many, the doctrine of aseity is one of the strongest arguments favoring
atemporality. If God is to possess illimitable life, then that life must be possessed in its fullness. Man thinks one thought at a time. He enjoys one pleasure at a time. The argument is that “no being that experiences life sequentially can have the fullest life possible.”

David Braine comments, “Yet more crucial: for God’s life to be possessed simul is not for it to be possessed in one instant of mundane time as this is measured by continual regular motions, but for it to be possessed in one act. This is the significance of Aquinas’ insistence that the ‘now’ of eternity is not the ‘now’ of time.”

Arguments Concerning Simultaneity

Feinberg explains the objection simply and effectively: “If for an atemporal God every moment is simultaneously (to use Boethius’s terminology) present to him, then by logical extension, every temporal moment must be simultaneous with every other temporal moment. Of course this is absurd.” At first glance this appears to be a very powerful argument. However, Paul Helm points out that simultaneous is a temporal term and God is not temporal. Stump and Kretzmann argue for a kind of

---

53In studying God we notice that whatever God is, he is to the greatest possible degree. He knows everything that is possible to know. He can do everything that is possible to do. He is maximally merciful. This ‘maximal property idea’ can be applied to the nature of God’s life. God is a living being... If whatever is true of him is true to the greatest possible degree, then his life is the fullest life possible... Some philosophers argue that this fact about God’s life requires that he be atemporal. No being that experiences its life sequentially can have the fullest possible” (Ganssle, “Introduction” 22).

54David Braine comments, “Yet more crucial: for God’s life to be possessed simul is not for it to be possessed in one instant of mundane time as this is measured by continual regular motions, but for it to be possessed in one act. This is the significance of Aquinas’ insistence that the ‘now’ of eternity is not the ‘now’ of time.”

55Arguments Concerning Simultaneity

Feinberg explains the objection simply and effectively: “If for an atemporal God every moment is simultaneously (to use Boethius’s terminology) present to him, then by logical extension, every temporal moment must be simultaneous with every other temporal moment. Of course this is absurd.” At first glance this appears to be a very powerful argument. However, Paul Helm points out that simultaneous is a temporal term and God is not temporal. Stump and Kretzmann argue for a kind of

56John S. Feinberg, No One Like Him (Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway, 2001) 407. Feinberg argues for a pure temporal position. He gives his reasons on pages 428-30. Unfortunately he seems to be confused as to the atemporalist position and argues against a hetero-temporal or idio-temporal God. He seems so caught up in the arguments presented by Stump and Kretzmann that he assumes that atemporalists are arguing for a different form of duration not a different mode altogether. Because he requires some form of sequence, even in God, he gravitates toward those atemporalist views which propound an atemporal duration. Even that phrase is self-contradictory. As long as one is required to “make sense” (428) of the notion of atemporal eternity as a presupposition to accepting atemporality, it is very unlikely that he will do so.

57“God knows his creatures. This knowledge is time-free; it is not, for example, foreknowledge, or memory, nor is it contemporaneous knowledge. It is knowledge about which it makes no sense to ask how long the knower has known, or when he came to know. Thus to attempt to raise, in a strict and philosophical manner, questions about simultaneity and non-simultaneity of the divine will and human
Is It Time to Change? Open Theism and the Divine Timelessness Debate 61

eternal simultaneity (ET simultaneity), but their efforts seem to imply a different kind of temporality for God as opposed to atemporality. These defenses are usually countered by suggesting that such a being becomes so other that he could not possibly interact with his creation.

That God’s perspective is both totally transcendent and totally immanent can be affirmed by two convincing examples. Both of these depend on developing spatial arguments that parallel and contradict the logic of the temporal arguments. Feinberg rejects all such argumentation, claiming an unwarranted analogy between time and space. He misunderstands Helm at this point. Time and space do not need to be analogous, only the aspects of time and space that relate to the specific form of the argument. “If we come to this conclusion on the basis of arguments about space then there is no good reason to withhold the conclusion that God is outside time, since the arguments that establish one are strictly parallel to the arguments that establish the other.”

For example, humans and mice are not inherently analogous; however, one may construct some arguments in which they do appear to be analogous. Researchers do experiments on mice and then extrapolate to humans. Therefore, some analogies can be drawn between the two. To reject the spatiality arguments categorically based on the differences between space and time is a generalization fallacy. Apart from this general objection, no one has demonstrated a flaw in the actual argument as used by Helm.

It is generally assumed or stated that all temporal beings must have temporal location and temporal extension. The same is true of all beings that exist in space. They have location and occupy space (extension). Any being that does not occupy space cannot affect space. By extension, a being that is not in time (temporal extension) cannot interact with beings that are in time. This is an answer to the “otherness” problem. Angels occupy no space but they affect space. They can produce spatial effects such as sound. They have location without extension.

The second answer has to do with the supposed simultaneity problem. God is omnipresent. God and Marshall Wicks are in the same place. God and George Bush are in the same place. Therefore, Marshall and George Bush are in the same place and that is clearly absurd. It is both true and absurd because God does not occupy space in the same way that we occupy space, or we would be pantheists.

will (for example) is to be guilty of a category mistake. It is like asking for the physical dimensions of a thought” (Helm, Eternal God 37).


“It ought to be stressed that in these arguments it has not been assumed, nor argued, that space and time are in all respects analogous, but that they are analogous in those respects that are relevant for the propounding of the arguments. The exact respect in which time can be regarded as similar to space is a matter of controversy into which there is no need to venture” (ibid., 46).

Helm, Eternal God 55 (emphasis added).
Spatially, he is both location-less and extension-less. He is aspatial. Omnipresence and immensity are human attempts to define a being who is outside of space. That He is outside of space does not keep Him from acting and interacting in space. Congruently, that He is atemporal does not keep him from acting and interacting in time. God clearly has a different mode of spatial and temporal interaction from humans, but that it is different does not mean it is impossible. Henry’s words are sobering in this respect:

>[N]o analysis of finite beings, however thorough, will securely support a ladder that reaches to the Infinite, and . . . to reject a demarcation between the infinite and the finite, even when such rejection seeks to preserve the finite within the life cycle of the Infinite, actually sacrifices the living God of the Bible. Valid knowledge of infinite being is possible only on an alternative model of the relationship between God and the universe.\(^61\)

Arguments Concerning Personhood

This is the one argument that convinced Nelson Pike to embrace temporality. The argument is simple: a timeless person could not carry out many of the functions that are necessary to entail personhood.

A timeless being could not deliberate, anticipate, or remember. It could not speak or write a letter, nor could it produce sounds or written words on a piece of paper. It could not smile, grimace or weep. Further a timeless person could not be affected or prompted by another. It could not respond to needs, overtures, delights or antagonisms of human beings.\(^62\)

One might simply point out that there are human people who do not qualify by this definition. Unborn infants by this definition would not qualify. There are severely mentally handicapped persons who are born and live for significant amounts of time who do not exercise any of these functions. Are they not people?

Even if one concedes that such beings qualify as persons by association with the rest of the race, one can still question this definition of personhood. The Bible is very clear that the difference between man and the animals is that man alone was created in the image of God. God exercises the essential attributes of personality on a much higher level than man does. Man reflects God not the other way around. Memory is needed because man forgets; God does not. Anticipation is necessary because man does not know the future; God does. Deliberation is needed because man does not intuitively know the right or the best course of action; God does. God clearly interacts with man but does so in a different mode than men interact with one another.

Any view of God must allow Him to respond to multiple billions of people simultaneously. To think that he univocally responds to particular persons is

\(^{61}\)Henry, God, Revelation and Authority 226.

\(^{62}\)Pike, God and Timelessness 128.
Is It Time to Change? Open Theism and the Divine Timelessness Debate

It completely absurd for a temporal God. At any given moment God is responding to the actions and thoughts and perhaps the dreams of six billion people. Does he require six billion personality centers to respond presently and appropriately to each individual? To require God to be limited by the normal characteristics of human personhood is theological folly. On the other hand, could a timeless God respond univocally to six billion people simultaneously (in a non-temporal way)? That seems very plausible. Is not an atemporal God who deals with his people personally and undividedly superior to a temporal God who is dividing his attention among the mass of humanity? Which version of God is more personal and responsive?

Additionally, if God is responding temporally, it follows that he must be simultaneously experiencing all of his emotions across their entire spectrum at any given time. Because the six billion inhabitants of planet earth are at any given time exhibiting all imaginable behaviors, God feels great joy, little joy, mild disappointment, intense disappointment, righteous indignation, extreme wrath, and everything in between—all at the same time. There can be no other conclusion if God is temporal. This does not sound at all like the personal God of the Bible.

Arguments Concerning the Incarnation

"Neo-Protestant theologians now routinely contend that the traditional evangelical view of divine timelessness not only nullifies significant divine human relationships but also reduces the incarnational ministry of Christ to a docetic sham activity." There is no way that a few paragraphs in this article can begin to deal with such an important and variegated subject. The question of the relationship between the two natures is so nuanced that one would need to provide a potential answer for each variant. How one configures the kinesis is also significant. Realizing that the following presentation may not be applicable to all possible positions regarding the incarnation, it is presented as a general answer with a significantly wide application.

The argument against atemporality would go something like this.

1. Jesus was the bearer of temporal properties.
2. No bearer of temporal properties is atemporal.
3. Jesus Christ = God the Son (a divine person).
4. God the Son is not atemporal.

The answer to this argument is simply to apply this reasoning to other human characteristics exhibited by Jesus. Jesus was located in space; does this preclude God from being spaceless? Jesus did not know the hour of His return; does this preclude God from that knowledge? These quandaries are generally settled by

---

43Henry, God, Revelation and Authority 253.
referring to the kenosis or the two natures of Christ. “So, just as one can employ the two-minds view to defeat the claim that the Son’s being incarnate need not preclude his being omniscient (or omnipotent, or omnipresent), one can also employ it to defend the claim that his being incarnate need not preclude his being timeless.”

Note the following argument in consort with the argument above.

1. Jesus was the bearer of physical properties.
2. No bearer of temporal properties is incorporeal.
3. Jesus Christ = God the Son (a divine person).
4. God the Son is not incorporeal.

Arguments Concerning the Nature of Time

Alan Padgett, who will be discussed a bit later in the article, writes, “The main objection I have to the timeless model is simply stated: it is only true if the stasis theory of time is true. Since the stasis theory of time is false, we should reject the timeless view because we should whenever possible bring coherence to theology.” This appears to be a methodological error more than a logical one. One should base his or her view of time on the nature of God and not vice versa. Even the dynamic view of time can be cited in this respect.

Alan also makes remarks that the stasis theories of time rely too heavily on abstractions, human creations. But I doubt that metaphysics has quite the power that Alan supposes. The fact that Alan Prior’s strongly held views about human freedom and the openness of the future (expressed for example in his Papers on Time and Tense [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967]) is one piece of evidence to suggest that it is not the logic that drives the metaphysics but the other way around. There is certainly no one-way street from logic to metaphysics.

Part Three: Composites

This part of the article will deal with a specific form of composite: those that maintain temporality and atemporality simultaneously. Positions such as omnitemporality as defined by William Craig may be designated as a composite, but only in a sequential sense. Others, such as Stump and Kretzmann, offer a parallel but still atemporal alternative. The idea of a timeless duration seems patently contradictory and really solves very little. Three recent works have claimed to offer a mediating position in which God is atemporal and temporal at the same time.

---


66Padgett, “Eternity as Relative Timelessness” 95.

Erickson, believing that the argument is at an impasse, suggests a “synthetic position.”

His basic contention is that God is “ontologically atemporal/aspatial but actively or influentially present within the space-time universe.” He further states, “[T]his suggestion will meet with protests from both temporalists and atemporalists, for the discussion has been contested in a sort of ‘winner-take-all’ atmosphere.”

No matter how one reads it, his position does not seem to differ at all from what atemporalists have consistently stated. No conservative atemporalist would deny that God is actively and influentially present in space and time. This appears to be no synthesis at all.

John Frame and Alan Padgett: The Lord of Time

There are very significant differences in the position held by these two men, but they both use the idea that God is the Lord of time as the motif to unfold God’s relationship to time. Padgett writes,

The fact that God is Lord of Time I have understood to mean that he has a plan or design for human history, and nothing takes place outside his will; that he is not limited or changed in any fundamental way by the passage of time and that he is a necessary being (a se and metaphysically necessary) who lives for ever and ever.

In spite of his attempts to create a new kind of “time” for God, he appears to hold to a form of divine temporality.

John Frame’s position differs significantly.

But God’s temporal immanence does not contradict his lordship over time or the exhaustiveness of his decree. These temporal categories are merely aspects of God’s general transcendence and immanence as the Lord. The give-and-take between God and the creation requires, not a reduced, but an enhanced view of his sovereignty. God is the Lord in time as well as above time.

So God is temporal after all, but not merely temporal. He really exists in time, but

---

49 Ibid., 139.
50 Ibid.
51 Padgett, God, Eternity, and the Nature of Time 125.
52 “I fail to see that Alan Padgett’s ‘relative timelessness’ proposal is really a third model of the relation of God to time. It appears to me definitely to be a variant on the everlastingness view. It is, in fact, fully compatible with my own articulation and defense of the everlastingness view. In some respects it goes beyond my own commitments; at no point does it go against them” (Nicholas Wolterstorff, “Response to Alan G. Padgett,” in Four Views: God and Time 120).
he also transcends time in such a way as to exist outside it. He is both inside and outside the temporal box—a box that can neither confine him nor keep him out. This is the model that does most justice to the biblical data.73

The immediate question that arises is how this differs from the classical definition of timelessness. His purpose is clearly to rid himself of the simple, impassible God of Thomistic theism. But is there really any concession in his position? How is God affected, influenced, or changed by His exposure to time? Frame allows no change in the decrees of God. He does not allow that God’s knowledge of events is any more vivid.74 He does not allow God to experience temporal change.75 It is purely relational. If God’s atemporal knowing is no different from His temporal knowing, what purpose does Frame have for creating this somewhat impotent caveat? It certainly sounds good, but does it generate any significant advantages for the theologian? This would be very nice if God were only dealing with one person on the time spectrum, but Frame now has Him in a truly temporal give-and-take relationship with billions of people simultaneously.

Frame’s position has an inherent verbal contradiction. Such contradictions or antinomies do occur in theology. The trinity can be stated as an antonym. God is only one and God is three. That He is three in a different sense than He is one is commonly recognized. Now to say that God is temporal and atemporal at the same time is contradictory unless he is temporal in a different way than he is atemporal. Frame demonstrates no difference in the two. Atemporalists do not deny that God is omnitemporal. They deny that He experiences any passage of time. They do not deny that He can manifest Himself temporally. He is just not limited by that manifestation. Atemporalists argue that God has the same relationship to time that He has to space. Frame’s difference with atemporalist appears to be only semantic. No real consequence or limitation is placed on God by his position. The God of the atemporalist is no different from Frame’s God except in verbiage.

Ganssle make this argument very effectively. Because Frame holds to immutable vividness and an immutable future, he would hold that God’s knowledge is direct.76 “If God’s experience of the temporal now does not involve a difference in his cognitive experience from moment to moment, it must be grounded in some other difference.”77 There appears to be no other difference. If there is no difference, such

---

73 Frame, *Doctrine of God* 559.
74 “An atemporal being would see all events equally vividly. Since God can do this, his experience of time, in still another sense, is very different from ours. Indeed, his relationship to time is quite unique” (Frame, *No Other God* 155).
75 “His unchangeability gives him an experience of time that is different from ours” (ibid., 154).
76 He states as much in *The Doctrine of God* (483). “It should be obvious that the extent of God’s knowledge is universal. God controls the whole course of nature and history.”
direct knowledge entails atemporality. If God is equally aware of all that He knows, His direct knowledge of a present event is the same as his knowledge of a past event. But His past knowledge on a temporal model is indirect. Direct knowledge cannot span time. We have no direct knowledge of the future, but God does. Why? Because we are temporal and God is not. Direct knowledge is obviously a superior form of knowing, but it cannot be a temporal form of knowing. “If it cannot, God can know by direct awareness only those facts which persist simultaneous with his act of knowing. If God knows every fact by direct awareness, then, He must be atemporal.”

No temporalist would consider Frame’s position to make concessions in any way to their beliefs.

Conclusion

One point is all too seldom recognized: when professional philosophers and systematic theologians project modern theories that eliminate timelessness from the nature of God they do more than simply reconstruct a particular perfection of the biblical God, what they do is substitute a deity very different from the God of orthodox theism.

If we understand eternity as mere everlastingness, then it seems that we are in danger of reducing Him who is worshipped to the level of the creature.

At least some theologians and philosophers think that this discussion about atemporality is very important. Both Process Theology and Open Theism realize that their theories cannot prevail if this doctrine is entailed by theism. There is little question that the assault has begun in earnest.

Based on the research and discussion developed in this article several conclusions seem appropriate.

1. Time as it exists today cannot predate the creation.
2. Scripture presents a stronger case for atemporality than often admitted.
3. Tradition almost univocally supports atemporality.
4. Modern systematic theologians almost univocally support atemporality.
5. Apart from questionable presuppositions (libertarian freedom, dynamic view of time, arbitrary rejection of spacelessness analogies, etc.) there are no legitimate objections to timelessness.
6. There is really no downside to the atemporal position.

The real question before the church today is not whether she is going to tweak certain attributes of God but whether she is willing to revamp classical theism

---

7Ibid., 167.
8Henry, God, Revelation and Authority 253.
9Braine, “God, Eternity and Time” 337.
totally. Theologians and philosophers have chipped away at the edifice slowly but surely over the last two centuries. Simplicity and impassibility are receiving CPR. Immutability has been sequestered and the vultures are circling. Omniscience has been given a court date. And divine timelessness appears friendless, harried, fearful, and guilty by association.

This is not one of the popular attributes. It has not received the press that immutability or omniscience have. Most believers would probably wonder if it were even necessary. But it is pivotal. There is no such thing as partial timelessness. God either is or He is not. If He is, then all the arguments of open theist's are for naught. Timelessness poses no threat to any of the traditional teachings of theism. It only threatens the current novelties, Process Theology and Open Theism. This is not a bad place to take a stand. It is certainly a watershed. No strongly compelling or even moderately compelling reason prevails to break with those who have gone before. This writer concludes that the doctrine of eternity ought to be reaffirmed and the implication of that reaffirmation applied to interdependent attributes. It is incumbent upon those who affirm atemporality to reconsider recent adjustments to immutability and perhaps impassibility as well. If God is a timeless God, and it certainly appears that He is, then Open Theism is clearly an unorthodox version of theism and should be soundly rejected.
In disputes about the age of the earth, young-earth creationists contend for a literal six-day creation 6,000–10,000 years ago and a global flood, but old-earth creationists advocate theistic evolution or progressive creation over millions of years and, many times, a local flood. Jesus understood the OT to be historically accurate in its description of historical events, including His teaching on the age of the earth. Specifically, in three “Jesus AGE verses,” He demonstrated His young earth viewpoint in Mark 10:6, Mark 13:19-20, and Luke 11:50-51. When analyzed carefully, “from the beginning of creation” in Mark 10:6 refers to the beginning of the whole creation, not just the creation of the first marriage on day 6 of Genesis 1:27-30. In Mark 13:19, “since the beginning of creation which God created” refers not to the beginning of the human race but to the beginning of the whole creation, starting in Gen 1:1. Luke 11:50-51 focuses on “since the foundation of the world” and refers to the whole creation week of Genesis 1, not just a portion of it. A number of young-earth creationists have referred to these verses to prove that Jesus was a young-earth advocate, but old-earth defenders have usually ignored them. A survey of commentaries on Genesis, systematic theology texts, popular-level books, and scholarly works demonstrates this trend. Nothing in the Gospels supports the idea that Jesus viewed man as being created long ages after the beginning of creation.

* * * * *

Introduction

For several decades, a growing controversy within the church about the age of the earth has existed. Young-earth creationists have argued for a literal six-day
creation 6,000–10,000 years ago and a global flood. In opposition, various kinds of old-earth creationists have advocated theistic evolution or progressive creationism over millions of years, with many of them also arguing for a local flood at the time of Noah. The old-earth views have dominated the church since the early nineteenth century, whereas the young-earth view was almost the universal belief of the church in the first eighteen centuries.

What does Jesus have to say about the age of the earth? That surely should be important to all Christians and a determining factor in their belief on the subject. For Jesus, the Word of God was the bread of life, without which no man could live (Matt 4:4). He taught that those who hear His words and act upon them are like a wise man who built his house on a solid rock (Matt 7:24-27). As Ravi Zacharias correctly observes in his book against atheism, “Jesus claimed to be ‘the truth.’ Let us test His claims and teachings. If they are true, what He says matters more than anything else in life.” About Jesus, the Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy similarly declares, “His words were crucially important; for He was God, He spoke from the Father, and His words will judge all men at the last day.” The ICBI scholars added, “[T]he authority of Christ and that of Scripture are one,” and “[A]s He bowed to His Father’s instruction given in His Bible (our Old Testament), so He requires His disciples to do.” Following the teaching and example of the Lord Jesus Christ, every Christian should conform his beliefs, teachings, and behavior to the inspired, inerrant, authoritative Word of God.

Many Christians, even Christian scholars, seem to be unaware that Jesus taught about the age of the earth. Before a discussion of those teachings, a brief examination of what Jesus said about Scripture generally and Genesis 1–11 in particular will shed light on how He interpreted the early chapters of the Bible. Next, an examination of a number of the writings of young-earth and old-earth scholars to see how they deal with the teachings of Jesus on the subject will show clearly that Jesus was a young-earth creationist and that if anyone calls Him Lord, he should

---


2Old-earth creationists (including theistic evolutionists) accept the secular estimate of the age of the universe (about 15 billion years) and of the earth (about 4.5 billion years).


follow Him, rather than the contemporary scientific majority, many of whom are not believers.

**Jesus’ View of Scripture**

In John 10:34-35 Jesus defended His claim to deity by quoting from Ps 82:6 and then asserting that “Scripture cannot be broken.” That is, the Bible is reliable and truthful. The Scriptures cannot be contradicted. In Luke 24:25-27 Jesus rebuked His disciples for not believing all that the prophets have spoken (which He equates with “all the Scriptures”). So, in Jesus’ view, all Scripture is trustworthy and should be believed.

Another way that Jesus revealed His complete trust in the Scriptures was by treating as historical fact the accounts in the OT which most contemporary people think are unbelievable mythology. Those historical accounts include Adam and Eve as the first married couple (Matt 19:3-6; Mark 10:3-9), Abel as the first prophet who was martyred (Luke 11:50-51), Noah and the Flood (Matt 24:38-39), Moses and the serpent (John 3:14), Moses and the manna (John 6:32-33, 49), the experiences of Lot and his wife (Luke 17:28-32), the judgment of Sodom and Gomorrah (Matt 10:15), the miracles of Elijah (Luke 4:25-27), and Jonah and the big fish (Matt 12:40-41). As Wenham has compellingly argued, Jesus did not allegorize the accounts but took them as straightforward history, describing events that actually happened just as the OT describes. Jesus used these records to teach His disciples that His death, resurrection, and second coming would likewise certainly happen in time-space reality.

All the above-mentioned statements reflect some aspect of Jesus’ attitude toward or belief about the Scriptures. But far more frequently Jesus reveals his conviction about the authority of Scripture. Its authority is shown in the way Jesus used the OT. He constantly quoted it as a basis for His own teaching on such things as church discipline (Matt 18:16), marriage (Matt. 19:3-9), God’s requirements for eternal life (Matt 19:16-19), the greatest commandment (Matt. 22:37-39), and the fact that He would cause family divisions (Matt 10:35-36). He used it as His justification for cleansing the temple (Matt 21:12-17) and for His disciples picking grain on the Sabbath (Luke 6:3-4). It is the “weapon” He used in responding to Satan’s temptations (Matt 4:1-10). And in a totally unambiguous manner, He stated that the OT sits in judgment over all the man-made traditions and ideas of public consensus (Matt 15:1-9). Jesus knew of nothing higher than Scripture to which one can appeal as a source of truth and divine standards for what is to be believed and obeyed (Mark 7:5-13). The thoughts of men are nothing compared to the commandments and testimonies of God. It is a very serious error, according to Jesus, to set them aside in order to submit to some other alleged source of truth, whether natural or supernatural.

---

Evidence is non-existent that Jesus dissected the OT and trusted only the so-called theological, moral, or religious portions. For Him all the Scriptures were trustworthy truth, down to the last jot (Matt 5:18). Nor does He ever appeal to some higher authority to bring out some “hidden meaning” of Scripture. Also, Jesus indicates that the Scriptures are essentially perspicuous: eleven times the Gospel writers record Him saying, “Have you not read …?” and thirty times He defended His teaching by saying, “It is written.” He rebuked His listeners for not understanding and believing what the text plainly says.

Jesus boldly confronted all kinds of wrong thinking and behavior in His listeners’ lives, in spite of the threat of persecution for doing so. Even His enemies said, “Teacher, we know that you are truthful, and defer to no one; for you are not partial to any, but teach the way of God in truth” (Mark 12:14). As Wenham cogently argued, Jesus never adapted His teachings to the common, but ignorant and mistaken, beliefs of His audiences. Jesus knew the difference between parables and history and between the traditions of men and the truth of God’s Word (Mark 7:8-13). He spoke in truth (Luke 4:25), because He was and is the truth (John 14:6), and frequently, He emphasized His truthfulness with “Truly, truly I say ...” (e.g., John 3:3). He also explained that believing what He said about earthly, time-space reality was the ground for believing what He said about heavenly realities, such as eternal life, forgiveness of sin, and spiritual rebirth (John 3:12). In other words, if we do not believe what He said about things we can verify, how can we legitimately believe what He says about the things we cannot verify? He also said that believing the writings of Moses was foundational to believing His words (John 5:45-47). Jesus (like all the apostles and prophets) clearly viewed the Bible’s history as foundational to its theology and morality.

7In these instances Jesus referred to Genesis 1–2; Exodus 3–6; 1 Sam 21:6; Ps 8:2; 118:22 to unspecified Levitical law—in other words, to passages from the historical narrative, the law and the poetry of Scripture.

8Passages He specifically cited were from all five books of the Pentateuch, Psalms, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Zechariah and Malachi. Interestingly, in the temptation of Jesus, Satan used Scripture literally and, in response, Jesus did not imply that the literal interpretation of Satan was wrong, but rather corrected Satan’s misapplication of the text’s literal meaning by quoting another text, which He took literally (cf. Matt 4:6-7).

9Scripture quotations throughout this article are from the New American Standard Bible unless otherwise noted.

Jesus’ Teaching on the Age of the Earth

Besides the above-mentioned evidence that Jesus took Genesis 1–11 as straightforward and reliable history, the Gospel writers record several statements that Jesus made, which are relevant to the age of the earth. Those verses, hereafter collectively referred to as the “Jesus AGE verses,” show that Jesus was a young-earth creationist. They are:

1. “But from the beginning of creation, God made them male and female” (Mark 10:6).
2. “For those days will be a time of tribulation such as has not occurred since the beginning of the creation which God created until now, and never will. Unless the Lord had shortened those days, no life would have been saved; but for the sake of the elect, whom He chose, He shortened the days” (Mark 13:19-20).
3. “...so that the blood of all the prophets, shed since the foundation of the world, may be charged against this generation, from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah, who was killed between the altar and the house of God; yes, I tell you, it shall be charged against this generation” (Luke 11:50-51).

The key phrases that attract attention in these verses are “from (or since) the beginning of creation” and “since the foundation of the world.” Old-earth advocates who interact with these verses contend that in them Jesus is not referring to the beginning of the whole creation but only to the beginning of the human race, which they date millions of years after the creation of the universe, earth, trilobites, dinosaurs, etc. In what follows will come exegetical arguments for concluding that Jesus is referring to the beginning of the world (Gen 1:1) in these verses. Then will come interaction with the writings of a few old-earth proponents who have discussed the relationship of the verses to the age of the earth.

1. Mark 10:6: “But from the beginning of creation, God made them male and female.” Commentators agree that Jesus quoted from Genesis 1–2, so the “male and female” He refers to are Adam and Eve. Jesus says they were “from the beginning of creation” (ajpo; ... ajrch’" ktivsw”). To what does that phrase refer—to the creation of Adam and Eve or to the beginning of creation in Gen 1:1?

Besides its use in Mark 10:6, “from the beginning of creation” (ajpo; ... ajrch’" ktivsw”) appears in Mark 13:19 and 2 Pet 3:4. In 2 Pet 3:4, Peter writes about the past and the future of the heavens and the earth, not simply of humanity. His reference to the beginning of creation must, therefore, be equally cosmic in extent. In a similar phrase in Rev 3:14 Jesus says that He is “the beginning (or ruler) of the creation” (hJ ajrch; th"" ktivsw”), which certainly
The phrase “from the beginning” (από αρχήν) occurs 20 times in the NT. Of those 20 uses, five have the initiation point of the cosmos in view. Never is it a clear reference to the beginning of the human race. It appears three times in 1 John 1:1 and 2:13-14. Comparing the language of those two passages to John 1:1-3 (which uses ἐν αρχῇ, “in the beginning”) shows that John refers to the beginning of creation (not merely the beginning of the human race), for he speaks of Christ being in or from the beginning and the Creator of all things. The phrase also appears in Matt 19:4, 8; John 8:44; 2 Thess 2:13; 1 John 3:8. Matthew 19:4-8 is parallel to the account in Mark 10, so the similar phrases must have the same meaning. John 8:44 and 1 John 3:8 speak about Satan and teach that he has sinned, lied, and murdered from the beginning. This undoubtedly refers to his fall, his deception of Eve and his behind-the-scenes influence in Cain’s killing of Abel. Since we do not know exactly when Satan fell (except that it was before he tempted Eve), these two verses by themselves are too vague either to support or oppose clearly the view that “from the beginning” refers to the beginning of creation. Yet nothing in the context restricts the meaning only to the beginning of the human race. Because of Paul’s comment on divine election in Eph 1:4 (that God chose us “before the foundation of the world”), to conclude that in 2 Thess 2:13 he is referring to the same beginning of the whole creation is most reasonable. That he has merely the beginning of the human race in mind here seems unlikely. Hebrews 1:10 contains the phrase κατ' αρχήν, which is translated “in the beginning” in frequently used translations. Since, according to the rest of the verse, that is when the earth was founded or established and the heavens were made, the beginning refers to the events of the whole creation week. All other uses of “from (or in) the beginning” are irrelevant to the present discussion, for the context shows that the phrase in these cases refers to the beginning of the Scriptures (i.e., the time of Moses), the first hearing of the gospel by some people in the first century, the beginning of Jesus’ earthly ministry, or the beginning of Paul’s life or ministry. Never does it mean the beginning of the human race.

---

11 See David E. Aune, Revelation 1–5, vol 52A of Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, 1997) 256, for the different interpretations of από αρχήν here. Either way the phrase refers to all of creation, which is consistent with the meaning of the other similar phrases.

12 KJV, NKJV, NIV, NASB, ESV, NLT, RSV, and HCSB.

13 First John 2:7 is referring either to the beginning of the Scriptures (i.e., the time of Moses) or more likely to the time when John’s initial readers first heard the apostles’ preaching or believed the gospel. Likewise, 1 John 2:24, 3:11 and 2 John 3-6 refer to when John’s readers became Christians. Luke 1:2 refers to the disciples at the beginning of Jesus’ earthly ministry. John 6:64 refers to either the beginning of Jesus’ ministry or, less likely, to the beginning of the creation, so the verse is either irrelevant to this discussion or confirms the young-earth view. John 6:25; 15:27; 16:4 are referring to the beginning of Jesus’ ministry. Philippians 4:15 refers to the beginning of Paul’s preaching in Philippi. Acts 26:4 refers to the beginning of Paul’s life.
This discussion shows that the phrase in Mark 10:6, “from the beginning of creation,” refers—in Jesus’ way of thinking—to the beginning of the whole creation, encompassing the whole creation period described in Genesis 1. Jesus was not referring merely to the creation of the first marriage on day six.

2. Mark 13:19: “For those days will be a time of tribulation such as has not occurred since the beginning of the creation which God created until now, and never will. Unless the Lord had shortened those days, no life would have been saved; but for the sake of the elect, whom He chose, He shortened the days.” Like Mark 10:6, this verse uses αἰών ἁλλῇ ἡμῶν. But in 13:19 the phrase is modified by “which God created” (τὸν ἡμῶν ἀλλῷ). The relative pronoun is feminine, so the clause modifies one of the feminine nouns, “creation” or “beginning.” Jesus would hardly have said that God “created the beginning.” Such wording is not used elsewhere in Scripture, and why Jesus would emphasize such a point is difficult to explain. Also, the closest antecedent of “which” is “creation.” Furthermore, Rom 1:18-20 indicates that sinners deny that God is the Creator, not the beginning of the physical world. So surely Jesus means the “creation, which God created,” with “creation” referring to the whole of creation week during which God created, not just to the creation of Adam and Eve.

Another support for this conclusion is that in Mark 13:19 Jesus describes a time-line: from the beginning of creation until now and on to the end of the present cosmos (v. 20), when heaven and earth will pass away (v. 31). Mark 13:24-26, 13:30-32, and Matt 24:14, 37-39 show clearly that Jesus predicts that the present human experience and the present cosmos will end at essentially the same time (cf. 2 Peter 3). Together, these verses support the notion that humanity and the rest of creation also began at essentially the same time in the past. Since the suffering under consideration is human (not animal) suffering, there must have been humans at the beginning of creation in order for Jesus’ time-line to make sense. If there were no humans in existence from the beginning of creation (supposedly billions of years ago) until the relatively recent past, what would be the point of saying there will be a time of human suffering unsurpassed by any other human suffering since the beginning of the cosmos (when no humans existed, according to old-earthers) until the very end? Jesus could have easily said “since the creation of man until now” or “since Adam,” if that is what He meant. His choice of words reflects His belief that man was there at the beginning and human suffering commenced essentially at the beginning of creation, not billions of years after the beginning. His Jewish listeners would have assumed this meaning in Jesus’ words, for Josephus’ history of the Jewish people indicates that the Jews of his day believed that both the first day of creation and
Adam’s creation were about 5,000 years before Christ.\textsuperscript{14}

Since Matt 24:21 is parallel to Mark 13:19, Matthew’s wording “since the beginning of the world” (\textit{ajp j ajrch}'" kovsmou) must have the same meaning, with both accounts accurately reflecting what Jesus meant. Though \textit{kovsmou} (kosmos) sometimes refers to this sinful worldly system of man,\textsuperscript{15} it often refers to the whole creation,\textsuperscript{16} as in Matt 24:21.

The foregoing evidence demonstrates the Jesus and NT writers never use the phrase \textit{ajp j ajrch}'" to mean “beginning of the human race.” Most instances that refer to the ancient past mean the beginning of the whole creation starting in Gen 1:1, thus supporting the young-earth interpretation of Mark 10:6 and 13:19.

An analysis of the commentary literature on Mark 10:6 and 13:19 yields four views of the phrases relevant to this study. Gundry and Morgan take the phrase in 10:6 to refer to the beginning of the whole creation (not merely the beginning of the human race or the beginning of marriage).\textsuperscript{17} Cranfield says the phrase in 10:6 does not necessarily mean the beginning of Genesis or the creation narrative, but he gives no justification for his view.\textsuperscript{18} McKenna, Evans, and Wessel say the phrases refer to the beginning of human history, but present no argument for their conclusion.\textsuperscript{19} France asserts simply that the phrase in 10:6 refers to the period before the Fall.\textsuperscript{20} Garland, Lenski, Cole, Gould, Lane, Hare, Edwards, Hendricksen, Brooks, and Moule make no comment on these verses, or at least not on the phrases related to the age of the earth, or their comments are too vague to determine what they


\textsuperscript{15}E.g., John 15:18-19; 16:33; 17:6, 14, 21; 1 John 2:15-17.

\textsuperscript{16}E.g., Luke 9:25; John 1:10 (first two uses, cf. 1:3—Jesus created the earth, not the sinful system of man); 13:1 (cf. 6:38; 13:3; 16:28—Jesus was not just leaving the sinful world of humanity to be a hermit in the wilderness, but leaving the world of time-space physical creation to return to the Father in heaven); John 17:5, 24; Acts 17:24.


believe regarding the issue under discussion.\textsuperscript{21}

That a highly respected Greek lexicon in its entries for \textit{ajrchv} and \textit{ktivsi} concurs with the young-earth interpretation of Mark 10:6 and 13:19 is noteworthy (especially since the compilers are not evangelicals).\textsuperscript{22}

3. \textit{Luke 11:50-51}: “… so that the blood of all the prophets, shed since the foundation of the world, may be charged against this generation, from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah, who was killed between the altar and the house of God; yes, I tell you, it shall be charged against this generation.” This statement of Jesus contains the phrase “foundation of the world.” The phrase occurs ten times in the NT: seven times preceded by “from” (\textit{ajpov}) and the other three times by “before” (\textit{prov}).

In addition to Luke 11:50, the phrase “from the foundation of the world” (\textit{ajpov katabolh'} " kovsmou) also appears in Matt 13:35; 25:34; Heb 4:3; 9:26; Rev 13:8; 17:8. In Heb 4:3 the writer says God’s creation “works were finished from the foundation of the world.” Verse 4 says that “God rested on the seventh day.” The two statements are clearly synonymous: God finished and rested at the same time. This implies that the seventh day (when God finished creating, Gen 2:1-3) was the end of the foundation period. So the foundation does not refer simply to the first moment or first day of creation week, but to the whole week.\textsuperscript{23} The

\textsuperscript{21}David E. Garland, \textit{Mark: The NIV Application Commentary} (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996); R. C. H. Lenski, \textit{The Interpretation of St. Mark’s Gospel} (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1946); R. Alan Cole, \textit{Mark}, \textit{Tyndale New Testament Commentaries} (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983); Ezra P. Gould, \textit{Gospel According to St. Mark}, \textit{International Critical Commentary} (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1896) (on 10:6 Gould says only that “Jesus goes back from the Mosaic Law to the original constitution of things,” which would lend support to the YEC view); William L. Lane, \textit{The Gospel of Mark}, \textit{New International Commentary on the New Testament} (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974) (Lane does not comment on the phrase in 10:6, although he implies by the presence of the definite article in his phrase the true nature of human existence as it was revealed from the beginning of the creation”) [emphasis added] that he understands 10:6 as I am interpreting it; on 13:19 he says only that it “is virtually a citation of Dan. 12:1” [471], which is an exaggeration, though the verses are similar, the wording is notably different; Daniel speaks of a time of trouble such as never has been “since there was a nation,” whereas Jesus says “since the beginning of creation”); Douglas R. A. Hare, \textit{Mark} (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1996); James R. Edwards, \textit{The Gospel according to Mark} (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002); William Hendriksen, \textit{Exposition of the Gospel According to Mark} (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1975); James A. Brooks, \textit{Mark}, \textit{New American Commentary} (Nashville: Broadman, 1991); C. F. D. Moule, \textit{The Gospel According to Mark} (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1965).


\textsuperscript{23}Heb 1:10 confirms this when it says that “in the beginning” God “laid the foundation of the earth” (\textit{thn gh' eajjemiivwsa}, literally “founded or established the earth”) and “the heavens are the works of His hands,” all of which occurred before Adam was made.


25John 1:9-10 says that Jesus came into the world and was in the world that He made. Clearly, in John 1 Jesus is the maker of everything, not simply the human race, and He came into the physical world from His pre-incarnate spiritual life in heaven. In John 11:27 Martha says that she knew Jesus was the Son of God who comes into the world. It is doubtful that she was thinking and meaning anything different than Jesus did with this language. So “world” (kósmo) in these verses, as in 17:5, 24 and Acts 17:24, is clearly referring to the whole creation, not simply humanity or even the sinful worldly system.

26Cf. Col 1:16-17 for similar teaching.

27See Paul’s similar teaching in 2 Tim 1:9 and Titus 1:2 (NIV and KJV are accurate translations of the time phrase, whereas the NASB is not).
Marshall’s only relevant remark is that \textit{ajpo; kataboîh’}” (“from the foundation”) is always used in the NT to refer to the beginning of the world.\textsuperscript{29} Similarly, Lenski comments that the phrase “implies that God laid that foundation when he called the world into being, and the phrase is used to denote the beginning of time.”\textsuperscript{30} Both comments support the young-earth interpretation.

Hendriksen says that “the reason why Jesus says ‘from Abel to Zechariah’ is that according to the arrangement of the books in the Hebrew Bible, Genesis (hence ‘Abel’) comes first; Chronicles (hence ‘Zechariah’) last.”\textsuperscript{31} However, the verses are not referring to the books of Scripture, but rather to people. Furthermore, scholars are not in agreement about which Zechariah this was in history or about when the present order of the OT books became canonical. A far more likely reason, given the contextual reference to the blood of these men (v. 51), is that Abel was the first prophet killed and Zechariah the last prophet killed.

Most of the commentators on Mark and Luke are silent on the phrases in these verses. Of those who do comment, many support the young-earth interpretation. The others merely make assertions (without offering support for their interpretations), or the argumentation given does not overturn the conclusions of the analysis above.

4. “Preliminary conclusion about Jesus’ view of the age of the earth.” From the study of these Jesus AGE verses, one sees that Jesus taught that man has existed essentially as long as the entire cosmos has. Given His evident belief in the literal historical truth of all of Genesis 1–11 and the historical reliability of the rest of the OT (including its chronological information such as in the genealogies of Genesis 5 and 11), we have strong grounds to conclude that He believed in a literal six-day creation week which occurred only a few thousand years ago. No other
understanding adequately accounts for the Jesus AGE verses and His approach to the historicity of Genesis.

But, as will be demonstrated below, the vast majority of Christian old-earth proponents have not taken into account the Jesus AGE verses and the arguments of the few who have commented on them lack cogency, are inherently self-contradictory, fail to deal with all the evidence, or are inconsistent with the evidence.

### Young-earth Creationist References to the Jesus AGE Verses

For decades, young-earth creationist writers have cited these verses in articles and books in defense of the earth being only thousands of years old, emphasizing that the statements of Jesus show that Adam could not have been created billions of years after the beginning, as all old-earth views maintain.\(^{32}\) Most of those

---


For an Eastern Orthodox perspective, see Fr. Seraphim Rose, Genesis, Creation and Early Man (Platina, Calif.: Saint Herman of Alaska Brotherhood, 2000) 150 (cites Mark 10:6), 228 (cites Luke 11:50-51). In both cases in Rose’s work the comments are in the editor’s footnotes. This work documents through lengthy quotations that the young-earth view was the unanimous belief of Eastern Orthodox “Church Fathers” until the advent of old-earth evolutionary ideas in the nineteenth century. See my review of this important book: “Orthodoxy and Genesis: What the fathers really taught,” TJ 16/3
creationist books are still in print. It would appear that either old-earthers are not reading the young-earth literature, as they tell the church that young-earth creationists are wrong about the age of the earth and about the importance of the subject, or the old-earthers are simply overlooking the point being made by young-earthers from the teaching of Jesus on this matter.

Some of the early nineteenth-century defenders of young-earth creationism (called “Scriptural geologists”) also used these statements of Jesus as they resisted the idea of millions of years that was engulfing geology at that time. In 1834 the Anglican minister, Henry Cole, argued this way from Mark 13:19:

Now, is there a geologizing mortal upon Earth who will assert, that the Redeemer is here speaking of ‘afflictions’ experienced by a world of creatures, who lived in a mighty space between ‘the beginning,’ and the present race of mankind? Will any geological sceptic, we repeat, dare aver, that our Lord is here referring to a race of beings of whom his disciples had never heard, and whose existence was never known to men or saints, till discovered by wondrous Geologists in the nineteenth century! Must not every scientific, unless he violate every remnant of natural understanding, honesty, and conscience, confess that the Saviour is here speaking to sons of men of the ‘afflictions’ of the same sons of men which have been from the beginning of the Creation of this world? Then, here is the creation of man immediately, manifestly, and undeniably, connected with ‘the beginning’.

But the early nineteenth-century Christian old-earth proponents largely ignored the Genesis text and all of them overlooked the Jesus AGE verses, as they told the church to accept millions of years and to regard the age of the earth as unimportant. As will be seen, old-earth proponents continue to do this.

As part of a thorough survey of evangelical scholarly literature addressing the age of the earth, we consider first commentaries on Genesis, then systematic


33Two of the most prominent young-earth creationists for many years have been Henry Morris and John Whitcomb.


35Henry Cole, Popular Geology Subversive of Divine Revelation (London: J. Hatchard & Son, 1834) 46-47. See also George Bugg, Scriptural Geology (London: L. B. Seeley & Son, 1826-27) 1:108 (uses Mark 10:6). For historical background on the Scriptural geologists, see my published article, online at www.answersingenesis.org/home/area/magazines/tj/docs/tjv11n2_scrp_geol.asp, accessed 12/26/06. For a summary of Cole’s and Bugg’s lives and objections to old-earth geology, see my published articles, which are online at www.answersingenesis.org/home/area/magazines/tj/docs/tjv13n1_cole.asp, accessed 12/26/06, and www.answersingenesis.org/home/area/magazines/tj/docs/tjv12n2_george_bugg.asp, accessed 12/26/06, respectively.
Commentaries on Genesis Regarding the Jesus AGE Verses

1. Young-earth creationist commentaries on Genesis. Morris, MacArthur, and Leupold refer to at least one of the Jesus AGE verses to argue for the historicity of Genesis 1–11. This supports their young-earth conclusions about Genesis, although they do not explicitly make the point from the verses about Jesus believing in a young earth. However, Morris’s study Bible, The Defender’s Bible (Grand Rapids: World, 1995) is explicit on this point. Rice says nothing about the Jesus AGE verses.

2. Old-earth creationist commentaries on Genesis. Almost all Genesis commentaries by old-earth proponents that I examined apparently overlooked the Jesus AGE verses (most also show little, if any, acquaintance with young-earth literature). These include Kenneth Mathews, John Walton, Bruce Waltke, J. Vernon McGee, Warren Wiersbe, John Sailhamer, Allen Ross, Arthur Pink, Ronald Youngblood, Gordon Wenham, and W. H. Griffith-Thomas. Space precludes detailed


37Rice says nothing about the Jesus AGE verses.

38"He has notes on Matt 19:4 (explaining that Jesus took Genesis as literal history). Mark 10:6 (emphasizing that Jesus was a young-earth creationist), Mark 13:19 (mentioning young-earth implications and showing that “beginning of creation” is synonymous with “beginning of the world” in the parallel passage of Matt 24:21), and Luke 11:50 (pointing out that Abel was at the foundation of the world, not four billion years after the formation of the earth).

39John R. Rice, In the Beginning (Murfreesboro, Tenn.: Sword of the Lord, 1975). The book claims to give detailed studies on creation vs. evolution, the Flood, etc. It strongly recommends Whitcomb and Morris’s The Genesis Flood. He argues extensively that the gap and day-age theories are unbiblical and believes that rocks and fossils are the evidence of the Flood, not millions of years. But he does not refer to the apostolic evidence for the historicity of Genesis 1–11 or to the Jesus AGE verses.

comment on them.

However, James Boice’s commentary is worthy of brief discussion because (1) he does refer to some of the Jesus AGE verses and (2) his lack of careful reflection on the issue of the age of the earth is symptomatic of the above commentaries. In the chapter entitled “Fact or Fiction?” (a question about Genesis that Boice fails to answer clearly), he has a sub-section called “The Teaching of Jesus.” Boice there says, “A special aspect of the attitude of Scripture to Genesis is the teaching of Jesus Christ. This obviously carries special weight…. [I]t is surely of interest to those who profess to follow Jesus as their Lord to know what He said. His teaching has special weight if only because we revere the Lord highly.” 40 Yes, indeed! How sad then to see that Boice discusses Matt 19:3-6 but not the parallel passage in Mark 10:2-6, which shows Jesus to be a young-earth creationist. Boice quotes a small part of Mark 13:19 to say that God created. But he does not quote the rest of the verse, which is so relevant to the age of the earth, and he does not comment on Luke 11:50-51. Is this giving special weight to Jesus’ teaching on this subject?

Boice rejects theistic evolution, but he also rejects the Flood as the cause of most of the fossil record. He has doubts about the gap theory, and sees problems with the day-age view and framework hypothesis. So he is not sure how to harmonize the Bible with millions of years. In chapter 8 on young-earth creationism’s view of Genesis 1–2, Boice uses quotes from Whitcomb and Morris’ The Genesis Flood to summarize the view. He then gives several points that should guide one’s evaluation of young-earth creationism. He says, “First, there is the concern for biblical teaching. More than this, creationists want to make biblical teaching determinative.” 41 Boice is correct, and such a hermeneutic is the necessary corollary of the doctrine of inspiration. Whatever God says is always determinative for the believer, regardless of the views of other supposed sources of authoritative truth that contradict God’s Word. Boice quickly adds that “we have to admit here that the exegetical basis of the creationist is strong.” 42 But as his discussion continues, he reveals that the only reason he rejects the young-earth creationists’ sound exegesis is because so-called science confidently asserts that the creation is billions of years old. 43 What happened to the teaching of Jesus, which Boice says is so determinative?

**Systematic Theology Texts Regarding the Jesus AGE Verses**

1. **Young-earth creationist systematic theology texts.** In his discussion on

---

41Ibid., 57.
42Ibid.
43Ibid., 59-60.
creation, Berkhof argues for literal days and against the gap and day-age views.\footnote{Louis Berkhof, \textit{Systematic Theology}, 4th ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1949) 150-64.} He does not explicitly state his view on the age of the earth, but uses Exod 20:11 in defense of his view, rejects theistic evolution, rejects human evolution, and seems to reject old-earth geology.\footnote{Ibid., 181-88.} However, he does not refer to the Jesus AGE verses, except to affirm (by reference to Mark 10:6) that the creation had a beginning.\footnote{Ibid., 130.} Ryrie refers only to Luke 11:51, and then merely in relation to Jesus’ view of the extent of the OT canon.\footnote{Charles Ryrie, \textit{Basic Theology} (Chicago: Moody, 1999) 122.} Reymond lists many OT and NT references (including Luke 11:51) to support his contention that Genesis 1–11 is reliable history and he refers to Mark 10:6 when he states that “to question the basic historical authenticity and integrity of Genesis 1–11 is to assault the integrity of Christ’s own teaching.”\footnote{Robert L. Reymond, \textit{A New Systematic Theology of The Christian Faith} (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1998) 118.}


Lewis and Demarest discuss the origin of the world and humanity in their 1996 theology text. In numerous statements they badly misrepresent the young-earth view,\footnote{Gordon R. Lewis and Bruce A. Demarest, \textit{Integrative Theology}, vol 2 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996).} which is not surprising since they do not demonstrate familiarity with the
recent creationist literature (but refer to much recent old-earth literature). It would appear that they did not even read carefully the two older books by Henry Morris (published in 1974 and 1984), which they cite, both of which refer to the Jesus AGE verses.51 They argue for the day-age view, concluding that “ultimately, responsible geology must determine the length of the Genesis days.” 52 What happened to the principle of Scripture interpreting Scripture? They do refer to Mark 10:6; 13:19; Luke 11:51, and affirm that “Jesus clearly endorsed the validity of the Old Testament creation doctrine”53 and that “the Lord Jesus Christ and his apostles who wrote the New Testament by the Spirit’s inspiration understood the early chapters of Genesis to be informative.”54 However, it is not clear what “endorsed the validity” and “informative” in these statements are meant to convey regarding the truthfulness or proper interpretation of Genesis 1–11. In any case, Lewis and Demarest apparently have failed to grasp the implications of Jesus’ words for their view of the age of the earth.

In his Systematic Theology Grudem deals with Mark 10:6, but not Mark 13:19 or Luke 11:51. His refutation of the young-earth reasoning from Mark 10:6 is one sentence: “This argument also has some force, but old Earth advocates may respond that Jesus is just referring to the whole of Genesis 1–2 as the ‘beginning of creation,’ in contrast to the argument from the laws given by Moses that the Pharisees were depending on (v. 4).”55 This objection makes little sense; it actually affirms that Adam and Eve were indeed at the beginning of creation, not billions of years after the beginning, just as young-earthers contend. In any case, whatever statements in Deuteronomy 24 the Pharisees were relying on is irrelevant to Jesus’ statement and belief about when Adam and Eve were created. Furthermore, Grudem apparently imagines how old-earth advocates might evade the force of this young-earth argument, but he does not cite and I do not know of any old-earth proponent who has actually reasoned this way. So, the young-earth argument from Mark 10:6 has more than just “some force.”

Other Old-earth Writings Regarding the Jesus AGE Verses

The following authors either promote or at least accept belief in millions of

---

51See notes 61 and 67 to chapter 1 of vol. 2 (499).
52Ibid., 29.
53Ibid., 33.
54Ibid., 39.
55Wayne Grudem, Systematic Theology (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994) 297.
years: Snoke, Arnold, Lucas, Forster and Marston, Ramm, Cabal, and Kaiser. So do Newman and Eckelmann, E. J. Young, Harris, Mark Ross, Moreland, Scofield, Orr, Hague, Wright, and Mauro, Davis Young, Snow, and Stek. So also do Bradley and Olsen, Blocher, Hugh Ross, Howard Vos, Free, Archer, Sailhamer, Warfield, and Kline. But none of these scholars interacts with the Jesus AGE verses and most of

56David Snoke, A Biblical Case for an Old Earth (Hatfield, Pa.: Interdisciplinary Biblical Research Institute, 1998), a day-age proponent, who is an elder in a Presbyterian church and a Ph.D. Asst. Prof. of Physics and Astronomy, Univ. of Penn (IBRI is an influential group among evangelical academicians and has produced a number of books strongly opposed to the young-earth view), who also ignores the Jesus AGE verses in his recent book, A Biblical Case for an Old Earth (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2006); Bill Arnold, Encountering the Book of Genesis (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), who favors either day-age or framework view; Ernest Lucas, Genesis Today (London: Scripture Union, 1989), who is a professing evangelical and a theistic evolutionist, has a Ph.D. in chemistry, has been a pastor and is currently vice-principal and tutor in biblical studies at Bristol Baptist College in England; Roger Forster and Paul V. Marston, Reason and Faith (Eastbourne, UK: Monarch, 1989); (see also their revised second edition: Reason, Science and Faith [Crowborough, UK: Monarch Books, 1999]); Bernard Ramm, The Christian View of Science and Scripture (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1955); Ted Cabal, “Evangelicalism and Young-Earth Creationism: Necessary Bedfellows?,” a paper given at the annual meeting of ETS in Colorado Springs in 2001 which answers the title question in the negative; Walter C. Kaiser, Toward an Old Testament Theology (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978); Kaiser, The Old Testament Documents: Are They Reliable and Relevant? (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 2001); Kaiser, et al., Hard Sayings of the Bible (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 1996), who favors the day-age view.

57Robert C. Newman and Herman J. Eckelmann, Genesis One and the Origin of the Earth (Hatfield, Pa.: IBRI, 1977), who advocate the day-gap-day view; E. J. Young, Studies in Genesis One (Phillipsburg, N.J.: P&R, 1964), who wonderfully defends the full historicity of Genesis 1 (and refutes the Framework Hypothesis) and contends that the days of creation were chronologically sequential (non-overlapping), but who states “The Bible does not state how old the earth is” and “the length of the days is not stated” (102 and 104); R. Laird Harris, “The Length of the Creative Days in Genesis 1,” Did God Create in Six Days?, eds. Joseph Pipa and David Hall (Taylors, S.C.: Southern Presb. Press, 1999) 101-11; Mark Ross, “The Framework Hypothesis: An Interpretation of Genesis 1:1–2:3” in ibid., 113-30; J. P. Moreland, Scaling the Secular City (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998) (for further critique of Moreland’s uncharacteristically superficial comments about the age of the earth, see Ken Ham, Carl Wieland, and Terry Mortenson, “Are (Biblical) Creationists ‘cornered’?—a response to Dr. J. P. Moreland,” TJ 17/3 [2003]:43-50, online at www.answersingenesis.org/docs2003/1001cornered.asp, accessed 12/27/06); C. I. Scofield, ed., The Holy Bible (reprint of 1917 2d ed., Lake Wylie, S.C.: Christian Heritage Publications, 1994); the writings of Orr, Hague, Wright, and Mauro are in R. A. Torrey, ed., The Fundamentals (reprint; Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1998); Davis A. Young, Christianity and the Age of the Earth (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1982); in Howard Van Til, et al., eds., Portraits of Creation (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), Young says nothing about the Jesus AGE verses in his chapter on the perceived tensions between biblical and evolutionary cosmogonies, nor does Robert Snow in his chapter criticizing the creation science movement, nor does John Stek in his chapter on “What says the Scriptures?”

them do not consider at all the NT teaching relevant to the correct interpretation of Genesis 1–11. Other authors who do the same deserve some comment. Their handling of Scripture on this subject is illustrative of the works above.

In Evolution and the Authority of the Bible, Nigel Cameron presents some strong arguments in favor of the young-earth view, although he does not explicitly endorse it. He considers Matt 19:4 to be a “strong testimony to an historical reading of Genesis by Jesus himself.” After discussing other relevant NT verses he concludes,

The New Testament view of the early chapters of Genesis, both as to the essentials (that Adam was a real man and that he really fell) and also as to certain details (such as the order of creation and Fall—Adam created first, Eve first to fall), is that an historical reading of the narrative is the appropriate one…. Evangelical Christians who desire to interpret Scripture faithfully will follow the New Testament writers in treating Genesis 2 and 3 as history. If they reject this reading, they do so at their peril.

Cameron gives no reason for limiting his conclusion about historicity to Genesis 2–3, instead of applying it to all of Genesis 1–11. Cameron seems to imply that the historicity and fall of Adam are the only essentials taught in the early chapters of Genesis and that only “certain details” (of the order of creation and fall of Adam and Eve) are important, straightforwardly clear and trustworthy, but that the details about creation in six days, the global Flood, and the genealogies of Genesis 5 and 11 are not. He fails to provide any rationale for such a selective reading of the details of the text. The NT writers clearly indicate that they treated all those chapters (and their details) as literal history. If one rejects or ignores the details of the Creation narrative or the Flood, he places himself in great peril. Should not Jesus’ view on these matters, as well as the views of the NT writers, be considered? Cameron has not heeded his own very appropriate warning.


1Nigel Cameron, Evolution and the Authority of Scripture (Exeter, UK: Paternoster, 1983) 85.

2Ibid., 90-91.
Given Cameron’s affirmation of the authority of Scripture, I wanted to find out more about his views after reading his 2001 email to a colleague of mine, in which Cameron said this about his above-mentioned book: “I have long taken the view that it is open to us to be agnostic on the ‘alternative’ we put in place of the standard evolution position. It’s fair to say that when I wrote that book I was more sympathetic to the young-earth view than I am now, but I was not committed to it even then.” So in January 2004 I wrote Dr. Cameron to clarify his position on the age of the earth and whether he still held to the arguments presented in his book. He replied, “My position has all along been somewhat agnostic, and indeed I do not think we are obliged to come up with alternative scenarios. So I don’t think my position has changed!” This is doubly perplexing when noting two more things. First, Cameron explains that the rapid, nineteenth-century compromise of the church with millions of years was because “first in geology and then in biology … nineteenth century, biblical commentators hastened to accommodate their interpretation of Scripture to the latest orthodoxy in science.” And, secondly, he gave a glowing endorsement (on the back cover) of Douglas Kelly’s defense of young-earth creationism (which includes reference to the Jesus AGE verses and other NT references to Genesis 1–11), Creation and Change (1997), saying, “A highly intelligent engagement with these crucial verses with which God declares himself to be a speaking God who is our maker. The discussion is scholarly but accessible, a model of the kind of exegetical theology which the church of our day needs.” Surely, such inconsistent reasoning creates problems for a commitment to the authority of the Bible and of Jesus as Lord, not to mention problems for articulating the gospel in an intellectually rigorous and coherent way to a skeptical world.

Francis Schaeffer says that the Bible “is a scientific textbook in the sense that where it touches the cosmos it is true, propositionally true” and “wherever it touches upon anything, it does so with true truth, but not with exhaustive truth. That is, where it speaks of the cosmos, science, what it says is true. Likewise, where it touches history, it speaks with that [sic] I call true truth, that is, propositional, objective truth.” He argues that Genesis 1–2 are united descriptions of one creation account and even refers to Mark 10:6-8 to support that view. He argues for the historicity (even the “historicity of the details”) of the account of Adam and Eve and

---

43Cameron, Evolution and the Authority of Scripture 72.
44Francis Schaeffer, Genesis in Space and Time (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 1972) 35, 76 (emphasis in the original).
46Ibid., 41-43.
the historicity of the Flood and even (rather weakly) defends it as being global.\textsuperscript{67} However, he devotes merely one paragraph to the question of the length of days in Genesis 1, and only asserts that $\text{yôm}$ ("day") can mean a long period as well as a normal day and so "we must leave open the exact length of the time indicated by \textit{day} in Genesis."\textsuperscript{68} He gives absolutely no exegesis to defend this view. Following William Henry Greene and B. B. Warfield, he briefly argues that the genealogies of Genesis 5 and 11 have gaps.\textsuperscript{69} But nowhere does he discuss the verses showing Jesus to be a young-earth creationist.

In his \textit{No Final Conflict} (1975), Schaeffer said this book should be studied with the above book as a unity.\textsuperscript{70} But this book, he says, deals with the \textit{possibilities} open to us where the Bible touches science in the first chapters of Genesis—that is, the possibilities that exist if we hold to the historic Christian view that both the Old and New Testaments in their entirety are the written Word of God without error in all that they affirm about history and science as well as about religious matters.\textsuperscript{71}

Schaeffer affirms the "space-time" historicity of Genesis 1–11 and unity of the whole book. In defending this, he cites the \textit{toledoths} in Genesis and fourteen NT verses. He says that "absolutely every place where the New Testament refers to the first half of Genesis, the New Testament assumes (and many times affirms) that Genesis is history and that it is to be read in normal fashion, with the common use of words and syntax."\textsuperscript{72} Nevertheless, although he rejects the gap theory, he does still allow it as a "theoretical possibility."\textsuperscript{73} He accepts the day-age view as possible, as well as the literal day view, and says that he is not sure about the matter. He appears to lean toward a global Flood, but is hesitant about how to relate it to geological ages. And he accepts that animals could have died peacefully before the Fall, but that there would not have been violence and agonizing, cruel death (as in one animal chasing

\textsuperscript{67}Ibid., 133-34. He shows no evidence of having read Whitcomb and Morris’ \textit{The Genesis Flood}, even though it was a landmark book that spawned the modern creationist movement and was published 10 years earlier by Schaeffer’s fellow Calvinists at Presbyterian and Reformed Publishers. \textit{The Genesis Flood} deals not only with the extent of the Flood but also the date of the Flood (based on population growth rates, by which Schaeffer also reasons, although he does not do the math and so only limits the Flood to less than 20,000 years ago).

\textsuperscript{68}Ibid., 57.

\textsuperscript{69}Ibid., 122-24.

\textsuperscript{70}Francis Schaeffer, \textit{No Final Conflict} (1975), reprinted in volume 2 of \textit{The Complete Works of Francis A. Schaeffer} (Westchester, IL: Crossway, 1982) 120.

\textsuperscript{71}Ibid. (emphasis in the original).

\textsuperscript{72}Ibid., 126.

\textsuperscript{73}Ibid., 132.
down another) before Adam’s sin. But he fails to mention and take the Jesus AGE verses into account. Failing to take account of them certainly makes it easier to accept Schaeffer’s possibilities for harmonizing the Bible with millions of years. But that is a serious oversight.

Geisler’s encyclopedia of apologetics has three articles relevant to this discussion. In “Genesis, days of” (where he argues against young-earth creationism) and “Genealogies, Open or Closed” (where he argues for gaps in the Genesis genealogies), he does not deal with the Jesus AGE verses. In “Creation and Origins,” he does refer to and even quote Mark 10:6 and 13:19, but he uses them only to state that creation was a past, singular event, rather than a continuing process. However, this contradicts Geisler’s endorsement of Hugh Ross and the idea of millions of years, because the evolutionary astronomers and geologists (on whom Ross relies) argue for millions of years on the basis of presently observed physical and chemical processes going back in an unbroken sequence to the beginning of time. In other words, the evolutionists deny that the creation activities are different from present-day processes, in contrast to what Geisler (rightly) believes.

In a basic apologetics book, Geisler and Bocchino say that the order of creation in Genesis “does offer an extremely accurate account of the order of creation as compared to the discoveries of modern science” (i.e., of evolutionary cosmology and geology). However, their supposedly wonderful harmonization fails to mention the creation of the birds, sun, moon, or stars. So, once again we see a lack of careful attention to the biblical text. They tell their readers that they will not deal with the technical Hebrew details to defend their old-earth view. But they do not say where such details are discussed and unfortunately they fail to reckon with the Jesus AGE verses and other NT teaching germane to the age of the creation. Nevertheless, they do urge their young-earth readers to “stop the infighting over the question of age” because “many sincerely honest and intellectually gifted scholars” argue for an old earth. Unfortunately, neither sincerity, nor honesty, nor intellectual giftedness, separately or combined, ensures correct (biblical) thinking, and history affords many examples of times when many, or even the majority of, scholars were wrong.

---


75Ibid., 165-66.

76Norman Geisler and Peter Bocchino, Unshakeable Foundations (Minneapolis: Bethany House, 2001) 174-75.

77They continue to ignore the birds, sun, moon, and stars in their chart of progressive creationism (178).

78Ibid., 175 n. 6.

79For example, Athanasius was exiled five times before he almost single-handedly convinced the majority that Arius’ view of the nature of Christ was wrong. Most of the visible church was wrong about the doctrines of salvation and indulgences at the time of Martin Luther’s conversion. Most contemporary
In his recent book on science and faith, Collins does address some of the Jesus AGE verses, saying that “if this [young-earth] argument is sound, I’m in trouble.”\(^80\) That is because he rejects the literal, six-day creation view. After summarizing accurately the young-earth argument from the Jesus AGE verses, he says that it “finds its credibility from the way the English ‘from the beginning’ seems so definite; but the Greek is not so fixed.”\(^81\) He then discusses several verses to argue that “from the beginning” in Matt 19:4, 8 is referring to the beginning of the human race. He says that the phrase found in 1 John 1:1; 2:13-14 relates to Christ and refers “to a ‘time’ before the world began.” The same phrase used in 1 John 3:8 and John 8:44 in relation to Satan refers, he contends, “to the beginning of the world or perhaps to the beginning of his own rebellion.”\(^82\) On the other hand, he correctly observes that 1 John 2:7, 24; 3:11 refer to the time when John’s readers became Christians or to the beginning of the apostles’ ministry. Without further comment Collins then concludes, “If we apply this insight to the verses in Matthew 19, we find that they most naturally refer to ‘the beginning’ of the human race.”\(^83\) Attempting to neutralize the young-earth argument from Mark 10:6, he refers to Matt 24:21 (“from the beginning of the world”) and its parallel passage in Mark 13:19 (“from the beginning of the creation”). He says that these phrases cover all of time or at least all of the time that humans have existed to experience tribulation. But he contends that the total time since the absolute beginning is irrelevant to Jesus’ point in Mark 10:6. So he concludes that such verses “have no bearing on the age of the earth.”\(^84\)

Several responses are possible. First, one might ask how Collins knows that young-earthers build their argument only from the italicized word (“the”) in the English phrase “from the beginning.” None of the young-earthers cited above argues that way. But in any case, the English phrase is no more definite than the Greek phrase. Second, in 1 John 1:1; 2:13-14 John easily could have said “He who was before the beginning” (cf. John 17:24; 1 Pet 1:20). But he says rather, “He who was from the beginning.” In the opening of his Gospel, which refers to the creation of all things in the beginning, no reason exists to see the verses as lending support to the restricted meaning of “the beginning of the human race.” Third, neither Collins’ suggested meanings of the verses about Satan (1 John 3:8) nor the verses about Christians (1 John 2:7; 2:24; 3:11) support his restricted interpretation. Since no one knows precisely what “from the beginning” refers to with respect to Satan, those scholars in the world presently accept Darwinian evolution (though most OEC Christians do not). In the eighteenth century most physicians believed that bleeding was an almost universal cure for sickness.


\(^{81}\)Ibid.

\(^{82}\)Ibid.

\(^{83}\)Ibid., 107.

\(^{84}\)Ibid.
verses cannot be used to support his interpretation of “from the beginning of the human race.” But also, though that verse and the ones related to Christians in 1 John may be construed to give “insight” into Collins’ interpretation of Matt 19:4, they do so only because he has ignored the additional words “of creation” in the parallel passage of Mark 10:6.

Lastly, Collins overlooks Luke 11:50-51, which is relevant to his argument about Mark 10:6. No young-earther has argued that the age of the earth is “the point” of any of the Jesus AGE verses. Although the particular phrases are incidental to the main thrust of Jesus’ statements, they nevertheless reveal something of Jesus’ worldview, i.e., that He is a young-earth creationist. In Luke 11 Jesus could have said merely that “the blood of all the prophets will be charged against this generation, from the blood of Abel …” and left out the words “shed from the foundation of the world.” This latter phrase is unnecessary to warn people of judgment, but its presence reveals an aspect of Jesus’ worldview. The same applies to the additional but unnecessary (if Jesus is only referring to the beginning of the human race) words “of creation” in Mark 10:6 and 13:19. Furthermore, it is very doubtful that any Pharisees and any Christian readers of the Gospels prior to the nineteenth century would have thought that Jesus was referring to only the creation of man or the beginning of the human race, for there is no biblical evidence that long ages of time elapsed between the absolute beginning in Gen 1:1 and the creation of man in Gen 1:26. As noted above, Jesus always treated the OT narratives as straightforward history.

We therefore have good reasons to reject Collins’ attempts to avoid the clear implications of the Jesus AGE verses for an understanding of the age of the earth. Also, it is clear from his book that the driving force behind Collins’ old-earth interpretations of Scripture is his unquestioning trust in the claims of the evolutionary geologists about the age of the rocks. At the end of his four-page discussion of geology, he states, “I conclude, then that I have no reason to disbelieve the standard theories of the geologists, including their estimate for the age of the earth. They may be wrong, for all I know; but if they are wrong, it’s not because they have improperly smuggled philosophical assumptions into their work.” But, as I argue elsewhere, smuggling philosophical assumptions into their work is precisely what geologists have done (usually unknowingly because of the educational brainwashing they received). Without the uniformitarian assumptions of philosophical naturalism, which have controlled geology (and astronomy) for the past two centuries, no “evidence” for millions of years would exist.

Supported by Hugh Ross, Stoner promotes the day-age theory and attempts

---

85Ibid., 250.

to refute the young-earth arguments from the Jesus AGE verses. First of all, he says that “Adam was created on the sixth day of creation, not the first. This was not the beginning of creation no matter how long or short the creation days were.” But, as noted before, “the beginning of creation” refers to the whole first week, and when Jesus said these words 4,000 years after the beginning, the sixth day was truly at the beginning of creation, on the level of precision that He was speaking (everyday language to a non-scientific audience). Second, Stoner argues that ktivsi” (“creation”) in Mark 10:6 should be translated as “institution” so that Jesus should be understood to be talking about the beginning of the institution of marriage, not the beginning of creation. He bases this interpretation on the fact that in 1 Pet 2:13 ktivsi” is translated in the NIV as “authority instituted.” But Stoner is mistaken because he did not pay careful attention to his own English quote of Peter, where it says “to every authority instituted among men,” i.e., to every human authority or “to every human institution” (as in NASB). The Greek text is clear: in pavsh/ ajnqrwpivnh/ ktivsei the adjective ajnqrwpivnh/ modifies ktivsei. An institutional authority (such as kings, governors, and slave masters, which Peter discusses in the context) is indeed a “human creation” (the literal translation of Peter’s Greek words). But this is a very different contextual use of ktivsi” than in Mark 10:6. Furthermore, Jesus could have easily said “from the first marriage” or “from the beginning of marriage” or “since God created man,” if that is what He meant. Also, if ktivsi” in Mark 10:6 has the meaning “authority” or “institution,” it makes no sense. What would “from the beginning of authority” or “beginning of institution” mean? To make it meaningful, Stoner would have to add a word to the text, which has no clear contextual justification. Finally, Stoner ignores Mark 13:19 and Luke 11:50-51, which in two of Henry Morris’ books cited by Stoner expose the error of Stoner’s interpretation of Mark. That neither the NASB nor the NIV (nor any other English translation) uses “authority” or “institution” as a translation for ktivsi” in Mark 10:6 is worth noting. All of the above applies to the reasoning of Geisler and Ankerberg, who in their opposition to the young-earth view, reason essentially the same as Stoner and Ross on Mark 10:6.

In their 1991 booklet on evolution, Ankerberg and Weldon mention Matt 19:4-5 (parallel to Mark 10:6) as part of their defense of the young-earth view. They

---

17Don Stoner, A New Look at an Old Earth (Eugene, Ore.: Harvest House, 1997) 53-54.
19See my response to the Geisler/Ankerberg article online at www.answersingenesis.org/docs2004/1101ankerberg_response.asp, accessed 12/27/06.
even state that they have studied the various old-earth reinterpretations of Genesis “in detail and believe they all have fatal biblical flaws.” Unfortunately, in an October 2000 TV debate between Ross and Kent Hovind, Ankerberg has since ignored Jesus’ teaching, and his own previous reasoning based on it, and has abandoned the young-earth view by sympathizing with Hugh Ross’s old-earth views. He has continued to promote Ross’s teaching in a 2004 TV series and in another series with Kaiser and Ross in 2005 and by moderating (but not with impartiality) the 8-part “The Great Debate” between Ken Ham and Dr. Jason Lisle from Answers in Genesis and Drs. Kaiser and Ross, a debate televised starting in January 2006.

Wenham contends correctly that Jesus “consistently treats the historical narratives as straightforward records of fact.” In his discussion that follows this statement he cites more than 50 passages from the Gospels and refers once to Mark 10:6 and three times to Luke 11:50-51. After one mention of the latter passage, Wenham states, “This last passage brings out his [Jesus’] sense of the unity of history and his grasp of its wide sweep. His eye surveys the whole course of history from ‘the foundation of the world’ to ‘this generation’.” Wenham notes that “curiously enough, the narratives that are least acceptable to the so-called ‘modern mind’ are the very ones that he seemed most fond of choosing for his illustrations.”

But later he strangely reasons in reference to Mark 10:2 that “the references to the ordinance of monogamy ‘from the beginning of creation,’ for instance, do not seem to necessitate a literal interpretation of chapters 1 and 2 of Genesis for their validity.” However, in the process of justifying this view he overlooks Mark 10:6 and instead focuses on the laws of Moses referred in Mark 10:3-4 (cf. Deut 24:1, 3). He seems not to have applied his own true statement to his thinking on origins: “Thus to our Lord the Old Testament is true as to its history, it is of divine authority, and its

---

62 His two TV series on science and the Bible (“Why is the Big Bang Evidence that God Created the Universe?” [5 programs in 2004] and “Can the Biblical Account of Creation be Reconciled with Scientific Evidence Today?” [4 programs in 2004]) promoted the old-earth day-age teachings of Hugh Ross. The 2005 series of 5 programs with Kaiser and Ross is “Are the Genesis Creation Days 24 Hours or Long Periods of Time?”
63 See online at www.ankerberg.com. The unedited debate with critical commentary by the author of this article (exposing many errors of fact and logic in the comments of Drs. Ross and Kaiser) is available online at www.answersingenesis.org/p/90-7-300, accessed 12/27/06.
64 Wenham, Christ and the Bible 12.
65 Ibid., 12-13.
66 Ibid., 13.
very writings are inspired by God Himself.”

Wenham presents the same arguments in summary form in his contribution to the defense of inerrancy. He gives good reasons for rejecting the notion that Jesus accommodated His teachings to the (supposed) erroneous beliefs of His contemporaries. He cites Luke 11:50-51 three times (quoting it in full once) to affirm that “Jesus consistently treats Old Testament historical narratives as straightforward records of fact.” But in his listing of 27 Gospel passages, he starts with Abel (instead of Adam) and again overlooks Mark 10:6 and 13:19. When he later refers to Mark 10:2ff., he states,

The teaching of monogamy as being God’s plan from ‘the beginning of creation’ perhaps does not necessitate a literal interpretation of chapters 1 and 2 of Genesis for its validity; but subsequent reference to the changed situation under Moses seems to require it. Seldom can a non-literal meaning be applied without some loss of vividness and effectiveness.

Sadly, Wenham’s scholarly understatement weakens the authority of the Lord’s straightforward records of fact. And nowhere in his discussion does Wenham explain on what grounds he does not accept the literal interpretation of Genesis 1–2.

In a 1989 article on the history and future of evangelicalism, Wenham begins with these words: “Many devout and thoughtful people are deeply worried as to where evangelicalism is going.” He recounts with sadness the fact that many evangelicals have slid into liberalism or at least a denial of inerrancy. He laments that the Christian faith and morals lost much ground in the twentieth century. He admits that “Darwin raised problems for biblical Christianity which neither the Victorians nor ourselves have ever wholly solved,” but he strongly rejects young-earth creationism. He considers it to be “far saner and healthier” to reject Darwinism while still accepting the millions of years demanded by evolutionary geologists and cosmologists, though he does not endorse any particular old-earth reinterpretation of Genesis.

In his proposed plan of action to revive evangelicalism, he says that “we shall probably have to work again and again at Genesis 1–11,” but apparently that

---

97Ibid., 28.
99Ibid., 6.
100Ibid., 7-8.
101Ibid., 212.
103Ibid., 212.
means coming up with new alternative old-earth reinterpretations, rather than accepting the straightforward literal interpretation which Jesus and the apostles affirmed. He concludes by saying, “[W]e want the Church united in utter loyalty to Christ and his revelation … without compromising biblical principles.” But is it loyalty to Christ for us to ignore or reject Jesus’ teaching regarding the literal truth of Genesis and the age of the earth?

**Conclusion**

The sayings of Jesus recorded in the Gospels demonstrate that Jesus was clearly a young-earth creationist. Nothing in His teachings supports an old-earth view (of man being created long ages after the beginning of creation).

Two figures illustrate the importance of Jesus’ statements on this subject.

**Figure 1**

```
+------------------------4000 years------------------------+
Beginning                Jesus
Adam & Eve
```

**Figure 2**

```
+----------------------14 billion years----------------------+
Beginning                Today
Big Bang                “Adam & Eve”
```

As figure 1 illustrates, the time from when Jesus spoke these words as recorded by Mark and Luke back to the first day of creation would be about 4,000 years, assuming no gaps in the Genesis genealogies. Jesus taught that Adam was at the beginning of creation (the 6th day on a 4,000-year timescale would be the “beginning of creation” in the non-technical, everyday language that Jesus was using).

Contrast this to the evolutionary view, illustrated in figure 2, that all old-earth proponents embrace, namely that the big bang happened about 14 billion years ago, earth came into existence about 4.5 billion years ago and true *Homo sapiens* came into existence only a few hundred thousand years ago (or less). On a 14-billion-year timescale this would mean that man came into existence at the very tail end of creation up to the present.

So one cannot believe Jesus’ view and the evolutionary view on the age of

---

103Ibid., 217.
104Ibid., 218.
105See the arguments in the sources cited in note 1.
the earth at the same time. They diametrically oppose each other.

Present-day young-earthers have been using the Jesus AGE verses in support of their view for decades. In contrast, of the sixty-one old-earth proponents examined (many of them among the top scholars in evangelicalism), only three (Grudem, Collins, and Stoner) deal with the Jesus AGE verses and attempt to rebut the young-earth creationist interpretation of them. Their old-earth arguments are very weak. Sadly, many of the old-earth proponents refer to each other’s writings (therefore circulating their misguided arguments), and the vast majority of them do not attempt to refute the best young-earth arguments and, in fact, give little or no evidence of having read the most current, leading young-earth writings. The old-earth writers have influenced the church through seminars and Bible colleges and through the endorsement of such prominent Christian leaders such as James Dobson, Bill Bright, Charles Colson, and R. C. Sproul.106

The above sixty-one old-earth authors hold on to the idea of millions of years for only one reason, and it is not because millions of years is taught in the Bible (for it is not).107 It is, as many of these men plainly indicate, because they operate with the assumption that the evolutionary geologists and astronomers have proven scientifically that the creation is billions of years old.108 Yet this is an uninformed and false assumption. Months or years of study are not necessary to see this. About 25 hours is sufficient. I plead with my old-earth Christian readers to learn recent data on the scientific arguments for a young earth.109

Mark Noll’s scathing criticism of young-earth creationism is grossly in

---

106Sproul has very recently changed to the young-earth position, but for most of his life he leaned toward acceptance of the millions of years. He had also endorsed one of Hugh Ross’ books: Creation and Time (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 1994) back cover.

107See Jonathan Sarfaty, Refuting Compromise (Green Forest, Ark.: Master Books, 2004) 123-28, for a refutation of Hugh Ross’ assertions that words like “ancient” or “long ago” or “of old” imply millions of years.


error. In his widely acclaimed book denouncing young-earthers for the (supposed) scandalous misuse of their minds, he states that they use

a fatally flawed interpretive scheme of the sort that no responsible Christian teacher in the history of the church ever endorsed before this century came to dominate the minds of American evangelicals on scientific questions.... [These young-earthers are] almost completely adrift in using the mind for careful thought about the world ... thinking they are honoring the Scriptures, yet who interpreting the Scriptures on questions of science and world affairs in ways that fundamentally contradict the deeper, broader, and historically well-established meanings of the Bible itself.110

Sadly, Noll bases his indictment of young-earth creationists largely on the historical interpretations of an openly agnostic (and former Seventh Day Adventist) historian of science, Ronald Numbers,111 whom (amazingly) Noll describes as a “truly professional” historian who has “few bones to pick with basic Christian teachings.”112 Numbers is certainly a justifiably respected historian of science. But being a self-proclaimed agnostic, he is far from being unbiased or neutral on basic Christian doctrines—he rejects most, if not all, of them! Furthermore, Noll also accepts the condescending evaluation of young-earthers by James Moore (a former evangelical, turned skeptic), and many other non-Christian historians. He offers no substantive exegesis of Scripture to defend his old-earth views and completely overlooks the Jesus AGE verses as he harangues young-earthers for shallow thinking and lack of scholarship. Judging from his text and footnotes, we might justifiably conclude that the only young-earth literature he has read is the introduction to Whitcomb and Morris’ The Genesis Flood (published 46 years ago!), although he seems to have read a considerable amount of literature from theistic evolutionists and progressive creationists. So where does the scandalous use of the evangelical mind really lie? And just who is using a fatally flawed hermeneutic to interpret Genesis? It is truly sad to see such a justly respected Christian historian ignore the overwhelming witness to young-earth creationism in the first eighteen centuries of church history.

We need to heed the words spoken by God to Peter, James, and John on the Mount of Transfiguration. Though the Gospel writers record different aspects of God’s


111Numbers does not discuss history before the 1850s to draw the erroneous conclusion that the young-earth view is a modern invention. Perhaps at the time he wrote this book he knew nothing at the time about the young-earth “Scriptural geologists” of the early nineteenth century. As my book The Great Turning Point shows, it is the old-earth view that is novel in the church. Shortly after publication, I sent Numbers a copy, so he knows now.

112Noll, Scandal 14.
declaration about the nature of Jesus’ Sonship (Matt 17:5; Mark 9:7; Luke 9:35), they precisely agree in their quotation of God’s command: “Listen to Him!” Evangelicals, and especially evangelical scholars, need to listen to what Jesus says about Genesis 1–11 and the age of the earth. Anyone who calls Him “Lord” cannot possibly have a different view than He has and say that the age of the earth does not matter?
INDUCTIVE AND DEDUCTIVE METHODS
AS APPLIED TO OT CHRONOLOGY

Rodger C. Young

Constructing an OT chronology for the four and one-half centuries from the beginning of David's reign to the release of Jehoiachin from prison is a formidable challenge. By following a deductive methodology of resolving the problem, nonevangelical critics of the Bible have proposed that the task is impossible because of errors in the OT text. By seeking a solution through starting with observations rather than presuppositions, an inductive approach is more complex, but obtains much more satisfactory results. Among evangelicals who have used an inductive method successfully are Edwin Thiele and Leslie McFall, whose works have achieved a long-sought-after rational explanation of the chronological data of the Hebrew monarchies, an achievement that demonstrates that the Scriptures were not written by late-date authors and editors who lived long after the events they described. The method of Decision Tables, described in the present article, adds to these solid accomplishments by producing a methodology by means of which all the possibilities that are inherent in the scriptural texts may be fully explored. Such an inductive methodology has made it possible to assemble 124 items of exact chronological data from Kings, Chronicles, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel into a consistent and harmonious chronology of a period of over 400 years. The methodology has been so successful that it has served as a corrective for some chronological problems in Assyrian and neo-Babylonian history.

* * * *

*Mr. Young received a B.A. degree from Reed College, B.A. and M.A. degrees in mathematics from Oxford University, and has done graduate work in theology and biblical languages at the Nazarene Theological Seminary in Kansas City. He retired from IBM in 2003 and began writing about OT chronology. He and his wife attend the Bible Missionary Church in St. Louis. This article is adapted from his presentation at the 57th Annual Meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society in November of 2005.
The Problem

From the beginning of the Davidic dynasty to the release of Jehoiachin from prison, mentioned at the end of 2 Kings, represents a period of about four and one-half centuries. For this time period, the books of Kings, Chronicles, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel provide over 120 dates, lengths of reign, and synchronisms that form the raw material for constructing a chronology of these times. For anyone who tries to assemble these data into a chronological scheme, it soon becomes clear that is a formidable task. Some older interpreters such as Martin Anstey\(^1\) handled the apparent discrepancies in the numbers by introducing interregnas, that is, periods of time during which no king was assumed to be on the throne. This is like using scissors to fashion fill-in pieces as needed for a picture puzzle that otherwise does not seem to fit together. To the credit of such interpreters, they genuinely regarded the Bible as the Word of God, and their aim in writing was to explain the text and to strengthen the faith of God’s people by attempting to produce a harmonious chronology from the received text.

However, interpreters emerged who did not share this goal of building up others in the faith. Their goal was to discredit a supernatural explanation of the origin of the Scriptures and the miracles recorded therein, replacing matters of “faith” with what they were quick to label as a “scientific” approach to religion. But the science of those writers was not the science that brought about the scientific revolution of modern times, because the method of true science starts with observation, whereas they started with a theory and then used that theory to reconstruct history. They either trampled on or ignored such observations as were beginning to come from archaeological findings in the ancient Near East. Thus De Wette had no archaeological findings or any other historical facts to support his theory that the Book of Deuteronomy was invented during the days of Josiah;\(^2\) the theory merely supplied an explanation to replace the supernatural alternative, namely that it was a revelation to Moses during Israel’s wandering in the desert. Neither did Wellhausen build his theory of the development of Israel’s religion on a study of ancient Near Eastern inscriptions; instead an imposition of Darwin’s evolutionary ideas and Hegel’s dialectic was used to construct an imaginative scheme for the history of Israel and the formation of the OT canon.\(^3\)

---


\(^2\)W. M. L. de Wette, *Dissertatio critica, qua Deuteronomium a prioribus Pentateuchi libros diversum, alias cviuxdum recentioris auctoris opus esse demonstrator* (Jena, 1805), reprinted in *Opuscula Theologica* (Berlin: Georg Reimer, 1830).

Inductive and Deductive Methods as Applied to OT Chronology

**Deductive Methodology as Applied to the Problem**

Wellhausen’s Documentary Hypothesis and its later offshoots (the tradition-historical school, the socio-economic approaches, etc.) are examples of the deductive method. Deduction is “inference in which the conclusion about particulars follows necessarily from general or universal premises.” One universal premise of such an approach is that the Scriptures did not come in a supernatural God-with-man encounter or revelation, at least in the sense of God speaking to and through Moses as stated in the Pentateuch. Divine revelation was replaced by various explanations of how writers from a later time fabricated stories about miracles and revelations that they ascribed to dimly-remembered heroes from their nation’s past. With this view of the origin of Scripture, it would necessarily follow that the authors who put together the Books of Kings and Chronicles could not possibly have handled correctly all the historical details from the time of the Hebrew monarchs. Thus, with regard to the chronological data in the Books of Kings, the following conclusions were reached by several scholars of the redaction-critical school:

- R. Kittel: “Wellhausen has shown, by convincing reasons, that the synchronisms within the Book of Kings cannot possibly rest on ancient tradition, but are on the contrary simply the products of artificial reckoning. . . .”
- Theodore H. Robinson: “Wellhausen is surely right in believing that the synchronisms in Kings are worthless, being merely a late compilation from the actual figures given.”
- S. R. and G. R. Driver: “Since, however, it is clear on various grounds that these synchronisms are not original, any attempt to base a chronological scheme on them may be disregarded.”
- Karl Marti: “Almost along the whole line, the discrepancy between synchronisms and years of reign is incurable.”

Strange Theories,” shows the tremendous harm that theological and sociological theorizing that was not based on observation had in the ideologies and wars of the twentieth century.


• Cyrus Gordon: “The numerical errors in the Books of Kings have defied every attempt to ungarble them. Those errors are largely the creation of the editors. . . . [T]he editors did not execute the synchronisms skillfully.”

Such conclusions about the unreliability of the chronological data of the kingdom period follow logically once the presuppositions of these scholars are granted and their deductive method pursued. The advantage of the deductive approach is that it is readily adaptable to whatever is currently fashionable in intellectual circles. At present that seems to be the socio-economic approach to historical interpretation. The disadvantage of the deductive approach is that nothing is settled for certain; the results obtained are as diverse as the presuppositions of the scholars, since diverse presuppositions produce diverse results. This is readily evident from the discordant opinions regarding the origin of the text given by scholars who follow the traditio-historic, socio-economic, and other literary-critical methods that force a priori assumptions on the biblical data.

The Inductive Method

However, some scholars have followed an inductive approach in biblical and chronological studies. Induction is “inference of a generalized conclusion from particular instances—compare deduction.”10 Broadly speaking, deduction starts with principles, whereas induction starts with observation. When studying the chronology of the Hebrew monarchies, one should observe some of the following pieces of evidence if an inductive course is to be pursued:

1. There is evidence from Jewish writings that the New Year might be reckoned from the spring month of Nisan, and other evidence that it might be measured from the fall month of Tishri.11 An unbiased approach would consider both these options.

2. The field of Egyptology yields evidence that sovereigns, during their lifetime, occasionally invested their son with the royal office, thus forming a coregency.12 The years of the son’s reign might be counted from the year he became coregent instead of from the first year of his sole reign. There is some prima facie evidence in the Scriptures for coregencies (1 Kgs 1:34, 2 Kgs 15:5; 1 Chr 23:1). An

---

9Webster’s Ninth.
10Rosh HaShanah 1a; Josephus, *Ant.* Liii.3; Seder Olam 4.
Inductive and Deductive Methods as Applied to OT Chronology

The inductive approach should consider the possibility of coregencies, and the possibility that the years of a king could be measured either from the beginning of a coregency or from the beginning of a sole reign.

3. The field of Egyptology demonstrates the existence of rival reigns—reigns for which the years of the pharaohs cannot be added together because two pharaohs were ruling simultaneously from different capitals. Such a phenomenon is reported in the Bible for the reigns of Tibni and Omri (1 Kgs 16:21-22).

4. Two ways existed for reckoning the first year of a king’s reign—whether that year was reckoned as year one of his reign, or whether it was reckoned as his “accession” or “zero” year. The two possibilities are called the non-accession and accession methods, respectively. Since there is evidence for both usages in the ancient Near East, a proper methodology that starts from observations should not rule out either possibility for the kings of Judah and Israel.

5. The final source of evidence for the inductive method would be the texts of Kings, Chronicles, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel that give chronological data for the kingdom period. These texts (in the MT) should be accepted as raw data (observations) unless they can be shown to be self-contradictory or contradictory to established external dates.

From this list of observations, it is clear that the inductive approach faces a great difficulty. That difficulty lies in how to handle the various possibilities

---

13Modern Egyptologists believe that whole dynasties of pharaohs were ruling simultaneously, such as the Ninth and Tenth Dynasties with the Eleventh, or the Sixteenth and Seventeenth with the Fifteenth, even though the overlap is not stated in Manetho’s king-lists nor in the Turin Canon of Kings (Kenneth Kitchen, *The Third Intermediate Period in Egypt (1100–650 B.C.)* [Warminster: Aris & Philips, 1986] xxxi).

14The *Seder Olam*, chs. 4, 11, and 12, assumes that all years for Israel’s kings and judges were given by non-accession reckoning. This method is generally assumed in the Talmud. Babylonia and Assyria usually used accession reckoning. Tiglath-Pileser III, however, used non-accession reckoning, contrary to the customary practice in Assyria. This example serves as a warning that the choice of whether to use accession or non-accession reckoning was quite arbitrary, and the choice was probably made by the king himself. Applying this to Judah and Israel would suggest that whether a king used accession or non-accession years must be addressed anew for each king; it is not sufficient to assume that because a certain king used one method, his successor must have used the same method. To assume uniformity in this matter would be consistent with the deductive method of making arbitrary assumptions, but a careful study of the scriptural data shows that it is an improper assumption.

15The LXX translators attempted to harmonize various readings of the Hebrew text that seemed to be contradictory, and in doing so, they produced various readings that cannot be assembled into a coherent chronology without postulating multiple arbitrary emendations. See Edwin Thiele, *Mysterious Numbers of the Hebrew Kings*, 3d ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan/Kregel, 1983) 89-94, for a discussion of the unreliability of the LXX in chronological matters. For an example of the emendations and assumptions that are necessary when trying to use the various texts of the LXX traditions, see M. Christine Tetley, *The Reconstructed Chronology of the Divided Kingdom* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2005) chap. 2.
inherent in a proper treatment of all the observations just listed and their multiple combinations. The easy way to handle this complexity is to make simplifying assumptions. Thus the Seder Olam and the Talmud assume that all reign lengths are measured from the start of the king’s sole reign. Gershon Galil made the opposite assumption by presuming that all regnal years when a coregency was involved were measured from the start of the coregency.\textsuperscript{16} An even greater simplification was invented by Wellhausen, who ruled out coregencies altogether, even the plainly-stated coregency of David with Solomon.\textsuperscript{17} The consequences of this kind of procedure are obvious: the scholars who make such simplifying assumptions will not agree with scholars who make other, contradictory assumptions. The simplifications will also produce chronologies that contradict scriptural texts at some point or another; scholars will then, unjustifiably, claim that the Scripture is in error because it does not fit their scheme.

**Successes of the Inductive Method**

In contrast, scholars who have used the inductive approach attempt to make no a priori assumptions. Instead, they employ scriptural texts to determine the method used by the ancient authors, taking into account the different archaeological and historical evidences listed above and not ruling out any possibility until valid reasons for doing so surface. In the 1920s Professor Coucke of the Grand Séminaire de Bruges determined from a careful analysis of the data in Kings and Chronicles that Judah began its regnal years in Tishri, whereas Israel began its regnal years in Nisan.\textsuperscript{18} He also determined that the reign lengths of the first kings of Judah and Israel were in harmony with each other if these first kings in Judah used accession reckoning while their counterparts in Israel were using non-accession reckoning to measure their years of reign.

Some years later an American scholar, Edwin Thiele, discovered the same principles, although when he began publishing his findings, he was not aware of Coucke’s earlier work. Thiele was able to determine the chronology of the kings of Israel and Judah in a more satisfactory way than Coucke, and his principal work, *The Mysterious Numbers of the Hebrew Kings*, went through three editions. The


\textsuperscript{17} Wellhausen was followed in this presupposition by two more recent authors of OT chronological studies: Jeremy Hughes, *Secrets of the Times: Myth and History in Biblical Chronology* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1990) 99, 103, and Tetley, *Reconstructed Chronology* 117. After such rejection of well-established practices from the ancient Near East in order to make things simpler, such scholars find it necessary to make a plethora of secondary assumptions in order to explain the disagreements of their systems with the data.

chronology of the northern kingdom, Israel, remained the same through these three editions, and later conservative writers such as McFall have offered only minor modifications such as narrowing the date for the fall of Samaria and the end of Hoshea’s reign to the first half of the year beginning in Nisan of 723 B.C., rather than allowing for the full year as did Thiele.\(^\text{19}\) Thiele’s chronology of the northern kingdom has stood the test of time, and in particular his date for the beginning of the divided monarchies is widely accepted by conservative and non-conservative scholars alike.\(^\text{20}\)

However, for the southern kingdom, Judah, Thiele failed to recognize that the synchronisms of Hezekiah of Judah and Hoshea of Israel in 2 Kings 18 imply that Hezekiah at this time was coregent with his father Ahaz. This was a blind spot on Thiele’s part, because he recognized that Hezekiah’s father, grandfather, and great-grandfather had coregencies with their fathers, and Hezekiah had a coregency with his son; why then rule out a coregency of Hezekiah with Ahaz? But even though Thiele’s colleague Siegfried Horn\(^\text{21}\) and many other scholars pointed out this explanation of the synchronisms in 2 Kings 18, Thiele refused to accept that solution and did not even discuss it in the final two editions of his book. The time of Ahaz and Hezekiah was the one place that he declared that the scriptural texts dealing with chronology were in error.

It remained then for others to complete the application of principles that Thiele used elsewhere, thereby providing a chronology for the eighth-century kings of Judah that is in complete harmony with the reign lengths and synchronisms given in 2 Kings and 2 Chronicles. The most thorough work in this regard was Leslie McFall’s 1991 article in *Bibliotheca Sacra.*\(^\text{22}\) McFall made his way through the reign


A further development not considered by any of these writers, has provided an independent verification of Thiele’s date of 931 B.C. for the start of the divided monarchies, thus authenticating the correctness of Thiele’s basic approach and the reliability of the Scripture’s chronological data. That development is the agreement of the years for Solomon and his Temple activities, based on his death before Tishri of 931, with Israel’s calendar of Jubilee and Sabbatical cycles. See Rodger C. Young, “When Did Solomon Die?” *JETS* 46 (2003):599-603, or a more complete exposition in Young, “The Talmud’s Two Jubilees and Their Relevance to the Date of the Exodus,” *WTJ* 68 (2006):71-83.


\(^{22}\)McFall, “Translation Guide” 3-45.
lengths and synchronisms of Kings and Chronicles, and using an exact notation that indicated whether the years were being measured according to Judah’s Tishri years or Israel’s Nisan years, he was able to produce a chronology for the divided monarchies that was consistent with all the scriptural texts chosen. That was the logical outgrowth of Thiele’s work, and it attained a holy grail that had been sought for twenty-two centuries, namely a rational explanation of the chronological data of the Hebrew monarchies that was consistent with the scriptural texts used to construct the chronology, and also consistent with several fixed dates from Assyrian and Babylonian history.

Significance of the Successes of the Inductive Method

The significance of Thiele’s work and its logical extension in McFall’s article can hardly be overestimated. One way of emphasizing the significance is to consider just how improbable such an accomplishment was when starting from the premises of the critics who were cited earlier in this article. They, and many others who could be quoted, believed that it was impossible to construct a coherent and rational chronology from the data given in the received text. The primary reason for this belief (or unbelief) must have been because they saw little reason to pursue all the hard work that Coucke and Thiele had to struggle with before they determined the methods of the biblical authors; why spend time trying to determine if there was a reasonable explanation of the texts when they were sure that late-date writers, such as they supposed were the authors of the Scripture, could not have produced an accurate chronology for long-past events?

In this conclusion they were correct, if their starting assumption is granted. If late-date authors and editors who lived long after the events they were describing put together the Scriptures, such authors and editors could not have produced chronological data of the complexity found in Kings, Chronicles, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel that harmonize with each other and are also consistent with several dates in Assyrian and Babylonian history. The critics have declared implicitly or explicitly that these presumed writers could never give a consistent chronology for the kingdom period. However, such a chronology has been produced, and so the critics have established by their own statements that their initial assumption about the late-date origin of the textual sources used in Kings and Chronicles was false.

Their error can be demonstrated as follows. Imagine someone cutting a series of arbitrary shapes out of cardboard—in the present case, more than 120 such shapes—and then hoping that somehow the shapes would fit together in a picture puzzle. Better than the analogy of a picture puzzle is that of a logic puzzle. Figure 1 shows a logic puzzle. The example given deals with trying to match five professors with their classes and their eccentric ideas. The clues, given in sentences one through seven, provide sufficient information to solve the puzzle. An instructive exercise would be to try to make up clues for this puzzle before determining the answer to the
puzzle. If this is attempted, it will soon be concluded that late-date editors cannot invent clues and have them all fit together; before clues are provided, the answer must be known that will fit together into a solution. Furthermore a sufficient number of clues must be given so that someone else can solve the puzzle.

Figure 1. Example of a Logic Puzzle

Amy takes five classes (including history) at Bimbleman University, each taught by a different professor. At first she was baffled by the fact that each instructor (including Professor Bookwerme) has a different eccentric pet theory, but by now she has gotten used to their digressions. Can you determine each professor’s class and theory?

1. Amy’s psychology professor is not Dr. Weissenhimer.
2. Her philosophy class meets just after that of the professor who claims that dinosaurs were really aliens who got stuck here on a field trip.
3. Her political science class meets just before the class with the professor who insists that Shakespeare’s plays were really written by someone named Larry.
4. Professor Smartalecq believes that gravity is a hoax perpetrated by the hot-air balloon industry; Professor Noetalle does not teach history.
5. Amy’s psychology professor firmly believes that the lunar landing was faked on a North Dakota prairie.
6. As one professor orated about dinosaurs, Amy slipped out to attend her next class, led by Dr. Eguehedd.
7. The history professor, who isn’t Dr. Weissenhimer, believes that the earth is flat.

---

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Biology</th>
<th>History</th>
<th>Philosophy</th>
<th>Political</th>
<th>Psychology</th>
<th>Dinosaurs</th>
<th>Earth is flat</th>
<th>Gravity</th>
<th>Lunar landing</th>
<th>Shakespeare</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bookwerme</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Egueheddd</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Noetalle</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smartalecq</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weissenhimer</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dinosaurs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Earth is flat</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gravity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lunar landing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shakespeare</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
This illustration is relevant to the chronological texts related to the divided monarchies. The OT texts form, in every respect, a logic puzzle. They provide approximately 124 clues to help determine a chronology of the time, compared to the nine clues in the seven sentences of the logic puzzle of Figure 1. Since experimentation will show that no one can produce arbitrary clues that will have any good chance of success for a simple logic puzzle of nine clues unless he knew the answer beforehand, how could someone produce 124 clues that make up the scriptural logic puzzle, and have all the clues consistent with each other, unless he or she already knew the answer and then was very careful in giving a sufficient number of clues to lead to the answer?

How does one solve a logic puzzle like that of Figure 1? One way is to try various combinations to see if they fit the clues given. But even for a fairly simple logic puzzle like this, it soon becomes obvious that there are so many ways to combine things that one’s patience gives out. In frustration, then, he takes a bold step of making assumptions! Surely no professor of philosophy would believe that gravity is a hoax, and any professor of biology would know that dinosaurs evolved from frogs and after that they evolved into birds and flew away. After a few more such bold assumptions, working out a solution becomes possible. When that solution conflicts with some of the clues originally given (and it almost inevitably will), someone could declare that the original clues are mistakes introduced by an incompetent editor who did not know the facts of the case. This is similar to the authors cited earlier who could not solve the chronological puzzle and who then declared that the scriptural texts contained numerous errors.

The other way to solve the puzzle is to use the inductive method. That is, start with the clues given and see if they can be combined to give a reasonable solution, without trampling on the clues or throwing out some of them, as in the deductive method. That is the more difficult process. But when it comes up with a solution, one that is consistent with all the clues given, who can doubt that it is the right method? And who can doubt that the Thiele/McFall chronology of the divided kingdom that made sense of all the date-formulas chosen in Kings and Chronicles is to be preferred over the chronologies of those who followed the deductive method and introduced several assumptions in order to justify their schemes? Those were assumptions that Thiele and McFall did not need to make, since they were basically limited only to the observations that were necessary for the inductive method.24 Would not all calm and rational minds conclude that a solution that is consistent with the data and which makes the fewest assumptions is preferable to solutions that are not consistent with the data and that make several unjustified assumptions?

---

24McFall makes some debatable assumptions about side issues such as the figures for the age of Ahaziah when he became king (“Translation Guide” 22), but these are not critical to the building of his chronology.
Here then is a great mystery: the Author of the chronological puzzle in Kings and Chronicles knew the answer, and He was careful to provide enough clues so that an answer could be found after suitable mental exercise. The chronological texts of the kingdom period are revealed as an example of something quite awesome: purposeful design. In other words, Intelligent Design. No other way exists to explain how all the texts can fit together, and how a sufficient number of clues has been given so that the chronology can be solved without having to resort to the arbitrary assumptions of the deductive method. But just as opponents of Intelligent Design grasp at straws with a sort of blind faith that their own presuppositions must be right, so practitioners of the deductive method will never see the design inherent in the chronological texts of the kingdom period unless they give up their wrong approach and their wrong presuppositions regarding the origin of the text.

**Some Refinements to the Thiele/McFall System**

In speaking of the Thiele/McFall chronological system, the discussion above stated that it was consistent with all the texts that McFall used to build his chronology. However, McFall did not use some texts out of the approximately 124 of an exact nature that are the clues for this period. My own efforts were directed toward examining all these texts and making it the first priority to determine the methods of the authors of Scripture. In order to manage all the data and their possible combinations without making *a priori* assumptions, introducing the method of Decision Tables that I had used in my work as a systems analyst was necessary. Decision Tables proved invaluable in handling the complexities of the last major system that I designed at IBM. Fresh from this experience, I saw that Decision Tables could be used to explore all the combinations of the chronological parameters that were presented earlier in this paper. Decision Tables allow the exploring of all possibilities that are consistent with the investigator’s basic assumptions, and they show which combinations of those assumptions are not compatible with the data. The “data,” in this case, are the texts being studied and fixed dates from Assyrian and Babylonian history. The method of Decision Tables is entirely logical, and, if used properly, entirely impartial; it provides the final step that is needed in the inductive methodology for examining these chronological texts.

The first contribution of using Decision Tables was a resolution of some discrepancies in Thiele’s figures for the regnal years of Jehoshaphat, Ahaziah, and Athaliah. The second contribution dealt with the end of the monarchical period, utilizing texts in Ezekiel that were not used by McFall in building his chronology. Ezekiel’s texts show that non-accession years are to be used for Zedekiah, contrary to the assumption of Thiele and McFall that Zedekiah’s years are given by accession

---

Inductive and Deductive Methods as Applied to OT Chronology

A continuation of this analysis showed that all the Scriptures in Jeremiah, Ezekiel, 2 Kings, and 2 Chronicles are in harmony for Zedekiah’s reign. Decision Tables provided the only convenient way to handle all these texts in a consistent manner. When this method is used, it can be shown that all 124 items of exact chronological data for the period of the Hebrew kingdoms combine to produce a consistent and harmonious chronology for a period of over 400 years.

Skeptics may assert that the harmony of these Scriptures is an artifact of the method of Thiele and those who followed him, even though that harmony was achieved without the necessity of making various a priori assumptions that characterize the deductive method. To take the view that the method of Thiele and McFall was an artificial approach would be like maintaining that a logic puzzle of 124 clues could be put together in an artificial and arbitrary way that did not agree with the original design. Anyone who doubts this should try to make up clues for the simple puzzle in Figure 1 without knowing the answer. The clues will generally fail to fit together unless the person giving the clues knows the answer and is very careful to make all clues consistent with that answer. Similarly, the chronological puzzle could never have been put together by Thiele and those who followed him if the original data were not authentic, that is, true to history. Errors in the original data, such as would be predicted by any theory of limited inspiration, would have meant that neither McFall nor anyone else could have combined all 124 exact statistics into a coherent and rational chronology. But this is exactly what has been accomplished by the scholarly and logical application of the inductive method.

Why Is the Problem So Complex?

But why is the problem so complicated? Why has it taken over two millennia until the work of Thiele, Horn, McFall and others has given a solution for the chronological texts in Kings, Chronicles, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel? And why must

26 Rodger Young, “When Did Jerusalem Fall?” JETS 47 (2004):21-38. This article is useful in showing the technique used to determine the chronological methods of the various biblical authors who dealt with the closing years of the Judean monarchy, and then showing, once the methods are determined, that all Scriptures dealing with dates for this period are in agreement. It and the “Solomon” and “Samaria” papers and the “Reign Lengths” paper of n. 27 are online at http://etjets.org/jets/journal/jets.html, accessed 1/12/07.

27 These 124 exact statistics are summarized in four tables at the end of my paper “Tables of Reign Lengths from the Hebrew Court Recorders,” JETS 48 (2005):245-48. The purpose of the tables is to show that all synchronisms and reign lengths in the six relevant biblical books are precise, without need of alteration from the numbers given in the MT, and without any need of special pleading for the reasonableness of the resultant chronology. Writers whose schemes do not fit the biblical data often contend that the reason for the lack of fit in their scheme is that the biblical numbers are only approximate. This contention flies in the face of what we know about the official court records of the ancient Near East, particularly those from Assyria and Babylonia, and the great concern that the priests of these nations had in keeping a strict calendar.
a proper methodology to handle all these data include the use of Decision Tables in order to eliminate wrong assumptions and to show all the possibilities that must be explored before the best solution can be determined?

The same questions regarding methodology could be asked of any non-trivial logic puzzle. It would be very difficult to solve the logic puzzle of Figure 1 without first learning how to use the grid that is included below the puzzle. All puzzle-solvers learn to use these grids. They are really Decision Tables. If Decision Tables are necessary to solve logic puzzles, how can the complicated chronological data of Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Kings, and Chronicles be handled without making use of a similar logical method?

This does not answer the question of why the data are so complex that it is necessary to be very careful to use a logical methodology that includes Decision Tables in order to handle them and to show which combinations are feasible and which produce contradictions. One might as well ask why it is necessary to master the methods of calculus to gain even a preliminary understanding of the motions of the planets, and beyond that to master both Special and General Relativity if more exact refinements in planetary and satellite motion are to be handled. Does anyone say that these laws are not valid, just because it takes effort and discipline to understand them? Perhaps in matters of chronology, one would have liked the Scriptures to be easier to understand, so that there would not have been so many interpreters declaring that the Scripture is in error simply because the interpreters were incompetent in determining the methods of the authors of Scripture. In matters essential to salvation, the Scriptures are plain enough that a wayfaring man, though a fool, need not err therein. But in other areas such as the one presently under discussion, God’s ways are not our ways, and His thoughts are higher than our thoughts. It was not in the Holy Spirit’s design to make all portions of Scripture easy to understand. It was in His design to make all Scripture so it is without error.

**Successes of the Inductive Method with Respect to External Dates**

In a 1996 article, Kenneth Strand wrote, “What has generally not been given due notice is the effect that Thiele’s clarification of the Hebrew chronology of this period of history has had in furnishing a corrective for various dates in ancient Assyrian and Babylonian history.” The purpose of Strand’s article was to show that Thiele’s methodology accomplished more than just producing a coherent chronology from scriptural data. His chronology, once produced, proved useful in settling some troublesome problems in Assyrian and Babylonian history. As Strand pointed out, this outcome was quite the opposite of what some of Thiele’s critics asserted, namely that Thiele merely juggled the scriptural data until he could match generally accepted

---

Inductive and Deductive Methods as Applied to OT Chronology

Another criticism is that Thiele’s and McFall’s approach is “too complicated.” See the preceding section for a consideration of whether this argument is valid. It should also be noted that critics who do not make an effort to understand the inductive method end up producing explanations of the scriptural texts that call for numerous assumptions and emendations. When these are all written down the system is invariably more complicated than the system that has been built on the five starting points of the inductive method that were listed at the beginning of the present article.
modern analysis of the time of Tiglath-Pileser is that of Hayim Tadmor. Following is a brief summary of the facts regarding the controversy, as derived primarily from Tadmor’s work.

1. Tiglath-Pileser’s records state that he received tribute from various western kings when he was in the city of Arpad. According to Luckenbill’s translation, the only entry in the Assyrian Eponym Chronicle (AEC) that indicated when Tiglath-Pileser was “in Arpad” was the entry for 743 B.C., a date consistent with Thiele’s and McFall’s dates for Menahem. The full entry for 743 as given by Luckenbill is: “in the city of Arpadda. A massacre took place in the land of Urartu.” Tadmor wrote the following regarding Luckenbill’s translation: “This translation of this crucial line, however, has been disputed by several scholars. It should most likely be taken to mean that the army of Urartu suffered a defeat in (the land of) Arpad, so that the earliest occasion for the payment of such tribute would be 740, when Arpad fell following a three-year siege.” However, Tadmor’s translation contradicts the customary usage in the AEC of the phrase “in (a place).” This normally means that the reigning king of Assyria was in that place. Furthermore, the determinative for Arpad is uru, meaning a city, not the determinative for a land. It is also difficult to accept that Urartu (Ararat/Armenia) was defeated in the city, consistent with the rest of Tadmor’s translation. For all these reasons, Luckenbill’s translation is to be preferred, and that translation is consistent with Menahem’s tribute being delivered when Tiglath-Pileser was “in Arpad,” in 743 B.C.

2. The main reason that Tadmor and other Assyriologists assign Menahem’s tribute to 738 is because an inscription from late in Tiglath-Pileser’s reign gave a list of tributary kings, including Menahem, just before an entry describing events in the Assyrian monarch’s ninth year, 737 B.C. The assumption was made that the tribute from the kings was all given in the preceding year. But this would not necessarily follow if the tribute list was a summary list. Summary lists were very common in Assyria and elsewhere in the ancient Near East. They lump together all the kings giving tribute or all the geographical regions conquered, irrespective of the year in which the tribute was given or the region conquered. Thiele expected that Tadmor’s publication of the Iran Stele, which contains the earliest of all extant Assyrian records mentioning Menahem’s tribute, would show that the tribute list in the later Assyrian records was a summary list. Thiele died in 1986 and Tadmor did not publish his translation of the Iran Stele until his book on Tiglath-Pileser appeared in 1994. In that publication it was shown that the tribute list of the Iran Stele was definitely a summary list. The implication is that the later list, the list from which Assyriologists make the inference that the tribute was in 738, was also a summary list, copied either from the Iran Stele or from an earlier prototype from which both lists were copied. The Iran Stele therefore vindicated Thiele by its evidence that the tribute lists containing the name of Menahem are summary lists, so that, based only on the

30Hayim Tadmor, The Inscriptions of Tiglath-Pileser III, King of Assyria (Jerusalem: Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 1994).
31ARAB 2.436.
32Tadmor, Inscriptions 268.
33Thiele, Mysterious Numbers 162.
consideration of the tribute lists without regard to the other evidence, the tribute could have been given at any time from the first year of Tiglath-Pileser, 745 B.C., until the year before the Iran Stele was erected in 737 B.C.  

3. The list that mentioned Menahem’s name in the Iran Stele also mentioned tribute from Tuba’îl (=Ithobaal II), king of Tyre. Tadmor cited Annal 27 of Tiglath-Pileser as showing that Hiram, who succeeded Ithobaal, was on the throne of Tyre in 738 B.C. This implies that the tribute from Tyre, and probably from Menahem also, was earlier than 738. In order to explain this, Tadmor conjectured that Menahem gave tribute twice, once in 738 and “once in 740 or even earlier.” A simpler interpretation is that there was only one tribute, in the “or even earlier” year of 743 B.C.

The question of the date of Menahem’s tribute to Tiglath-Pileser deserves a fuller treatment than has been given here. Devoting these few paragraphs to the issue, however, shows that the 738 date for the tribute, which is the most serious of all the objections to the Thiele/McFall chronology, is built on a series of assumptions that are quite ad hoc. The relevant data from the Assyrian texts support a date of 743 for Menahem’s tribute, a year during which Ithobaal II was on the throne of Tyre, Menahem was king in Samaria, and Tiglath-Pileser was in the city of Arpad to receive tribute from these kings. The date of 743 is also consistent with the biblical texts for this period and the Thiele/McFall chronology built on those texts.

Conclusion

The above study has compared the deductive and inductive approaches to studying the chronology of the divided kingdoms. The inductive approach has been described in detail. The study has shown it to be entirely logical, in contrast to the deductive method that makes unjustified simplifications and then rejects data that do not fit those simplifications. Because the deductive method is limited and unsuitable for this kind of investigation, scholars who have used this method have produced a host of differing chronologies for which no consensus has ever been reached. In contrast, scholars such as Coucke, Thiele, Horn, and McFall started from observed practices of the court recorders in the ancient Near East. As an outcome of their inductive method, a chronology giving exact data and in harmony with all the biblical texts has been achieved for the kings of Israel and Judah. The chronology is also consistent with several fixed dates in Assyrian and Babylonian history. The study has examined in detail the contention of critics that the chronology was accomplished by a clever juggling of the data. To counteract that criticism, a comparison has been made with a logic puzzle. If someone designing a logic puzzle cannot formulate consistent clues for the puzzle without first setting forth the puzzle’s solution, neither could modern scholars have developed a consistent chronological structure from the

34Tadmor, Inscriptions 266-67.
35Ibid., 276.
four centuries of data found in six major books of the Bible. The complexities of 124 exact synchronisms, reign lengths, and dates in 1 and 2 Kings, 1 and 2 Chronicles, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel negate that possibility unless the data were historically authentic. Neither would it have been possible for the final editors who penned the books of Kings and Chronicles to produce the harmony found in those texts unless their sources related an accurate history of the times, exact in the minutest details of chronology.
BOOK REVIEWS


John Collins is the Holmes Professor of OT Criticism and Interpretation at Yale University. He wrote this book after teaching introductory OT courses at various universities, some with religious commitments and others with none. He wrote this volume for those not well-versed in the OT and without any particular theological perspective. He takes a historical-critical approach and affirms that the OT tells an “ostensibly” historical story. He provides no footnotes but gives suggestions for further reading at the end of each chapter. The front matter includes a table of contents, abbreviation key, and 13 clear, helpful maps of different parts of the Bible world as well as different periods of Bible history. He divides his treatment into four major sections: Torah/Pentateuch, Deuteronomistic History, Prophecy, and Writings. He includes the apocryphal (deutero-canonical) books in his treatment, not addressing the canon issue. The book ends with a glossary, but has no indexes.

One of the unique features of this volume (though becoming more common) is the provision of a CD-Rom with an electronic version of the book (in Libronix format) as well as a study guide that includes analytical questions for each chapter and numerous internet links for websites that contain relevant articles and numerous images, maps, and explanations of various features.

Collins takes the expected liberal positions with regard to the dating and composition of the OT books. The books he suggests for further reading only rarely include any kind of evangelical writers. That is not surprising in light of his approach to the OT.

Generally, this reviewer would not recommend this volume for readers of *TMSJ*. It would be better to have a few solid introductions to the OT that will help the student of God’s Word better understand the OT from a faith perspective (affirming the inspiration and authority of God’s Word). However, if someone owns some good OTI texts and desires an up-to-date, clearly written overview of how critics view the OT, Collins does a great job of doing that in the volume. In the end, the reviewer has a hard time recommending a book that potentially would have a narrow impact on one’s understanding of the OT, especially when that book is a
The book begins with different life illustrations that beg for prayer but that also end with different results. Consequently, such deep misery and life perplexities raise many questions regarding the very nature of prayer, in both its purpose and results. Can prayer actually change God’s mind? Does God always answer prayer (16)? The author proposes that attempts to answer such questions have resulted in two differing solutions. One position is that if one is faithful and persistent in prayer, God can be influenced so that any request can be granted. The other side is that prayer never influences heaven; only the one who prays is affected as God uses prayer as a tool to shape and mold believers into His already determined will. Crump’s challenge is to unravel this “Gordian knot” with a NT theology of prayer. He seeks to do so by examining different passages within the Synoptic Gospels (chapters 1–4), what is called by many “The Lord’s Prayer” (5–7), and Pauline Prayer (8–12). He has one chapter on petitionary prayer in the General Letters and the Book of Revelation (13), and a final chapter on “Petition, the Hiddenness of God, and the Theology of the Cross” (14). Crump holds that both the Old and New Testaments are “the divinely inspired word through which God speaks today” (17). However, he likewise holds to “the current scholarly consensus regarding Markian priority . . . and the Two-Source Hypothesis . . . of the now-lost source called Q” (22 n. 1).

The arrangement of the book is intriguing. The first chapter deals with Jesus cursing the fig tree (Matt 21:21-22; Mark 11:23-25), which while a pertinent study on prayer, begins with the last week of the life of Jesus. Obviously much of what Jesus stated in regard to prayer in the earlier part of His ministry would be an extremely helpful foundation. The context of this statement in Matthew 21 after His entry into Jerusalem, especially how this relates to national Israel, could be explored. Beginning a study of prayer in the last few days of Jesus’ life leaves out much discourse on what Jesus previously taught on prayer. Simply put, it begins toward the end of His teaching, not the beginning.

Crump’s book contains numerous footnotes. For those who want to do scholarly work, these may prove helpful. For “the average church member,” it may interrupt the flow of the book. The conclusions at the end of each chapter do have a sense of reverence to them, repeatedly emphasizing the relationship of prayer to the heavenly Father.

Crum obviously writes from a Reformed theological perspective, which, consequently, affects the theology of his study on prayer. For instance, as part of the
answer of Jesus cursing the fig tree, he writes, “The unbelieving temple establishment of Jesus’s day was replaced by (and finds fulfillment in) the tenacious community of believing disciples—you and me; members in the Christian church—who will never surrender true faith in Jesus Christ . . .” (38). It ignores or diminishes the immediate context of Jesus being the promised Messiah of the Jews, as the King promises to return in Matthew 24–25. The same will be true for what is called “The Lord’s Prayer.” The church exists “as the Messiah’s new temple” (157). Thus Crum sees “Thy Kingdom Come” as already finding its fulfillment in the NT church rather than a prayer that still has unfulfilled eschatological hopes and promises.

Some may find Knocking on Heaven’s Door helpful in their studies or in their prayer life; it contains sections of warm devotion and reflection. However, for those who understand Scripture in accordance with the doctrinal statement of The Master’s Seminary, it will be a much more challenging read.


R. Kent Hughes, former pastor at the College Church of Wheaton, is the editor for this series and has tasked each author with writing a commentary that focuses on the preaching of that biblical book. As one endorser wrote, “No academic aloofness here, but down-to-earth, preacher-to-preacher meat for God’s people” (back cover). The series is driven by unqualified commitment to biblical authority, clear exposition of Scripture, readability, and practical application.

The author of this volume, Iain Duguid, was a Professor of Old Testament at Westminster Theological Seminary in Escondido, California, but now teaches at Grove City College in Pennsylvania. In this volume Duguid seeks to aid both pastors and lay people on this journey by explaining the profundities of the biblical text, especially its less transparent portions, and communicating the lasting message of God’s devotion to those who follow Him in faith.

After a brief (9-page) thematic introduction to the book, Duguid provides 36 chapters or messages that cover the 36 chapters of the biblical book. In some cases two chapters in Numbers are treated in one message and other times a message treats only half a chapter from Numbers. He begins each chapter/message with a catchy title and an illustration to lead the reader into the primary idea of the message. After presenting the message with varying numbers of points, a message ends with probing questions and pointed exhortations. The volume concludes with endnotes for each message (as few as one and as many as thirteen for a message), a Scripture index, a general index, and an index of sermon illustrations arranged topically.

The volume has several strengths and weaknesses. To have a commentary
that works through a biblical book, let alone an OT book, with a primary purpose of preaching the passage is almost unheard of. Modeling the use of an introduction with an illustration that draws the listener into the message and concluding the message with clear probing questions and pointed exhortations serves as a good reminder for any preacher of the Word. Even indexing those illustrations is a nice feature of the book. Each message seeks to explain, with clarity and relevance, the most fundamental truths a reader would encounter in a given biblical passage.

Nevertheless, this volume’s treatment of Numbers has some drawbacks. This reviewer’s reservations, doubtless, arise from his own preferred preaching style, especially when preaching from an OT passage. The commentary assumes that a preacher would draw on other important information on the Book of Numbers from another commentary. Understanding key parts of the book would be enhanced if more attention were given to the place Numbers has in the salvation history of God’s chosen people. Duguid makes no attempt to give his readers the big picture of the Book of Numbers. What are the major sections and how does that contribute to one’s understanding of the larger context of the book? None of the outline points has any verse parameters provided. That is because some sections may closely follow a given section out of a chapter in Numbers, while other outline points are only loosely connected to a set of verses.

Though clear and relevant sermonizing of a biblical book is often done poorly, Duguid’s commentary seems to neglect another part of the process. To the present reviewer, preaching a biblical book should help the listeners have a better understanding of what that book says in addition to how it is relevant to their lives. Preaching should enhance Bible literacy as well as model the manner in which one takes a message given to an ancient audience and makes it understandable and, when appropriate, livable by a modern audience.

Finally, the writer’s broader theological position will clearly impact his preaching of an OT text and limit or enhance the usefulness of a given commentary. Duguid approaches the text from a thoroughly Reformed perspective. As an example of this issue, in the latter part of his message on Num 15:22-41, when commenting on the faithfulness God expected of His people and their tendency toward unfaithfulness (196-98), Duguid exhorts his readers to have their Sabbaths spill over into other days besides Sunday. He then has a section on baptism and refers to it as a sign of God’s covenant faithfulness. He exhorts his readers to “improve your baptism” and to talk with their children regularly about their baptism. This baptism to which he refers is effusion (water poured on a person) as an infant. What do the Sabbath and infant baptism have to do with this passage in Numbers?

To be honest, the reviewer is still not sure how he would use the volume in preparing messages from Numbers. I think that I would turn to this volume after I have worked through the meaning of the passage and am considering how to introduce and apply that message to a modern audience. Am I glad I own this volume? Yes, but to be perfectly honest, I did not purchase the volume (it was a perk for writing this review!). Would I buy every volume of this series? Probably
not. I would want to look at how it treats key passages before I added a given volume to my library. Knowing the author might help my decision. Having said that, many of the things that Duguid explains the Book of Numbers are things most preachers need to think about in presenting a relevant message to their audiences.


Temporarily digressing from expanding his Theology of Lordship writings, John Frame, well-known author and scholar, accepted an invitation from the Institute of Theological Studies to tape a systematic theology survey course for them. This book is an enhanced version of that course. The same threefold approach taken in the lordship series, the reader is informed, will be adopted for this survey, namely, exegetical, Reformed, and focused on the lordship of Christ (ix-x). Although wondering whether the term “exegetical” is not perhaps an overstatement, it is the second term “Reformed” that signals disagreements which will most probably arise in certain areas, especially for readers who are not oriented to or accepting of covenant theology’s faults and foibles. Still, a well-written survey can prove to be valuable in providing students with an overarching perspective, the big picture, which Frame acknowledges may help the student learn important things which might get passed over when concentrating on the details. Commendably, the goal is to show that the Bible is not a miscellaneous conglomerate of ideas but a coherent, consistent system of truth “in which the major doctrines depend on one another” (ix-x). The intended audience is beginners in theology, which the comments below have kept in mind.

The nature of the book allows the author to decide which issues are to be simply bypassed, minimally introduced, or acknowledged as being inconclusive, or as bringing no clarity to a certain subject or term, e.g., the nature of the days in Genesis (20), the debates over creationism and traducianism, trichotomy and dichotomy (93), the order of the divine decrees and the *ordo salutis* (182-83) or the use of the phrase “eternal generation” not helping out with interpreting *monogenes* (Frame prefers “only begotten” of the Nicene Creed rather than the meaning “unique, one and only,” 37), or the mode of baptism (37).

Scattered throughout the book are statements which cause eyebrows to rise or a quizzical look to linger momentarily on the reader’s face, e.g., *inter alia* on Spirit baptism’s being the initial regeneration (163), on the church’s being the people of God in all ages since Eden (233-34, 36), on the highly symbolic numbers in Revelation ruling out the reality of a literal millennium (301), on the return of Christ, the final judgment, one general resurrection occurring all at once (306), on believers’ children being members of the covenant of grace who ought to be baptized, and that
Christians really should not break fellowship over this issue (281-82), which is somewhat naïve since behind the mode of baptism stands a doctrine of the church.

Were this book to be assigned as required reading for a survey course, or as part of a theology course, several rewrites would have to be done to make the book profitable, namely, (1) rewrite Chapter 9, “God’s Covenants,” taking pains to present properly the Abrahamic covenant, not taking away from his descendants their right to occupation of the Promised Land as per repeated prophetic promise with its careful geographical descriptions, definitely not allowing the biblical covenants to be subsumed under a supposed covenant of grace, (2) rewrite Chapters 18 and 21, “The Nature of the Church” and “The Sacraments,” in order to present clearly the believers’ church, not giving replacement theology free reign to do disservice both to the identity of that church and its ordinances, (3) rewrite Chapter 23, “The Events of the Last Days,” particularly so that the reader will come to understand that the differences between amillennialism, postmillennialism, and premillennialism are not just little differences of opinion, but are significant hermeneutical issues, and then finally, (4) insert exegetical notes to correct that reasoning which automatically equates an unlimited, broad, or remote extent of the atonement with universal salvation—not all who disagree with Frame are Arminians or are so inclined. Far from it.

The constant citing of the Westminster Shorter Catechism is somewhat distracting for those readers who are not oriented to the creeds, but given Frame’s theological background, its choice is understandable and thus tolerable.

Now the big question: Is this a good book, one to be recommended for private and/or classroom use? Since John Frame’s reputation as a worthy scholar of Scripture is well established, this reviewer hesitantly and uncomfortably advises that no real commendation is being voiced, neither is an outright rejection being expressed. Instead, the label on the cover would be “Use With Caution.”
Book Reviews

volume affirm that Kaiser is well known for his insistence that the contemporary church desperately needs more preaching from the OT (15, 17-19). Thus, the theme of OT preaching has been chosen for this book as a tribute to Kaiser’s passion. Robinson writes, “If the truth of the Old Testament is to sound again in churches, it must be from the pulpits. Perhaps this collection of essays will ignite a spark that causes to blaze again the warm, strong, relevant preaching of the entire Word of God. . . . Nothing would please Walter Kaiser more” (15). Gibson clearly articulates and reaffirms that the purpose of the present book is to give preachers the tools they need to prepare sermons from the OT. The emphasis is on preparation (17, 27, 198).

The first chapter, “Challenges to Preaching the Old Testament” by Gibson, sets the agenda for this volume. He states the reasons he believes that contemporary pastors do not preach the OT. Five barriers to preaching from the OT that he has discovered in interactions with pastors are the difficulty of using Hebrew, the foreignness of the OT culture, the irrelevance of the OT, the greater familiarity with the NT, and the difficulty of preaching Christ from the OT (22-26). As the years of ministry take a pastor from his foundational biblical training, his neglect of preaching the OT leads to a lack of fervor for and basic knowledge of the OT. Thus, “the purpose of this book is to help preachers cultivate a desire and skill to preach the Old Testament” (26). The target audience of this work is the struggling preacher and the following chapters of the book are designed to help “his or her” (26) preparation of OT sermons. The essays, therefore, are in essence a “refresher” and updating of the expositor’s foundational OT seminary courses as the above barriers to preaching the OT are addressed.

The second chapter, “Keeping Your Hebrew Healthy” by Dennis Magary, tackles the first barrier of retaining the Hebrew language skills necessary for effective OT preaching. Magary writes, “Learning Hebrew is a challenge. But learning the language is not the greatest challenge. . . . A challenge far greater than learning Hebrew is keeping it vital and healthy for use in lifelong ministry” (29-30). Therefore, a program for reclaiming (or retaining) biblical Hebrew is the gist of the chapter. Based upon a preacher’s learning style (32), the writer gives hints as to how an expositor can use the resources now available to resurrect and keep his Hebrew skills sharp as the foundation for effective OT preaching. This chapter (29-55) is a “healthy” read for all who wish to preach the OT, from the seminarian now learning Hebrew to the seasoned preacher.

The next five chapters address the issue of what preachers need to know in order to preach from the different genres of the OT. These essays describe the characteristics of the genres and how they were used in the OT. Very little practical information is given in how to use this information in one’s preaching. Chapter seven, “Preaching the Old Testament in Light of Its Culture” by Timothy Laniak, explores the barrier of cultural distance. Though it gives a good survey of contemporary tools available, very little practical direction is given for sermon use.

Chapter eight, “Toward the Effective Preaching of NT Texts that Cite the
Old Testament” by Roy Ciama, shows that even a preacher who concentrates on the NT must use the OT in his sermons. The author presents how he believes the NT uses the OT, because, “In order to effectively use a NT text that quotes the Old Testament, a preacher will want to help the embedded Old Testament text play the same role with the audience that it played with the original audience” (152). However, the essay concludes, admitting, “The issues related to understanding the use of the Old Testament in the New are many and complex. It requires wisdom to discern how much a congregation needs to know about these issues in order to reach a maximal understanding of NT text without getting lost in the trees” (167). The final two chapters seek to demonstrate the relevance of preaching the OT. “Preaching the Old Testament Today” by David Larson (171-83) is a good summary of why the OT needs to be preached whatever the perceived contemporary barriers might be.

Preaching the Old Testament Today is a good reminder of the need for OT preaching today. It also provides a healthy review of OT studies that is the foundation upon which an OT preacher builds. However, it fails to show the OT expositor “how” to prepare sound biblical sermons. For that, the preacher will need to consult two excellent volumes written by the honoree of this book, Walter Kaiser’s Toward an Exegetical Theology: Biblical Exegesis for Preaching and Teaching (Baker, 1981) and Preaching and Teaching from the Old Testament: A Guide for the Church (Baker, 2003).


This cleverly titled volume follows on the heels of the author’s first work, This Little Church Went to Market. In it, Gilley passionately urges the church to be biblically discerning in an era of dangerous deception. The book consists of 15 chapters unfolded in four sections:

1. A Postmodern World
2. The Church’s Mandate
3. The Scriptures
4. Pressing Challenges

As one might expect, the author espouses a high view of God, a high view of Scripture, and a high view of the church. He seeks to expose those who attempt to impose upon the church a low view, i.e., less than fully biblical, of any one or all of the three afore-mentioned non-negotiables.

For those who wonder about George Barna, Brian McLaren, Rick Warren,
the Emerging Church movement, the purpose-driven life fad, and/or postmodernism’s impact on the church, this well-written alert should be a must read.


Volume 41 of the SBL Resources for Biblical Study is a brand new edition of Landes’s *A Student’s Vocabulary of Biblical Hebrew* (Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1961) that went out of print in 1997. His approach is based upon the observation that students of biblical Hebrew find it easier to acquire vocabulary when they can see words grouped by their etymological relationships (ix). This new edition retains the same basic format as the original publication. List I contains “Verbal Roots Occurring Ten or More Times, and Their Most Frequently Attested Nominal and Other Cognates” (47-126). List II contains “Nominal and Other Cognates Occurring Ten or More Times, with Their Less Frequently Attested Verbal Roots” (129-56). List III consists of “Nouns and Other Words without Extant Verbal Roots in the Hebrew Bible” (159-86).

Changes in this new edition include a larger font size for improved readability, division of the three lists into 91 sub-lists or “discrete vocabulary groups” (x) for more manageable study lists, and expansion of the number of glosses for providing a more complete overview of semantic nuances. Whereas the former edition drew upon definitions in Koehler and Baumgartner’s *Lexicon in Veteris Testamenti Libros*, rev. ed. (Brill, 1953-57), the new edition looks to the English translation of their third edition, *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Brill, 1994-2000).

Landes’ work, like those of John D. W. Watts, *Lists of Words Occurring Frequently in the Hebrew Bible* (2nd ed., Eerdmans, 1978) and Larry A. Mitchel, *A Student’s Vocabulary for Biblical Hebrew and Aramaic* (Zondervan, 1984), lists Hebrew words alphabetically within each frequency range rather than in order of individual word frequency. Watts did not list any verb occurring fewer than 25 times or any noun occurring less than 50 times in the Hebrew Bible, and he included a separate list for prepositions and prepositional phrases (28-31). Mitchel employs a combined list of all verbs, nouns, and particles (including prepositions) occurring ten or more times in the Hebrew Bible (1-51). In addition, he includes frequency lists for all 648 words employed in biblical Aramaic (52-65)—something neither Landes nor Watts provide. Only Watts uses a format that places the Hebrew on one page and the English glosses on the opposite page, enabling self-testing.

Landes, like Mitchel, lists only those words occurring ten or more times, although cognate words might occur as seldom as once within a grouping that has
more than ten representative occurrences. Landes does not give exact statistics for words occurring more than 70 times. Instead, he provides the general range (e.g., the verb נשׁב, swb, “command,” is listed among verbs occurring more than 500 times; its cognate noun, נישוב, miswā, “commandment,” is assigned a frequency in the 100-199 range) (51).

Only Mitchel (66-88) and Landes (191-218) provide the user with an alphabetical index to make it easier to locate words in their lists. Mitchel gives exact statistics for each and every vocabulary word except for those twelve words occurring in excess of 5,000 times. Mitchel provides transliteration for each word, while Landes does not. Landes’ introduction to his vocabulary lists is far more extensive than either Watts or Mitchel. A large portion of his introduction instructs the reader in “How Hebrew Words Are Formed” (7-39). That section is a basic review of the formations of verbs and nouns, together with the various possible affixes (including prepositional, article, and interrogative prefixes and pronominal and adverbial suffixes).

Landes follows up his three major vocabulary lists with two appendixes: “Proper and Place Names Occurring 70 or More Times in the Old Testament Arranged in Decreasing Order of Frequency” (187-88) and “The Forms and Meanings of the Hebrew Pronominal Suffixes” (188-89).

As long as people study biblical Hebrew, vocabulary building will be a necessary component of learning the language. As Landes points out, rote memorization and word associations are of limited aid (2-3). Repetition is the primary key for learning biblical Hebrew vocabulary (4-6), a repetition that may take the form of flash cards (either physically or electronically). Vocabulary lists provide handy access to the most frequently occurring words in a systematic fashion. Landes’ new edition is the only one arranged by cognates. That factor helps to propel his volume to the top of recommended vocabularies for biblical Hebrew.


Tony Lane, Professor of Historical Rheology and Director of Research at the London School of Theology, has done a great service by offering his revised and expanded edition of *A Concise History of Christian Thought*. This work is a concise, readable survey of key Christian leaders, creeds, councils, and documents from the time of the church fathers to the present.

The number of books devoted to church history is vast, but Lane’s work distinguishes itself from many by its excellent format. His 336-page work has 150 entries that offer succinct but thorough explanations of the person or topic at hand. Thus, the average entry receives a little over two pages of fact-filled, relevant
information that gets to the point and shows why the discussed person, creed, council, document, etc., was important in the development of Christian thought. This helpful format avoids the brevity of dictionary-like definitions while escaping overly long explanations that can lose the reader who is looking only for the most essential information on a person or topic.

The book has five major divisions. Part I (26 entries) covers the church fathers up until A.D. 500. Part II (11 entries) addresses the Eastern tradition until A.D. 500. Part III (26 entries) covers the medieval West from 500–1500 and Part IV (41 entries) summarizes the Reformation period and reaction to it (1500–1800). In Part V (46 entries), Lane addresses Christian thought in the modern world from 1800. This last section of Lane’s expanded edition includes discussion of more recent theologians such as George Lindbeck and John Hick.

In any book in which the history of Christian thought is distilled to 150 entries, some will have differences of opinion concerning who should be included or excluded. This reviewer, though, found the selections to be well chosen. Evangelicals will probably be disappointed that Lane does not give more attention to evangelical theologians. For instance, G. C. Berkouwer and John Stott are the only two evangelicals of the last one hundred years whom Lane discusses.

For the most part, A Concise History of Christian Thought operates as a reference book that dispenses concise, helpful information to the reader. One could read this book from beginning to end, but its primary benefit is more as a reference tool, much like a dictionary or encyclopedia. The reader should be aware that at times Lane offers his personal evaluations of the topic at hand, especially in regard to more recent theological developments. For example, in his discussion on Process Theology, Lane points out that the movement has a philosophical starting point that leads to a distortion of the biblical concept of God (295). Lane also expresses optimism about the ecumenical movement (333) and recent Catholic-Protestant discussions concerning the doctrine of justification (335-36).

Though the reader must be discerning when he comes to Lane’s opinions, this book delivers what it offers—a concise history of Christian thought. Thus, it is a helpful resource for church leaders, students, and all who are interested in church history and the development of Christian theology. For this reviewer, A Concise History of Christian Thought continues to be a much-used reference work.


The Holman Old Testament Commentary is a projected 20-volume set designed as a counterpart to the 12-volume Holman NT Commentary that is already
complete. All 32 volumes are under the general editorship of Max Anders, Senior Pastor of Castleview Baptist Church in Indianapolis, Indiana. This commentary series was created with the pastor or Bible teacher/student in mind. The editorial preface states, “Today’s church hungers for Bible teaching, and Bible teachers hunger for resources to guide them in teaching God’s Word. The Holman [Bible] Commentary provides the church with food to feed the spiritually hungry in an easily digestible format” (ix). Each volume is based on the NIV and follows the same eight-point outline for each chapter in the commentary.

In the commentary by Larson and Dahlen, volume 9 in the OT series, most chapters represent a corresponding chapter in the biblical text. Every chapter begins with an introductory quote and a summary description of the chapter. This is followed by (1) an introduction to the sermon/lesson to be delivered from the biblical text, (2) an outlined verse-by-verse commentary including the “main idea” for the whole as well as the “supporting idea” for each individual point, (3) a conclusion that includes both a narrative and bullet-pointed principles and applications from the chapter, (4) a life application designed to bridge biblical truth to life, (5) a suggested prayer tying the chapter to life with God, (6) “deeper discoveries” that seek to enrich the biblical exposition with historical, geographical, and grammatical facts, (7) a teaching/preaching outline that summarizes the material presented in steps 1-3, and (8) issues for discussion that zero in on the points of the chapter on daily life.

Knute Larson, Senior Pastor of The Chapel in Akron, Ohio, wrote the commentary sections dealing with the books of Ezra and Nehemiah in this volume. He is particularly effective in providing the “main ideas” for each chapter, sometimes giving a descriptive statement and at other times providing a principled one, outlining the biblical chapters, and stating application points arising from the commentary on the biblical texts. Particularly noteworthy are his discussions of biblical interpretation and application (121-23), OT historicity (138), pain and trouble (200), and justice and judgment (275-76).

However, Larson’s interpretation of the chronology of the biblical text departs at a number of points from that espoused by the majority of commentators in the evangelical tradition. First, he dates the events in Ezra 3 to 522-520 B.C. (32, 44, 62) after “several waves of exiles returned to Palestine” (39), even though Ezra 3:8 states they occurred “in the second year of their [the returnees listed in Ezra 2] coming to the house of God at Jerusalem in the second month,” about 536 B.C. Second, Larson also dates the reading/explaining of the law by Ezra to the people and leaders recorded in Nehemiah 8 as occurring in 458 B.C. between the events described in Ezra 7–8 and 9–10 (104, 215-16); the preferred date is 445 B.C. after the building of the wall by Nehemiah. Third, the author wavers on whether the events recorded in Neh 9:1-37 took place between Ezra 10:15-16 (which would be 457 B.C.) or after Nehemiah 8 (which would be 458 B.C. on his reckoning) (228). The preferred interpretation is the latter, but with a 445 B.C. date. Finally, Larson thinks it probable that Neh 9:38–10:39 actually occurred after Nehemiah 13, when Nehemiah returned for his second governorship and confronted the abuses of the law
that he found (242). The majority interpretation is that these events took place in Nehemiah’s first governorship in 445 B.C. Two excellent commentaries on Ezra and Nehemiah, those by F. Charles Fensham (NICOT) and Derek Kidner (TOTC), are missing from this volume’s bibliography. Larson should have consulted them on these issues.

Kathy Dahlen, former Director of Communications at The Chapel and present free-lance writer, penned the commentary on Esther. Her perspective on the providence of God seen in the book is in keeping with the majority interpretation. She views Esther as a woman who trusted in her God and was respectful and submissive to the men in her life. In the end, the Lord rewarded her faithfulness to Him. In the bibliography, commentaries by Barry Davis (Christian Focus, 1995) and John Whitcomb (Moody, 1979) that would question Dahlen’s viewpoint concerning Esther as a godly model are not listed.

Bible expositors and teachers would be better served beginning with another Broadman & Holman volume, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther (NAC) by Marvin Breneman, as a primary resource as they prepare to preach and teach these biblical books. With the firmer interpretive foundation laid by Breneman, the applicational insights provided by Larson and Dahlen can be incorporated. Bible expositors should be aware of a number of especially valuable volumes in The Holman Old Testament Commentary. Judges, Ruth (vol. 5) by W. Gary Phillips, Job (vol. 10), Psalms 1–72 (vol. 11), Psalms 73–150 (vol. 12) by Steven J. Lawson, and Ezekiel (vol. 17) by Mark F. Rooker are good additions to the expositor’s library.


Kenneth Mathews is Professor of OT at Beeson Divinity School of Samford University and is also an adjunct faculty member at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. Other commentaries in this series have been reviewed in *TMSJ*. In fact, the first volume on Genesis was reviewed by William D. Barrick in issue 8/2 (see his comments there). Each author of the New American Commentary (NAC) series affirms a commitment to inspiration and inerrancy and the series seeks to enable pastors, teachers, and students to read the Bible with clarity and proclaim it with power. In light of this focus, most issues relating to scholarly discussions and technical points of grammar and syntax appear in footnotes rather than in the text of the commentary. The first volume (1996) dealt with the primeval or early history of Genesis 1–11, and this volume begins with the call of Abram and follows the building of the nation of Israel through the death of Joseph in Egypt. Mathews argues that Genesis in its present form is a cohesive unit that shows thoughtful order
and a self-consistent theology. “Essentially, there is one mind that has shaped the book, whom we believe to have been Moses.” The goals of this commentary are to describe the literary and theological contours of Genesis in light of the book’s overall structure. At the same time Mathews keeps an eye on the place of Genesis within the five books of Moses and within the OT canon.

The volume begins with a helpful introduction to issues related to this part of Genesis: history and historicity, religion of the patriarchs, themes and motifs, as well as a thorough outline for the book. Interspersed throughout the text of the commentary, Mathews provides two maps (Israel and Ancient Near East) as well as seven appendices: Abraham’s career and legacy, the patriarchs’ wealth, Melchizedek, faith and obedience, the sacrifice of Isaac, Edom and the Edomites, and Levirate marriage.

He begins every major section of the text by addressing key issues related to questions of composition and structure, in the first section providing brief responses to critical scholars. He consistently argues for a single author for Genesis (Moses) and critiques the various approaches that deny Mosaic authorship. The volume ends with a selected bibliography, selected subject index, person index, and selected Scripture index.

Although this commentary is not as technical as some, it represents a superb addition to commentaries available on the Book of Genesis. Mathews writes with clarity and depth and deals with most of the major exegetical issues in each passage he considers. There is no doubt that Mathews’ two volumes would be one of the first commentaries for which this reviewer will reach when working in Genesis.

Keith Miller, ed. Perspectives on an Evolving Creation. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003. 528 pp. $36.00 (paper). Reviewed by Trevor P. Craigen, Associate Professor of Theology.

All twenty-one chapters of this book support an evolving creation and oppose a young earth/recent creationist understanding of Genesis and origins. The first of three sections, “Providing a Context,” furnishes the needed biblical, historical, and scientific context for what follows. The second section, “Scientific Evidence and Theory,” puts forward the scientific evidence for this evolving creation, or theistic evolution. Then the third part, “Theological Implications and Insights,” deals with the philosophical and theological issues usually associated with evolution. The book’s stated objective is “to provide a wide-ranging and authoritative evaluation of evolutionary theory from those with an orthodox Christian perspective” (xi). “The need is for a Christian worldview which integrates, seriously, both scriptural revelation and the testimony of the created universe” (xii). So, to this end, contributors were drawn from a variety of disciplines, namely astronomy, geology, paleontology, anthropology, biochemistry, genetics, philosophy,
theology, and the history of science.

The editor’s preface advises that he, as geologist and paleoecologist, wishes to share the excitement and challenge of contemporary evolutionary research (xi). More than sharing the news of new discoveries, he wishes to advance the debate on creation and evolution in the evangelical Christian community beyond its “often fruitless and divisive nature” (xi). An admirable intention, to be sure, but one wonders if the debate can be advanced at all beyond the current stalemate. The reason is that with the Word of God as the inspired, infallible, inerrant, and authoritative revelation, any treatment overlooking sound exegesis and seeking an interpretive context to justify the view being proposed, is not tolerable. The elasticity and fluidity with which passages are subsequently handled so as to ensure that the biblical text and its facts conform with the current understanding of science is also quite troubling. It is easier, apparently, to relate the Bible to the fossil record if one considers that the Bible was written before the modern age, before the rise of modern science, and thus is not a science textbook. That the Bible is not a textbook of modern science is correct, but this does not imply that errors of fact and loss of objective accuracy occur in passages about natural phenomena and historical events.

“Evolution and Original Sin” is the title of a chapter which obviously attracts attention. The Historical/Ideal View is considered the best understanding of evolution and original sin. It might be “the best” from Miller’s perspective, but its denial that Adam and Eve were ever actually in the Garden of Eden in a paradisal state is beyond most worrisome, to say the least. Further, the denial that the Fall deeply affected human nature is equally very troublesome, especially when the assertion is made that neither of these two topics is found in Scripture (472). The Garden is said to represent what an ideal relation with God would be, and Adam and Eve represent both “every person” as well as the first hominids with self-consciousness and a growing awareness of God—a clear awareness uncluttered by the spiritual darkness that clouded the minds of the human race when later it turned away from God. The Historical/Ideal View, is described as theistically guided evolution, which means that all on earth is the result of the evolutionary process with God in different places and times guiding or influencing this process. God works in and through the natural processes, e.g., reproduction, and so the offspring are both the product of the operation of the world and a creation of God (497).

The problem is that other unsettling statements are quickly noticeable as one reads through the book, such as a clear acceptance of (1) the reality of common descent, (2) hominids before Adam and Eve, with the fossil record suggesting continuity between pre-human and human physical forms (208-30), (3) dual revelation theory (15-16), (4) two separate and contradictory creation accounts in Genesis 1–2, which defy harmonization if they are taken as natural history (21), (5) two traditions—agricultural/urban and the pastoral/nomadic—in the vocabulary of Genesis 1 and 2, which allows for harmonization, which a literal historical hermeneutic could not accomplish (22-23), (6) the primeval darkness and sea and the formless earth as the forces of chaos to be overcome, but without considering that
this need not depict chaos at all (26-27), (7) the Big Bang as the beginning point, but without commenting upon “the nothing” before that (104-7), (8) the seven-day week as having no chronological or historical significance—it just religiously affirms the totality of the universe having its origins in God (25-26), (9) a definition of original sin as covering the sinful choices all the way from hominids up to the current generation and the resulting bondage to sin and darkness inherited from ancestors (470-71), and (10) the early chapters of Genesis as a theological commentary and symbolic reconstruction of primal history, fitting in with the concepts and stories of that time—it is decidedly not historical narrative but cosmogonic narrative, and thus not to be taken literally (32-33).

One writer in closing his chapter, “Biochemistry and Evolution,” acknowledges that the biblical account of the origin of man reveals a unique origin, both physically and spiritually, that puts it outside the evolutionary process. Yet, nothing in *homo sapiens* biology or biochemistry would suggest that his origin is not part of evolution. Eloquently, he opts for no conclusion by saying, “I am content to remain in a state of cognitive dissonance on this issue until further clarity comes my way” (287). Commendable stance? No! Why is it so difficult to accept the biblical account? Does man being made in the image of God have no significance here? Not a single chapter, it may be said, is entirely free of such troubling and disturbing conclusions, evaluations, and statements as those noted above.

Perhaps it would be too much to ask the contributors to read thoughtfully David Tsumura’s “The Earth and the Waters in Genesis 1 and 2: A Linguistic Investigation,” (JSOTSup 83, 1989) and Roberto Ouro’s two-part article, “The Earth of Genesis 1:2, Abiotic or Chaotic?” (*AUSS* 35/2, 1998, and 37/1, 1999), for conclusions that the darkness and the “without form and void” are not indicative of chaos but of a world which could not sustain life, i.e., abiotic. The Hebrew conception of the world rejects the mythological concoctions of the surrounding nations. Were not these stories of creation and origins from the other nations nothing but sin-distorted versions of what really took place, which finally Moses under inspiration put down in writing so that the Hebrews would not embrace falsehood with regard to the beginning of all things? One more question: Is it really possible to ignore the Flood when studying the fossil record?

The footnotes, however, are most informative and introduce the reader to a considerable body of literature treating the subject matters under discussion. The content of the chapters is no easy reading, requiring concentration. The absence of an index makes for thumbing through the pages of a chapter or two whose contents might cover the information being sought.

This book has value in that it will provide the reader with an extensive look at the conclusions and thinking of theistic evolutionists and will reveal their interpretive approach to the biblical account of creation. It is an eye-opener!
Bill Mounce continues his many good and profitable books on Greek studies with this newest edition. For years *Vines’ Expository Dictionary* has been somewhat of the standard for pastors and lay people who want to do word studies from the Bible. Mounce’s dictionary is presented as “*Vines*’ for the 21st century,” and lives up to what it claims. Not only does it have more up-to-date definitions that benefit from over sixty years of collective studies; the format is much easier to use than *Vines*’.

For instance, if one looked up “Prayer” in *Vines*, the Greek transliterations would be given (e.g., EUCHOMAI), followed by very brief definitions and numerous Scripture references. This served its purpose, but the format of Mounce’s book is more user-friendly. As with *Vines*, the dictionary headings are all in English. However, instead of a Greek transliteration, each word begins with OT usage (if any), followed by NT usage. Mounce gives both his own numbering system used in his other Greek works as well as the often-cited Strong’s numbering system. Mounce presents his information in paragraph style, which is not only easier to follow than *Vines*, but also it gives much more information to the reader and does so in a format that is easy to follow and understand.

*Mounce’s Expository Dictionary* is purposefully presented to those in the church who want to do their own word studies. Those who have no background in either Hebrew or Greek can do this. One can merely skip over the Greek and Hebrew words and the numbering system and still gain a great deal of insight into certain words. For those who do have some understanding of the languages, the numbering system linked with other works may prove useful. For those who want to do deeper studies in the languages, this will be a good beginning point. Often the scholarly works from which the information is derived are cited so that the advanced student can pursue additional sources, if desired.

Mounce’s book has many helpful features. Of extreme importance is the “How To Do Word Studies” (xiii-xxvi). For those who have never attempted such, this is a very useful “walk through” to getting started. The book also has a Scripture index in the back (819-84), as well as both Hebrew and Greek dictionaries (885-1316). Special attention should be paid to page 885, where explanations of the different components of each word entry are given.

This dictionary will be warmly received by many pastors in their studies. It will likewise be a good tool when asked by a lay student of the Bible, “Is there a good tool or dictionary that I can use to do my own word studies?” Yes, there is. Many Bible and language dictionaries sound good to the church member, and yet will sit on the shelves or else usually be given away to someone later (such as Robertson’s *Word Pictures in the New Testament*). Robertson’s information is too advanced for the average church member. Mounce’s is not. It presents information
that can be understood easily, and should leave the reader with a greater desire to mine gold out of the Word, with the encouragement that “I can do this!” This most likely will not be one of those books that sits on the shelf, looks good, but serves no real purpose. Hopefully, it will be a very useful—and used—tool.


Four years after the original hardback edition (2001), Blackwell has published a paperback edition of The Blackwell Companion to the Hebrew Bible. Its driving force is to “demonstrate the principal areas of biblical study that are under major investigation” (xxx). A constellation of major contributors from seven countries wrote the 26 essays. Theologically the contributors represent a wide range and the general stance of those essays is nonevangelical. For example, Carol Meyers declares that the biblical sources are a combination of historical memory and fiction (xiii, 67) and, in part, unreliable (63). Leslie Hoppe concludes that biblical narratives are largely legendary and comprise a questionable historical source (xiv, 88) that tends at times to be imprecise (91). Robert Carroll states that the Bible presents “the myth of the empty land” following the Babylonian conquest (xv, 105). Indeed, the exile and return are both myths as well (112). William Dever continues to insist that the Book of Joshua presents an incorrect view of the conquest (xviii, 123). Ronald Clements adheres to a documentarian view of the “D texts” (xxiv; cf. 287-88). Bruce Birch argues that the Hebrew Bible says nothing about private ethics—only community ethics (xxv, 298). Klaus Koch accepts the three-Isaiah composition of that major prophetic book (xxvii, 353). James Crenshaw attributes the final form of the twelve minor prophets to a redaction much later than the historical prophets themselves (xxviii, 369). John Collins identifies some of Daniel’s prophecies as “unreliable and often in need of reformulation” (xxx, cf. 438-39).

This volume is similar in scope to two previous works, identifying current developments in research and writing on the Hebrew Bible. From a nonevangelical perspective, the earlier one (The Hebrew Bible and Its Modern Interpreters, ed. Douglas A. Knight and Gene M. Tucker [Fortress, 1985]) provides a look at the state of OT studies nearly 25 years ago. A later collection of essays (The Face of Old Testament Studies: A Survey of Contemporary Approaches, ed. David W. Baker and Bill T. Arnold [Baker, 1999]) provides an evangelical perspective on the field within the past decade (see the review in TMSJ 11/2 [Fall 2000]:239-42). The Blackwell volume is contemporary with the latter, but has the perspective of the former.

Antony F. Campbell (Jesuit Theological College, Melbourne, Australia) deals with “Preparatory Issues in Approaching Biblical Texts” (3-18). David Jobling (St. Andrew’s College, Saskatoon, Canada) surveys “Methods of Modern Literary
Criticism” (19-35). Charles E. Carter (Seton Hall University, South Orange, N. J.), who wrote on the same topic for The Face of Old Testament Studies (421-51), analyzes “Social Scientific Approaches” (36-57). Three essays cover the area of OT historical materials: “Early Israel and the Rise of the Israelite Monarchy” (61-86) by Carol Meyers (Duke University, Durham, N. C.), “The History of Israel in the Monarchic Period” (87-101) by Leslie J. Hoppe (Catholic Theological Union, Chicago), and “Exile, Restoration, and Colony: Judah in the Persian Empire” (102-16) by Robert P. Carroll (deceased; University of Glasgow, Scotland).

William G. Dever (University of Arizona, Tucson) contributes three essays on archaeology: “Archaeology and the History of Israel” (119-26), “Biblical and Syro-Palestinian Archaeology” (127-47), and “Archaeology, the Israelite Monarchy, and the Solomonic Temple” (186-206). Dever’s second essay is the same topic as one he wrote for The Hebrew Bible and Its Modern Interpreters (31-74). Dennis Pardee (University of Chicago) in “Canaan” (151-68) describes the developments in studies of Canaanite religion and culture. Joseph Blenkinsopp (University of Notre Dame) writes on “The Household in Ancient Israel and Early Judaism” (169-85). André Lemaire (The Sorbonne, Paris) deals with “Schools and Literacy in Ancient Israel and Early Judaism” (207-17).

Five essays cover the area of OT theology: “Modern Approaches to Old Testament Theology” (221-40) by Henning Graf Reventlow (retired; University of the Ruhr, Bochum, Germany), “Symmetry and Extremity in the Images of YHWH” (241-57) by Walter Brueggemann (Columbia Theological Seminary, Decatur, Ga.), “Theological Anthropology in the Hebrew Bible” (258-75) by Phyllis A. Bird (retired; Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary, Evanston, Ill.), “The Community of God in the Hebrew Bible” (276-92) by Ronald E. Clements (King’s College, University of London, England), and “Old Testament Ethics” (293-307) by Bruce C. Birch (Wesley Theological Seminary, Washington, D.C.).

Rolf Rendtorff (University of Heidelberg, Germany) and Calum Carmichael (Cornell University, Ithaca, N. Y.) present “Creation and Redemption in the Torah” (311-20) and “Law and Narrative in the Pentateuch” (321-36), respectively, in the area of Torah. For the Prophets, Herman Spieckermann (Georg-August-Universität, Göttingen, Germany) covers “Former Prophets: The Deuteronomistic History” (337-52), Klaus Koch (University of Hamburg, Germany) handles “Latter Prophets: The Major Prophets” (353-68), and James L. Crenshaw (Duke University, Durham, N. C.) deals with “Latter Prophets: The Minor Prophets” (369-81). Crenshaw also contributed an essay on wisdom literature to The Hebrew Bible and Its Modern Interpreters (369-407).

In the Writings, Ralph W. Klein (Lutheran School of Theology, Chicago) contributes “Narrative Texts: Chronicles, Ezra, and Nehemiah” (385-401). Erhard S. Gerstenberger (Philips University, Marburg, Germany), who wrote the essay on lyrical literature for The Hebrew Bible and Its Modern Interpreters (409-44), presents “The Psalter” (402-17). Katharine J. Dell (Cambridge University, England) surveys studies in “Wisdom Literature” (418-31) and John J. Collins (Yale Divinity

This volume is the companion to Craig A. Evans, *Ancient Texts for New Testament Studies: A Guide to the Background Literature* (Hendrickson, 2005). Sparks is Associate Professor of Biblical Studies at Eastern University, St. Davids, Penn. He is also author of *The Pentateuch: An Annotated Bibliography*, IBR Bibliographies 1 (Baker, 2002) and *Ethnicity and Identity in Ancient Israel: Prolegomena to the Study of Ethnic Sentiments and Their Expression in the Hebrew Bible* (Eisenbrauns, 1998).

In order to prepare the reader for the categorization of ancient texts in his volume, Sparks embarks upon a discussion of current concepts of genre (1-24). Contrary to the over-simplified generic realism of Gunkel and his followers, the author proposes generic nominalism, which recognizes that multiple legitimate genres can be assigned to any particular text.

For example, the book of Deuteronomy is no longer understood merely as a lawbook but also as an ancient treaty, a book of rituals, a history book, and a series of religious speeches. Nominalism does not force us to choose between all of these helpful alternatives (7).

Ultimately, Sparks takes an eclectic approach that realizes that there is no comprehensive theory of genre that adequately represents all facets of the texts under examination (21). He is in the process of preparing a second volume examining the Hebrew Bible within its comparative literary context, which will reveal his “unique generic judgments about the Hebrew Bible” (xiii).

Following his examination of generic theory, the author describes the nature and existence of “Near Eastern Archives and Libraries” (25-55). Descriptions of selected libraries and archives in the ANE include Syria-Palestine, Mesopotamia, Egypt, and Anatolia (52-55). Individual chapter topics include wisdom literature (56-83), hymns, prayers, and laments (84-126), love poetry (127-43), ritual and incantations (144-215), intermediary texts (omens and prophecies, 216-39), apocalyptic (240-51), tales and novellas (252-70), epics and legends (271-304), myths (305-43), genealogies and king lists (344-60), historiography and royal inscriptions (361-416), law codes (417-34), treaty and covenant (435-48), and epigraphic sources from Syria-Palestine (449-76). Each chapter commences with an introduction followed by discussion moving from Mesopotamia, to Egypt, and then to Syria/Palestine, unless one of the civilizations is more important than others in
that particular genre. Within the sections (e.g., “Mesopotamian Prayers and Laments,” 90-102), a number of sub-sections appear (e.g., “Dumuzi Laments,” 90-91; “Laments for Deceased Kings,” 91-92; “Sumerian and Akkadian City/Temple Laments,” 92-94, etc.). Each sub-section is concluded with a list of resources divided into “Texts and translations,” “Translations,” and “Bibliography.” A general bibliography closes each chapter.

This reviewer benefited from the volume’s usefulness in locating ANE literature that contained the equivalents of the Psalter’s superscripts and subscripts. Sparks not only confirmed the presence of such superscripts and subscripts, but indicated that some corresponded to musical instrumentation and others to the format or purpose of the text (85). In addition, he listed the various types of Mesopotamian literature that contained those elements, making it possible to find his discussions of the types and to employ his list of sources to locate the literature in both text and translation formats. Others will find this work equally beneficial in such endeavors. Such research, however, uncovers the volume’s weaknesses: no subject index by which one might locate all references within the volume to “superscript,” “subscript,” “colophon,” “acrostic,” and similar topics.

At times Sparks exposes his personal biases. He apparently does not think that works produced by theological fundamentalists can be of any use for serious biblical research (xiii). He reflects a viewpoint that looks at some biblical texts as adaptations of pagan (usually Canaanite) texts, when he indicates the possibility that Psalm 20 “originated as a northern psalm at the bull cult in Bethel before it was transmitted to Jerusalem and underwent a process of ‘zionization’” (112). Falling in line with liberal scholarship, Sparks identifies the Joseph story, Ruth, Jonah, Esther, and parts of Daniel as pure fiction (267). This is just the tip of the iceberg, however. He believes that many other texts within the narratives of the Pentateuch and subsequent Deuteronomistic history are also fictitious (268).


Richard Taylor, author of the commentary on Haggai, is Professor of OT and Director of Ph.D. Studies at Dallas Theological Seminary. His specialties involve Aramaic studies and Syriac literature. Ray Clendenen is the Executive
Editorial Director for Bibles, Academic, and Reference Books at Broadman & Holman Publishers. He has been a college and seminary professor, is the general editor for the NAC series, and served as the associate general editor for the Holman Christian Standard Translation. His specialty is Hebrew text linguistics. As with each author in this series, Taylor and Clendenen write from an evangelical perspective with allegiance to the complete authority and inerrancy of the Scriptures. This volume represents a superb addition to an already strong commentary series (for more information on the series, see the above review of another NAC commentary). One of the factors that makes this volume so appealing is that the authors had 200-250 pages to devote to a few chapters, unlike some of the volumes that have to cover many more chapters with only a comparatively few more pages (Matthews in his Genesis commentary had an average of 25 pages per chapter, while Taylor and Clendenen had between 60–100 pages per chapter available for their comments). Besides that logistical detail, Taylor and Clendenen both treat the biblical text carefully and thoroughly.

In their brief but helpful introduction to each book (Haggai, 77 pages; Malachi, 37 pages), Taylor and Clendenen deal with the customary topics of authorship, date, provenance, genre, message, purpose, literary structure, unity, language, style, and textual history of the book. Both authors affirm that the books are unified compositions written by one author. Although Taylor does not provide any excurses in his commentary, Clendenen provides five of them: Priests and Levites in critical perspective, the Levitical Covenant, divine impassibility, immutability of the everlasting God, and tithing in the church. If comparisons can be made, it seems that Taylor gives more attention to text-critical issues in his footnotes, whereas Clendenen, in light of his training in text linguistics, provides more focus on the structure found in the text of Malachi.

This volume represents a fine addition to OT commentaries that have already been published. For an evangelical in particular, this volume will provide great assistance in understanding and teaching or preaching the prophetic message in these small prophetic books.


Travers is an expert in poetry in addition to being a Bible scholar. He teaches English at Southeastern College at Wake Forest, North Carolina, a division of Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary. In this volume’s two sections, he introduces the poetry of Psalms (19-70) and then presents what Psalms teaches about God (71-285).

In the first section, three chapters deal with the nature of Hebrew poetry in
Psalms, psalm genres, and an approach to reading Psalms. Travers’ approach to reading a psalm involves asking four questions (58-61): What is the overall effect of the psalm? What is the structure of the psalm? What are the figures of speech and their effects? What are the themes and theology of the psalm? By means of Psalm 97, the author illustrates his approach (61-68), concluding with applications (69). According to Travers, the Psalter is God-centered. From it we can learn how to have a God-centered life. Therefore, the applications consist of devotional thoughts that guide the reader into a greater knowledge of divine character and actions and how they impact one’s faith and life.

After introducing readers to the poetry of Psalms and an approach to reading Psalms, Travers embarks upon a study of God in Psalms. Moses’ encounters with God become the analogy for understanding how God reveals Himself (73-86). In subsequent chapters the author applies his fourfold approach to individual psalms in order to uncover what each reveals about God. Psalms 19 and 104 elevate the picture of God as Creator (87-123). They reveal that God’s creation provides reason for worshipping God. God is Covenant Maker in Psalms 33 and 103 (124-50), which focus on His unfailing love (hesed, 126).

Psalms 84 and 96 reveal God as King (151-78). Such psalms teach us to employ our prayers to glorify God (166). Messianic psalms (Pss 22 and 45) are the foundation for presenting the Son of God (179-205). Travers argues for a “binocular” view of the Messianic psalms: they refer both to David and to Jesus Christ (182). Psalm 22 has a more direct reference to Christ. Psalm 45, however, has its ultimate fulfillment in the future descendant of the Davidic line, while its immediate focus is on the contemporary Davidic king.

Psalms 27 and 79 direct the reader to God’s provision of protection and deliverance (206-30). Travers handles the problem of imprecatory psalms by examining Psalm 59 (231-48). His solution to the problem involves considering four purposes for imprecatory psalms: to remind us that some things are truly evil, to help us identify sin in our own lives, to warn unbelievers so that they might turn from their unbelief, and to teach us about the sovereignty of God (235-38). The next two chapters look at God’s forgiveness in Psalm 51, a penitential psalm (249-67), and God as the beginning of wisdom in Psalms 111 and 112 (268-85). A final summary chapter asks, “What Have We Learned?” (286-95). An appendix presents “Major Attributes of God in the Psalms” (296-309), listing the topic of each of the 150 psalms and the divine attributes to which each refers. A select bibliography of books, articles, hymns, poems, and plays closes the volume (310-13).

Encountering God in the Psalms is not intended as an exegetical commentary, but it provides basic exegetical guidance. It does not discuss fully major problems like imprecatory and messianic psalms, but it offers the reader some valuable insight with which to begin a more detailed study. The volume’s strength is in Travers’ purpose to create an attitude of worship in the reader. Preachers and lay people alike will benefit from this catalyst for a devotional study of Psalms.

Most books on textual criticism focus exclusively either on the OT or the NT. Wegner’s volume, however, examines the history, methods, and results of textual criticism with regard to both testaments. For the OT, *A Student’s Guide* is more comprehensive and analytical than Ellis Brotzman’s *Old Testament Textual Criticism: A Practical Introduction* (Baker, 1993), even though both are aimed at the beginning student or informed layperson. Brotzman’s volume is distinctive because he illustrates the methodology of textual criticism by discussing all of the material variants in the Book of Ruth. On the NT side of things, Wegner’s depth and breadth of coverage compares favorably with J. Harold Greenlee’s *Introduction to New Testament Textual Criticism*, 2nd ed. (Hendrickson, 1996). Wegner excels in his insightful categorization of the different philosophies of textual criticism, his bibliographies for each major topic, and the work sheets and instructions giving the student direction for initiating the process of textual criticism (OT: 120-34; NT: 227-49). “Further Reading” lists occur 40 times at the conclusion of each topical discussion. Some sources occur repeatedly in these lists, because they cover a wide range of topics.

Some of the book is standard fare for volumes dealing with textual criticism: definitions and examples of unintentional and intentional transmissional errors (44-57), a history of the transmission of the text (58-86), and a history of key manuscripts, versions, and editions (OT: 89-119, 140-203; NT: 207-28, 256-65; both: 267-97). Wegner’s work stands out, however, in dealing with both testaments. An abundance of helpful tables, illustrations, and text samples make the material accessible for readers (like this reviewer) who are visual learners. The volume contains 77 figures, 22 tables, and 3 maps placed strategically within the text in close proximity to the corresponding discussions they illustrate. One of the most helpful tables covers “Perceived Goals of Old Testament Textual Criticism” (31, Table 1.1). Six separate goals have been set by various OT text critical scholars. Each goal is described and scholars who adhere to that goal are listed. For some readers it will come as a shock that so very few OT text critics seek to establish the author’s *ipsissima verba*.

One of the fascinating benefits of a volume covering textual criticism for both testaments is a discussion of the differences between OT and NT textual criticism (26-29). The two sciences differ due to the vast difference in the transmissional histories, as well as different starting points for practitioners. Throughout, Wegner maintains a sanely conservative stance, as evidenced in his preference for the “Reasoned Eclectic method” in NT textual criticism (221).

Wegner concludes that, for the OT, a “high regard for Scripture, devotion to detail and providence have preserved over the millennia a text that is remarkably
In regard to the NT, the relatively small number of material variants “underscores how accurate our Bibles actually are” (231). He reiterates these conclusions in the final chapter (298-301), then provides readers with a practical “Glossary” (302-10) and indexes for names, subjects, and Scripture references (314-34).

In spite of the overall excellence of this volume and its great value in providing students and laypersons with a user-friendly, understandable, and instrumental presentation of textual criticism for both testaments, it does have its flaws. Incompleteness, inconsistency, inaccuracy, and inequality crop up on occasion like unwanted weeds in the middle of a wonderful garden.

Incompleteness: Although the author provides sources in a footnote (75 n. 51) regarding the current debate over a potential new approach to the purpose of Kethib-Qere’ readings in the margin of the Masoretic Text of the Hebrew Bible, he fails to reveal that the new approach understands the Qere’ as a warning not to be led away from the Kethib (see the review of John Barton, *Holy Writings, Sacred Text* [Westminster/John Knox, 1997] in *TMSJ* 14/1 [2003]:108-9). In the description of one Qumran Isaiah scroll (1QIsa; 91-92), the author does not inform the reader that lengthy (not just single-word) corrections appear written between lines and even down the margins (as at Isa 40:7-8). The table for major abbreviations in *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* (*BHS*) and *Biblia Hebraica Quinta* (*BHQ*) correctly lists the meanings for pc Mss, nonn Mss, and mlt Mss, but fails to list the different quantities and the one additional abbreviation (permIt Mss) that applies to the Books of Samuel (117, Table E1.1, incorrectly labeled as Table 4.1 on this one page). The bibliography for the Masorah (118-19) omits the valuable work of Page H. Kelley, Daniel S. Mynatt, and Timothy G. Crawford, *The Masorah of Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* (Eerdmans, 1998). Commentary series especially helpful for identifying textual issues, gathering textual evidence, and offering a solution should include the International Critical Commentary (249).

Inconsistency: In the text (63, 143) Wegner cites Emanuel Tov’s second edition of *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible* (Fortress, 2001) stating that 35 percent of Qumran biblical manuscripts demonstrate affinity to the proto-Masoretic Text. However, in a chart (67, Table 3.1), he gives the figure as 60 percent (based upon an older unrevised work by Tov).

Inaccuracy: Discussing the textual variant at Gen 1:7 in the textual apparatus of *BHS*, Wegner asserts that the “editors of the BHS” suggest an addition (52, 114). Actually, “editors” should be “editor,” since Genesis was edited by Otto Eissfeldt in 1969, according to the reverse of the *BHS* title page. Another inaccuracy is due to a typo in references to “8HevXIIIgr” (200, 201) that should be “8HevXIIgr.”

Inequality: Wegner does not grant equal treatment to both testaments. This volume slightly favors OT textual criticism over NT criticism. True, the OT’s history and transmission are over a longer period of time and are often more complex. However, readers will be left wondering why an equivalent history of NT textual
history is not divided up into at least two major periods: AD 100-1500 and 1500-present. For the OT, the author provided nearly nine pages of transmissional history from AD 100 to the present (70-78), while only two full pages for the same period of NT transmissional history (80-82). On the other hand, Wegner presents two completed worksheets for a NT example (Eph 1:1; 250-51, 252-53; cp. 228), but he provides no completed worksheet for an OT example (134).

As far as this reviewer is concerned, this volume will become required reading for OT textual criticism courses that he teaches. Future revisions will iron out the first edition’s problems and keep the book in use for years to come. For that, teachers, students, pastors, and informed laypersons will be grateful.