

## Essay and Review

*Genesis 1-4: A Linguistic, Literary, and Theological Commentary*

C. John Collins

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### Introductory Essay

This essay and review introduces a short series of book reviews on Bible-Science issues because as the late Ralph Winter believes—correctly I think—that this is one of the major missiological battles of the twenty-first century. In the issue of the *International Journal of Frontier Missiology* (IJFM) entitled, “The Religion of Science: The Largest Remaining Frontier,”<sup>1</sup> Ralph Winter writes:

The “eleventh” frontier is the Religion of Science, which is clearly a barrier found today across many different ethnic traditions. It is one of the few frontiers that does not correlate specifically with the concept of unreached peoples, but rather runs throughout many different ethnic and cultural entities. Most seriously it limits people’s sense of God’s glory and thus even interferes with growth into the fullness of the Gospel for people within the major “reached” groups. Ironically, as primarily an impediment to glorifying God and of declaring His glory to the nations, it impedes a proper appreciation of God’s handiwork in His creation— which ought to be the means of knowing and glorifying God! (Winter 2003, 108)<sup>2</sup>

Certainly we all must agree! However, is the issue of a recent creation<sup>3</sup> a divisive issue that does not further the fulfilling of the Great Commission of our Lord? Is “Exporting the Age of the Earth Controversy a Bad Idea” as Ted Cabal states in his article in that same issue of the IJFM?<sup>4</sup> The great majority of evangelical scientists seem to believe that it is indeed divisive. But is it? For those working with believers from an orthodox Muslim background it certainly is not. The Quran believes in a recent creation in six solar days, and by implication, a few thousand years ago.<sup>5</sup> To suggest otherwise is to undermine the Scripture that has led to their

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<sup>1</sup>Ralph Winter, ed. 2003. The Religion of Science: The Largest Remaining Frontier [title of issue], *International Journal of Frontier Mission* (Winter) 20/4.

<sup>2</sup>Ralph Winter, From the Editor’s desk, *International Journal of Frontier Mission* 20/4 (Winter) 2003:107-108.

<sup>3</sup> Often called Young Earth Creation (YEC), but more accurately termed Recent Universe Creation (RUC).

<sup>4</sup>Ted Cabal, Why Exporting the Age of the Earth Controversy is a Bad Idea, *International Journal of Frontier Mission* 20/4 (Winter) 2003:121-126.

<sup>5</sup>Creation in six days – *Qur’an* S. 7:54; 41:9-12; 50:38 & 57:3-4 (cf. Gen. 1 & Ex. 20:8-11) “Your Guardian-Lord is God Who created the heavens and the earth in six days, and is firmly established on the throne (of authority). He draws the night like a veil over the day, each seeking the other in rapid succession. He created the sun, the moon, and the stars – (all) governed by laws under His Command....“We [viz. God] created the heavens and the earth and all between them in six days....“He is the First and the Last, the Evident and the Immanent. And He has full knowledge of all things. He it is Who created the heavens and the earth in six days.”

new found faith in Isa al-Masih. Most believers in the two-thirds world, like almost every major theologian until the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, who read the proto-history account (Gen 1-11), read it as it is, a straight forward narrative history of the centuries before the call of Abraham. They read the creation narrative just as Moses wrote and interpreted it in Exodus: “For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day; therefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day and made it holy” (Ex 20:11 NAU; see also 31:17). Our Lord himself read the account as straightforward history: “He who created them from the beginning made them MALE AND FEMALE” (Mt 19:4, see 19:8) and “From the beginning of creation, *God MADE THEM MALE AND FEMALE*” (Mk 10:6; cf. Jn 1:1-2; Heb 1:10).<sup>6</sup> In my opinion, no amount of exegetical or hermeneutical gymnastics can escape the perspicuous authority of our Lord in these passages. It does not move us forward to discuss accommodation theory or to escape into a non-overlapping magisteria dualism, as do many. Our Lord never accommodates with a lie but only with simplicity. Just like a mother will tell her two year old that she has a baby in her tummy, meaning her mid-section as she pats her extended womb, so our Lord will lisp the truth in baby talk, to use Calvin’s overused metaphor, but never in a lie. He tells us in a more simple manner so we can understand (see e.g., Jn 3:8-12; Rom 6:19). Creation in six days a few thousand years ago is already straight-forward and simple.

Almost all those who held to a classical hermeneutic and classical teaching on biblical infallibility (inerrancy) also hold to this doctrine. John Calvin certainly did, as any perusal of his *Institutes* will substantiate. Perhaps only Augustine of Hippo would dissent, and that for neo-Platonic reasons that God created all things in one day—still a few thousand years ago, I might add. Classically, Bible scholars added up the chronogenealogies of Genesis<sup>7</sup> and together with various other biblical genealogies with acknowledged gaps, came to a fairly close estimate of the earth’s age according to Scripture.

Why then is this universal consensus so controversial and divisive today? It was held everywhere and at all times in church history until the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century when Westerners began to question this common faith a generation or two before Darwin.<sup>8</sup> In my opinion, the paradigm shift certainly did not come because of the evidence. No evidence is neutral and uninterpreted. Everyone interprets data within an interpretative paradigm. Deism and then agnosticism—folly by biblical standards (Pss 10:4, 14:1, 53:1)—gradually introduced a new religious worldview—evolutionary materialism—into Western culture. Evolutionary materialism is by definition operationally atheist. As such, according to the Pauline doctrine of antithesis: “The wisdom of this world is foolishness before God” (1 Cor 3:19, see 1 Cor 2:1-4:7). The only antidote is to return back “to God’s instruction and the prophet’s word” (Is 8:14). We ought to be seeking to bring “every thought captive to the obedience of Christ” instead of trying to syncretize a biblical worldview with an antithetical paradigm that refuses to bow the knee to

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<sup>6</sup>Certainly the Apostles and Prophets of our Lord read Genesis 1-11 as straight-forward history (see e.g., 1 Cor 11:3; Rom 5:12-20; Heb 11:4, 12:24; 1 Jn 3:12; Jd 11; Rev 12:9, 20:12, 2:7, 22:2, 14, 19, etc.

<sup>7</sup>The term “chronogenealogies” perhaps coined by

<sup>8</sup> See Terry Mortenson’s careful documentation of this: 1) Mortenson, Terry. 2008. “Deep Time” and the Church’s Compromise: Historical Background, *Coming to Grips with Genesis: Biblical Authority and the Age of the Earth*, Terry Mortenson and Thane H. Ury, eds., 79-104. Green Forest, AR: Master Books. 2) Mortenson, Terry. 2004. *The Great Turning Point: The Church’s Catastrophic Mistake on Geology—Before Darwin*. Green Forest, AR: Master Books.

King Jesus. Paul and John were certainly no dualists, who accept Scripture authority only when it addresses upper story “religious truth.” John fought against such dualism in his first epistle. The Christ-Logos joined himself forever to the physical man, Jesus (1 Jn 1:1-4, 4:1-7). Paul certainly combated a sort of Jewish dualism in Colossians. Scripture addresses lower story scientific matters of actual observable factuality just as much as upper story religious matters. To accept such a dualist presupposition is to become a syncretistic and not a biblical Christian.

I bring this issue up because in the issue of the *Journal of Frontier Mission* mentioned above, the late Dr. Ralph Winter—whom I highly esteem—strongly recommends an article by Dean Ohlam, which presents a strategy to reach scientists as a class: “We will suggest an approach that allows the Genesis account of creation to be read side by side with the evidence of the natural world around us.” (Ohlam 2003, 128). A bit later in the article, he elucidates what he means:

A more significant difficulty with dinosaurs and other fossilized remains of extinct creatures is that scientific measurement and evaluation seem to place the vast majority of them on earth millions of years before the appearance of mankind. So it’s understandable that many have wondered why the Bible does not explain in a direct way the appearance of great age nor the story of dinosaurs and other extinct species as it seems to be told in the record of the earth’s crust. This and other scientific findings about apparent geological time (earth history) and apparent astronomical time (cosmic history) seem to place God’s two revelations in opposition to each other. Can both be true? (Ohlam 2003, 128-129)

Ohlam then lists many points that all those who are concerned for the authority of Scripture, the reclamation of the lost peoples and the lost beauty of creation can agree upon. He attempts to set the stage for seeking consensus between those holding to a recent universe and those who hold to an ancient earth because the vast majority of scientists claim the universe is in actual fact billions of years old. He claims: “Unanswered questions are to be expected” (Ohlam 2003, 131) and that one of these is the age of the earth: “According to the Bible, how old is the earth? We don’t know. The Bible doesn’t say” (Ohlam 2003, 131). In support of this contention, Ohlam writes:

Many thought that all you had to do to determine the age of the earth was to apply simple math and some logical deductions to the genealogies of Genesis 4, 5, 10, and 11. But a problem is created by the limitations of words. The word begot used in our English Bible to indicate the paternal line between generations does not always mean father to son. It often refers to the great, great grandfather (or any number of “greats”) of the named individual, with the in-between progenitors unnamed. So there is no accurate way to measure the generations back from Abraham to Adam. (Ohlam 2003, 131)

Sadly, however, this is not biblically accurate. Those who still make this claim, among them C. John Collins, whose book I will review shortly, have not carefully read the other side of the story as Scripture mandates (see e.g., Prv 18:17). Well-respected Old Testament professor,

Gerhard F. Hasel,<sup>9</sup> in two carefully researched and referenced articles strongly disagrees with Ohlam's (and Collin's) conclusions (Hasel 1980a, b).<sup>10</sup> Hasel and others establish that the genealogies of Genesis 5 and 11 are different from those mentioned after Abraham's story begins. They base this conclusion upon historical, grammatical, and contextual reasons (see also Sarfati 2003; 2004; Freeman 2008).<sup>11</sup>

First, according to Hasel, almost all ancient, Jewish and Christian sources teach that these genealogies are unique and determinative of the age of the earth. For example, Josephus at the beginning of the Christian era in *Antiquities of the Jews* and Calvin at the beginning of the Reformation in his commentary on Genesis or his *Institutes*, both held to an earth about 6000 years old (see Josephus 1(3):3-4; Calvin 1960 [*Institutes* 1.14.2]; 1996, 78, 105).<sup>12</sup> These were by no means the exception but exemplified the overwhelming consensus of opinion in Jewish and Christian circles until about fifty years before Charles Darwin's *Origin of the Species* in 1848 (see Duncan and Hall 2001; Sarfati 2004, 107-139; Mortenson 2004).<sup>13</sup> This conclusion even Davis Young, a theistic evolutionist who taught many years at Calvin College in Michigan, believes is accurate after a careful analysis of the historical data:

The virtually unanimous opinion among the early Christians until the time of Augustine was that human history from the creation of Adam to the birth of Christ had lasted approximately fifty-five hundred years. It is very probable that the age of the world was regarded as the same number of years, for the writings of the church fathers generally do not reveal any sharp distinction between the initial creation and the creation of man....It cannot be denied...that the almost universal view of the Christian world until the eighteenth century was that the Earth was only a few thousand years old. Not until the development of modern scientific

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<sup>9</sup> C. John Collins cites Hasel but does not interact with nor attempt to refute his argument (Collins 2004, 203-207).

<sup>10</sup> See "Genesis 5 and 11: Chronogenealogies in the biblical history of beginnings." *Origins* 7/1:23-37 (Hasel 1980a), and "The meaning of the chronogenealogies of Genesis 5 and 11." *Origins* 7/2:53-70 (Hasel 1980b).

Physical Chemist, Jonathan Sarfati following Hasel's research also establishes that 1) Sarfati, Jonathan. 2003. Biblical chronogenealogies. *Technical Journal* [TJ]: 14-18. 2) Sarfati, Jonathan. 2004. *Refuting compromise: A biblical and scientific refutation of "Progressive creationism" (Billions of Years), as popularized by astronomer Hugh Ross*. With a foreword by Douglas Kelly. Green Forest, AR: Master Books.

<sup>11</sup> See two works by Jonathan Sarfati and one by Travis R. Freeman: 1) Sarfati, Jonathan. 2003. Biblical chronogenealogies. *Technical Journal* [TJ]: 14-18. 2) Sarfati, Jonathan. 2004. *Refuting compromise: A biblical and scientific refutation of "Progressive creationism" (Billions of Years), as popularized by astronomer Hugh Ross*. With a foreword by Douglas Kelly. Green Forest, AR: Master Books. 3) Travis R. Freeman "Do the Genesis 5 and 11 Genealogies Contain Gaps?" in *Coming to Grips with Genesis: Biblical Authority and the Age of the Earth*, eds. Terry Mortenson and Thane H. Ury, 283-314. Green Forest, AR: Master Books.

<sup>12</sup> Calvin, John. 1960. *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. Translated by Ford Lewis Battles Philadelphia: Westminster. Calvin, John. 1996. *Commentaries on the first book of Moses called Genesis*. Trans. John King. Vol. 1. Grand Rapids: Baker.

<sup>13</sup> Duncan, J. Ligon, III and David W. Hall. 2001. "The 24 Hour View in *The Genesis debate: Three views on the days of creation*", ed. David G. Hagopian. With a Foreword by Norman L. Geisler, 21-66. Mission Viejo, CA: CruXPress.

investigation of the Earth itself would this view be called into question within the church (Young 1982, 19, 25)<sup>14</sup>

Young writes elsewhere in the same volume that “it does not seem to have occurred to any of the early Christians that there might be gaps or omissions in those genealogies [i.e., Gen 5, 11] of Scripture” (Young 1982, 22). He also concludes that “absolutely no one” argued for an age of the earth “tens of thousands of years old on the grounds that the six days are used figuratively for indefinite periods of time” (Young 1982 22).

Second, Hasel (Sarfati and others) believe that the grammar and vocabulary of the genealogies of both Genesis 5 and 11 indicate that they do not list forefathers. Instead, they list a direct father-son relationship. G. Hasel terms them “chronogenealogies” due to the fact that both provide birth and death information along with the number of years lived and in what year the heir being traced was born within the lifetime of the father (Hasel 1980a, b). Hasel explains that this information is the difference between the genealogies of Luke and of Matthew with its obvious “schematization,” the many other OT genealogical lists, and Genesis 5 and 11:10-26. The Genesis 5 and 11 genealogies are thus completely unique in biblical literature (Hasel 1980b, 60). In this they directly contradict Green who asks the following question: “Is there not, however, a peculiarity in the construction of the these genealogies which forbids our applying to them an inference drawn from others not so constructed?” (Green 1890/1972, 22).<sup>15</sup> After asking the question, Green immediately denies the question’s validity, while at the same time mentioning similar grammatical and vocabulary considerations as do Hasel (Sarfati and others).

C. J. Collins (and others such as Walter Kaiser) cite William Henry Green’s classic article in an attempt to refute concept that the genealogies of Genesis 5 and 11 are unique “chronogenealogies” (Green 1890, 1972). Green lists the following data in support of his contention. First, he believes that a schematization scheme holds true for the genealogies of Genesis 5 and 11 because of an alleged sequence of ten patriarchs before the flood and ten after. This scheme disallows us to use them to compute time sequence, he claims. Instead they merely give us a “conspectus of individual lives” and gave examples of the longevity of humans before the Flood and how they “gradually narrowed down” after it (Green 1890/1972, 23). Both of these contentions are indeed true but reductionistic. Second Green notes that “there is no

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<sup>14</sup> Young, Davis A. 1982. *Christianity and the Age of the earth*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan. An updated version is Young, Davis A. and Ralph F. Stearley. 2008. *The Bible, Rocks and Time: Geological Evidence for the Age of the Earth*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic. I would highly recommend Davis Young’s father’s volume: Young, E. J. 1964. *Studies in Genesis One*. Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed. The elder Young takes the exact opposite perspective of his son, who began well, but moved away from both inerrancy and a truly biblical-scientific approach by adopting a naïve realist or empiricist approach to geology. C. John Collins highly recommends the updated volume of Davis Young.

Young and Collins’ approach makes a fatal error, as we shall see. There is no such thing as a brute fact that can be interpreted without a worldview to inform the interpretation. The reason why empiricist science interprets the data of nature to “prove” billions of years is that their worldview mandates it! See my earlier article in *Global Missiology*: Mark R. Kreitzer, 2005. Studying Missiology with a Presuppositional Methodology. *Global Missiology* 3/2 (April). <http://www.globalmissiology.net>. Another version is Mark R. Kreitzer. 2007. Towards a Biblical Philosophy of Science. *Christianity and Society: The Biannual Journal of the Kuyper Foundation*. 17/2 (Winter 2007).

<sup>15</sup>William Henry Green. 1890. Primeval Chronology. *Bibliotheca Sacra* 47:285-303. Found also in Walter Kaiser, ed. 1972. *Classical Evangelical Essays in Old Testament Interpretation*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 13-28.

computation anywhere in Scripture of the time that elapsed from the creation or from the deluge, as there is from the descent into Egypt to the Exodus (Exod. 12:40), or from the Exodus to the building of the temple (1 Kings 6:1)” (Green 1890/1972, 23).

Citing much of the literature current up to his time of writing, G. Hasel shows that Green’s first contention does not turn out to be accurate. From Adam to Noah there are ten members of the list but from Shem to Terah there are only nine. There is therefore no comparison to the three sets of fourteen genealogical members as Matthew included in his list of the forefathers of Jesus (Mt 1:1-17). Hasel explains:

If Abraham is to be counted as the tenth patriarch in Genesis 11, then consistency requires that Shem is counted as the eleventh patriarch in Genesis 5, because each genealogy concludes with a patriarch for whom three sons are mentioned. It appears that a comparison of Genesis 5:32 and 11:26 reveals that there are no grounds to count one of the three sons in one instance and not in the other, when in fact the formula is the same. Thus, if one counts in Genesis 5 ten patriarchs, consistency demands the counting of nine patriarchs in Genesis 11, or, vice versa, if one counts eleven in Genesis 5, then one needs to count ten in Genesis 11. The figures 10/9 to 11/10 respectively can hardly qualify as an intentional arrangement or a symmetry. (Hasel 1980b, 60)

Contrary to Ohlam and Collins’<sup>16</sup> further assertion, some biblical authors actually did use biblical genealogies in order to make definite chronological assertions. Their argument is common among many evangelicals. See for example, Acts 13:19 and Galatians 3:17. Paul uses genealogies to make carefully constructed chronological statements (see also Acts 7:6). Certainly Jude did the same for the genealogies of Genesis 5 and 11, when he stated that Enoch was the seventh generation from Adam (e[bdomoj avpo. VAda.m [Jud 14]).

Now no one will deny that the Hebrew word “father” (**ba'**) can sometimes denote both a grandfather or a more distant male progenitor in certain contexts. All agree with Collins that “son” (**!Be**) can sometimes denote a distant but direct patrilineal descendant in other specific contexts. However to claim that these two terms denote something other than the usual meaning of biological father and son in the context of Genesis 5 and 11 is the fallacy of an “expanded semantic field. . . . The Genesis 5 and 11 genealogies say that X also ‘begat sons and daughters’, implying that Z is likewise a son of X in this specific context” (Sarfati 2003, 16).

Furthermore, Sarfati points out that even if the the words “son of” means a distant ancestor in some contexts, the term “son of” in Genesis 5 and 11 is “always preceded by the accusative particle אַ (’et), which is not translated but marks Z [the son] as the direct object of the verb ‘begat’ (וַיֹּלֵד wayyôled).” This indicates that “the begetting of Z by X still occurred when X was Y years old, regardless of whether Z was a son or a more distant descendant.” Last, grammar provides another strong defence for the view that wayyôled ’et- [-ta, dl,AYàw:] denotes a literal father-son relationship in Genesis 5 and 11. dl,AYàw: [wayyôled] is in the

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<sup>16</sup> “A further indication that we have found a valid convention is the simple fact that no biblical author ever reckons up a length of time based on a genealogy” (Collins 2004, 206).

In two additional instances the names of three sons are provided (Genesis 5:32; 11:26). The same verbal form as in this phrase (i.e. wayyôled) is employed another sixteen times in the phrase “and he fathered (other) sons and daughters” (Genesis 5:4,7,10, etc.; 11:11,13,17, etc.). Remaining usages of this verbal form in the Hiphil in the book of Genesis reveal that the expression “and he fathered” (wayyôled) is used in the sense of a direct physical offspring (Genesis 5:3; 6:10). A direct physical offspring is evident in each of the remaining usages of the Hiphil of wayyôled, “and he fathered”, in the OT (Judges 11:1; 1 Chronicles 8:9; 14:3; 2 Chronicles 11:21; 13:21; 24:3). The same expression reappears twice in the genealogies in 1 Chronicles where the wording “and Abraham fathered Isaac” (1 Chronicles 1:34; cf. 5:37 [6:11]) rules out that the named son is but a distant descendant of the patriarch instead of a direct physical offspring. Thus the phrase “and he fathered PN” in Genesis 5 and 11 cannot mean Adam “begat an ancestor of Seth.” The view that Seth and any named son in Genesis 5 and 11 is but a distant descendant falters in view of the evidence of the Hebrew language used. (Hasel 1980b, 67)

Other contextual reasons for seeing a direct father-son relationship in the Genesis 5 and 11 lists are definitive. The genealogy from Adam to Noah and his son Shem is actually the Seed-line through which the Seed of the Woman, Messiah Y’shua would come (Gen 3:15): Adam-Seth-Enosh-Kenan-Mahalalel-Jared-Enoch-Methuselah-Lamech-Noah [10 names] (Shem, Ham and Japheth) (Gen 5:3-32). The line in Genesis 11 also follows the Seed-line as well: Shem-Arphachshad-Shelah-Eber-Peleg-Reu-Serug-Nahor-Terah [9 names] (Abram, Nahor and Haran). Notice at this point the clear contextual reason for direct father-son relationships in eight of the eleven names listed. First Adam and Eve were the parents of Seth who replaced Abel in the Seed-line of faith leading to Messiah (Gen 4:25). Second, Enosh is the biological son of Seth, because Seth was the very one who named him (Gn. 4:25). Third, Enoch was the seventh direct descendant from Adam (Jude 14).<sup>17</sup> Fourth, Lamech named Noah, thus Lamech is likely his biological father, not merely a forefather though this is not one hundred percent certain because we do not know the customs of the day (Gen 5:29). At least Lamech must have been living.

Fifth, Enoch, a prophet (Jude 14), gave his son Methuselah a name most likely meaning “when he dies it shall be sent.” If there were no gaps in the genealogy of the Masoretic Hebrew text, then the genealogical years found in that text correctly added together puts Methuselah’s

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<sup>17</sup>Someone could make the counter argument that Jude only assumes that Enoch is the seventh in the biblical list, but not the literal seventh in a father-son list. However, in combination with the other evidence listed in this paragraph, the most natural reading is the seventh linear descendant.

death in the actual year of the Flood.<sup>18</sup> Sixth, Shem, Ham and Japheth were saved with Noah on the Ark and therefore must be his sons as Peter also directly implies (1 Pt 3:20).<sup>19</sup> Seventh, Arphaxad was born two years after the Flood thus was the son of Shem as the genealogy states (Gn. 11:10). Eighth, Terah traveled with Abram, Haran and Nahor, his three genealogically listed sons, from Ur of the Chaldees (Gen 11:31) (based on Sarfati 2003, 17). If eight of the eleven are direct father-son relationships, then why could not the other three also be? Even if there were gaps between the unaccounted three, certainly they cannot be adding up to millions or billions of years as ancient universe advocates teach.

Consequently, we can see that Scripture does indeed give accurate and useful information with which to discover the age of the earth. Second, the Bible teaches the genealogies of Genesis 5 and 11 are indeed following a father-son line, different from other biblical genealogies. It is for this reason G. Hasel terms them chronogenealogies that is genealogies giving actual time elapsed.

### Book Review

All of this has been a rather long introduction to the review of C. John “Jack” Collins’ book *Genesis 1-4: A Linguistic, Literary, And Theological Commentary*. Collins accepts the long-age theory of human origins. He further endeavors to demonstrate among other things that the classic consensus of the universal church on this question based on Genesis 1-4 is in serious error. In this he seeks to demonstrate that Scripture is not in error but human interpretation of it is. In itself, this is a noble desire, which I can appreciate. However, this particular attempt—like that of Olham and Dr. Winter’s—to find some sort of middle path between those holding a classic grammatical-historical exegesis of Genesis 1-4 and those believing that Genesis 1-4 is a mythical and/or a merely poetic (mythopoetic) account fails because of Paul’s doctrine of antithesis. Collins’ failure is especially dangerous because it undermines the very biblical authority he professes to uphold. In doing so, Collins rejects the classic hermeneutical principle of perspicuity. In other words, the way to discover the meaning of a passage is to study how biblical authors read the account and then, to substantiate that perspective, to study the history of interpretation of the passage in question.

First, however, I wish to make clear that Collins is no common scholar. He is clearly a master of ancient Semitic languages and of biblical scholarship. This volume is excellent, erudite, and well researched. I have gained many fine insights from it. It is an introduction to his innovative analogical day perspective that seeks to harmonize the consensus of modern science and Scripture’s account of creation. What is interesting is that Collins is a conservative Presbyterian from my denomination (Presbyterian Church in America [PCA]), and is Professor of Hebrew at its flagship school, Covenant Theological Seminary. Collins expressed desire is “read the text the way a competent reader in the original audience would have done, to the best that we can reconstruct that competence” (Collins 2004, 5).

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<sup>18</sup>Sarfati here cites a source showing that the best etymological reconstruction of the name of this patriarch is literally “he dies it shall be sent,” implying that Enoch, a prophet (Jude 14), predicts that the year Methuselah dies, the judgment-Flood will be sent upon the earth (Sarfati 2003).

<sup>19</sup>“The ark, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were brought safely through *the* water” would include Noah and his wife, and each of the three sons and their wives equaling eight.

There are many outstanding insights that Collins provides to help understand this foundational passage. For example, He claims that the original creation was very good. However, by supporting billions of years of nature “red in tooth and claw” he cannot explain the seemingly meaningless chaos of the fossil record, the millions of extinct species, and the nature of a good creation and a supposedly good God who creative in such a haphazard manner. Collins rejects a global Flood and the classic biblical explanation that the new heavens and new earth will restore the creation back to a vegetarian state as the visions of Isaiah claim.

Another positive point is that Collins demonstrates clearly that the original readers would have read the passage with Adam being in the role as head of humanity. In other words, the human race received God’s curse not because Eve sinned but because Adam rebelled. In this he upholds both the Pauline reading of the passage in Romans 5 and 1 Corinthians 15 (see e.g., Collins 2006, 173, 181) and that of the Westminster divines. In this, Prof. Collins upholds the Reformational insight that the original relationship between God and Adam was covenantal (Collins 2006, 113, 188), though he departs from his own denominational standards by denying that this was a “covenant of works” (Collins 2006, 112, 113, 114, 138). Here, in my opinion, he takes one good step forward but then two steps backward and shows that he has not digested Meredith Kline’s excellent work on this subject.<sup>20</sup> Interestingly enough, however, Collins seems to reject out-of-hand Meredith Kline’s version of the literary framework theory for the days of creation (as do I but for different reasons). Collins concludes, because Day 1 and 4, 2 and 5, 3 and 6 are parallel (in his estimation) and have a “high level of patterning that the order of events and even lengths of time are not part of the author’s focus; this is at the basis of what is often called the literary framework scheme of interpretation.” The six “workdays,” then, he adds, “are a literary device to display the creation week as a careful and artful effort” (Collins 2006, 73). This means, he states later, the creation week must not be taken in a “literalistic” manner as a record of the actual events. In other words, again he makes a step forward and two steps backward.

To support this claim, he writes that the creation days are not earth-focused days. The days, according to Collins, then are “analogical days” that is God’s workdays, which are not focused on earth, but upon heaven. Oddly, however, this is directly contrary to the actual focus of the account, which spotlights what God creating on earth and around the earth but not upon what God is doing in heaven (except speaking commands). Collins’ goal in this attempt, it seems, is to find billions of years in earth’s history within the biblical text. “My sympathies are with the harmonizers,” he writes. In other words, he is sympathetic with those who attempt to harmonize evolutionary materialist science and biblical faith.<sup>21</sup> Because of Paul’s doctrine of antithesis, this effort fails. God’s wisdom is foolishness to the world and man’s wisdom is foolishness to God. Certainly, we cannot escape here into dualism. Paul is speaking about wisdom in every area of life, not just in the area of religion.

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<sup>20</sup>Meredith G. Kline. 2006. *Kingdom Prologue: Genesis Foundations for a Covenantal Worldview*. Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock. See also Lee Irons. 2000. *Redefining Merit: An Examination of Medieval Presuppositions in Covenant Theology, Creator, Redeemer, Consummator: A Festschrift for Meredith G. Kline*, Howard Griffith and John R. Muether, eds. 253-69. Greenville, SC: Reformed Academic Press/Reformed Theological Seminary.

<sup>21</sup> See his more comprehensive attempt to show this is C. Jack Collins. 2003. *Science and Faith: Friends or Foes?* Wheaton, IL: Crossway.

Another excellent point of Collins' work is the fact that he correctly states that the original creation was "very good." Yet he never attempts to deal with the counter-discussion that a very good creation, according to Scripture itself, was an earth with harmony between predators and prey and between children and deadly vipers. Collins instead presupposes that animal death occurred for billions of years before the creation of Adam. Collins attempts to find in Genesis One these billions of years by postulating a gap between Gen 1:1 and 1:2. He thus rejects without argument the other main attempts to find billions of years in the creation account: 1) Day-Age theory for the creation days, and 2) M. Klines' theory of the days as a manufactured literary framework. In their place, he resurrects another form of the "gap theory" though this time not in the idea that the world was created billions of years ago, and then "became" instead of "was" without "form and void." To find a gap, Collins states that Genesis 1:1 is not a summary-heading for the whole creation week but a statement that God created the heavens and earth, and then waited an uncounted number of years to finish up the creation. "In my view," he writes, "there is a gap between verses 1 and 2, but it is not the gap of the gap reading [i.e., the standard gap theory] (Collins 2004, 128).

This is part of the reason that he attempts to provide, contrary to the classic reading of these verses, that "cosmogony . . . is not the focus of the text" though it does mention the topic (Collins 2004, 78). To support the theory, he believes that the text of Genesis 2 must presuppose an already known and accepted climate cycle concerning the wind in the evening. This is normal weather for those in the Middle East, and thus is a hint that the earliest readers would have picked up on and assumed that the whole chapter was not completed in 7 normal days. In addition, he believes the words "the LORD had not sent rain upon the earth" means that this was the dry season, again a hint that the first readers would have picked up. The creation account, thus, presupposes many years to establish this seasonal cycle. Furthermore, Collins believes that the patterning of the first three days with rough parallels to the next three days, show that the earliest readers would have presupposed that they must not listen to the actual words but find a deeper meaning by which God is hinting they must not read the story too literalistically. Additionally, Collins believes that since the wording for the seventh day does not include the phrase, "evening and morning, the seventh day," this clearly indicates to the earliest readers that the seventh day is even now continuing and hence the days of the creation were not necessarily normal days. (Certainly, Jesus contradicts this interpretation. He claims that He and His Father were indeed working on the seventh day even now, see Jn 5:16-18. Moses contradicts it when he wrote that God created the heavens and earth in six day and rested on the seventh, see Ex 20:11, 31:15, 17; parallel in 24:16).

All these points add up to hints in the text, Collins claims, that the first verse of Genesis is not a summary of the whole pericope, but a statement of the first occurrence in the creation. This was followed by an undefined gap, enough to establish foundational weather patterns. Furthermore, based upon these hints in the text that he claims to have found, he does not believe ancient or modern readers should read the account in a "literalistic" manner. Collins concludes then that Genesis 1:1-2:3 is "exalted prose." This is a different genre from the narrative prose style that finishes the whole creation and fall account (Gen 2:4ff), that is straightforward narrative prose.

He uses what he calls the discourse-oriented literary approach or discourse analysis to attempt to justify these assertions. What he means is that the ancient languages and ancient

literature apply to us today based upon how the original audience would have understood it. All agree upon this. Second, discourse analysis demonstrates how a pericope fits within the totality of the biblical canon and third the foundational theological point of each passage. This is again necessary and foundational for correct interpretation. However, note his emphasis not upon the actual time-space meaning but the theological point, belying an underlying dualist presupposition. The term “exalted prose,” in my opinion, is a euphemism to surreptitiously reintroduce a dualist view of inspiration separating an upper story *Geschichte* from a scientifically grounded, actual time-space *Historie*. In summary, then, Collins attempts to show that Genesis 1-4 is a story spoken to a specific people in a concrete ancient cultural context. This story possesses particular linguistic signs imbedded covertly in the text that would have or actually should have alerted the ancient audience that Genesis 1:1-2:3 is not literal historical narrative but “exalted” prose account of God’s workdays. These days cannot then be equated with actual time periods upon the earth.

Last, Collins states that the narrative prose of Genesis 1:1-2:3 is not really normal narrative prose as can be carefully shown to be the case,<sup>22</sup> but a new genre of literature called “exalted and formulaic [prose] . . . [that] is different from the rest of the book” (Collins 2004, 36). He concludes: “from this high level of patterning that the order of events and even the lengths of time are not part of the author’s focus” (Collins 2004, 73). Naturally, this does not take into account that Moses clearly interprets his own first chapter by the words of the Decalogue: “For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day; therefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day and made it holy” (Ex 20:11). Moses makes this same interpretation again in Exodus 31:17, giving a second substantiating witness that the focus was indeed both on God’s workday and upon man’s workday that should reflect the glorious days of God’s work. Of course, Collins in again trying to win billions of years by his exegesis and does not take into account the straightforward use of the creation account by our Lord and his Apostles to support monogamous marriage, warn against temptation, state that Abel was martyred from the beginning of earth-time, and so forth. Merely pointing out the artistic features of the creation account, renaming them “literary devices,” and then asserting that the days were not the focus of the author does not overturn the perspicuous testimony of the passage itself and its interpreters within the canon of Scripture itself. Actually, Collins is re-inventing the Westminster Confessions classic standards of hermeneutics. Only Scripture can interpret Scripture (not external science), and the clear passages interpret the less clear.

Unfortunately, Collins does not address nor counteract the ancient consensus of the Jews and of the church that the whole of Genesis 1-4 is straightforward historical prose. They held this consensus based upon the following overt evidence in the text itself. “Evening and morning,” together with the formula the “xth day” always denotes a standard earth day. The narrative style is nothing different from any other Hebrew narrative in Scripture and hence must

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<sup>22</sup>Unfortunately, Prof. Collins does not seem to be aware of the research of Steven Boyd (Steven Boyd. 2005. Statistical Determination of Genre in Biblical Hebrew: Evidence for an Historical Reading of Genesis 1:1-2:3, in *Radioisotopes and the Age of the Earth: Results of a Young-Earth Creationist Research Initiative [RATE II]*, eds. Larry Vardiman, Andrew A. Snelling, and Eugene F. Chaffin, 631-734. El Cajon, CA: Institute for Creation Research and Chino Valley, AZ: Creation Research Society, 631-734. See also, Steven W. Boyd. 2008. The Genre of Genesis 1:1-2:3: What Means This Text? in *Coming to Grips with Genesis: Biblical Authority and the Age of the Earth*, eds. Terry Mortenson and Thane H. Ury, 163-192. Green Forest, AR: Master Books.

be read as history not God's heavenly story. It is eisegesis and not exegesis, thus, to call Genesis 1:1-2:3 "exalted" narrative prose merely because the Lord artistically created the arrangement of the days to have some parallels between the days. Moses was not composing the first pericope using the creation as a literary device focusing on God's heavenly work day but was actually telling what the innovative and inventive Creator really did. Our God is the chief Artist using symmetry and balance in all that he does including the creation. This is not "formulaic," as Collins terms it, but showing us by example the canons of beauty! Thus He is normally exalted in all He does and uses magnificence and order as a matter of course because of who He is. Notice, for example, the beautiful symmetry and balance of the Tabernacle, the beauty of the ordered arrangement of the tribal camp spots around the Tabernacle, and even Jesus' outshining beauty as revealed to John in the Apocalypse chapter one (Rev 1:12-16).

Consequently, contrary to Collins' attempts, the total consensus of ancient Hebrew authors was that the first chapter is a straightforward account of cosmogony using the standard Hebrew manner of expressing solar days. All the rest of the biblical author's including Moses himself read the account in such a manner. Now of course stating this does not take away all the difficulties in the account such as why and how God created light before the sun and stars. However, the account clearly shows that the earth was the focus (not heaven, as Collins asserts). The Creator made the sun, moon, and stars around the earth and for mankind's benefits. Moses interprets the days as normal days; our Lord says that man was on the earth from the beginning of creation, and that Satan was a liar and murderer from the beginning. So functionally the creation account is geo-centered and provides the backdrop for the drama of redemption and the revelation of the creative-redemptive grace of our Triune God.

In summary, Collins main problem is that he implicitly tampers with the classic definitions of truth and of hermeneutics on the presuppositional level.<sup>23</sup> His dualistic view of truth—albeit a conservative dualism—inverts the order of the authority of science and scripture. Biblically, all data observed in the creation must be interpreted in the light of some presuppositional frame. The Psalmist summarizes this perspective: "In Your light we see light" (Ps 36:9). The opposite is also true: "Blind men lead other blind men into the ditch" (Mt 15:14). There is no such thing as "hard science" or a "brute fact" that is self-interpreting. For example, one cannot merely look at the appearance of the Appalachian Mountains and state unequivocally that they look to be billions of years old, as a friend and fellow evangelical professor once told me. To me, the Appalachian Mountains are a product of the interaction of the creation out of nothing, an earth-encompassing flood and post-flood ice age disruptions, along with the several millennia since then. It is a product of some gradual change but also a lot of catastrophic change.

Where do I get this presuppositional grid from, within which to study natural revelation? Only from the Scripture—because it is God's truth in every area of life that it addresses. Observational science, consequently, must be ministerial to Scripture and its worldview not magisterial over Scripture. In other words, a contemporary reader has enough information within Scripture itself to make sense of all spheres of life, including geography, history, cosmogony, and even the framework for developing a Scripture consistent mathematical system.<sup>24</sup> Science must serve God and his revelation. The observed and checked data of the

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<sup>23</sup> See e.g., *Westminster Confession of Faith* 1:6, 7, 9, the Confessional documents Prof. Collins is sworn to uphold.

<sup>24</sup> See, James Nickel. 2001. *Mathematics: Is God Silent?* 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Vallecito, CA: Ross House.

creation, therefore, can and must be reinterpreted through the glasses of a relatively recent creation, fall, universal flood catastrophe, and Babel dispersion. All so-called radiometric ages must be examined on the presuppositional level. Change the foundational presuppositions and the ages drastically change. Re-examine the data of geology within the biblical worldview and re-write a true geology, paleontology, and paleo-anthropology. Of course, this is a massive century long process but must be done. Evangelical scientists must totally dismantle modernity, which began with Copernicus, Galileo and Kepler and has proceeded thence through the long-age unbelieving geologists a generation before Darwin until today.

To reach this last frontier of the scientist class, we must not seek to find middle ground. Here the biblical worldview exhibits digital logic. Something is true or not true. There is no fuzzy middle in this case. Our God has revealed himself without error in Scripture and given an eye-witness account through the prophets of what He did in the beginning. Science and the consensus of unbelieving (or even of believing) scientists is not Scripture's master, nor is it the interpretational grid by which to look at how Scripture must be read. This biblical presuppositional grid is antithetical to the autonomous wisdom of man, who refuses to use a Scriptural framework for understanding life.

The Pauline doctrine of antithesis (e.g., 1 Cor 2:10-14, 3:18-19),<sup>25</sup> hence, rejects the empiricism that Collins uses to claim that science assuredly knows that the earth and the universe is billions of years old. God's perspicuous truth contradicts Satan's claim. God surely does know that in the day we eat of the tree—of autonomous, self-created knowledge of good and evil, or of autonomous true and false, or of autonomous, human-defined justice or injustice—man surely dies. Mankind experiences all the fruits of death because of sin and our own constant imitation of it. Death, as Collins correctly points out in his exposition of the temptation and Fall of Adam (Collins 2004, 116-118), is indeed alienation from the creator, a spiritual estrangement that leads inevitably to physical death. Yet at the same time, Adam's Fall so beclouds the mind of man that, apart from the sun-light of Scripture as opened by the Spirit, he cannot understand and discover the true history or origin of life. Mankind needs a cosmogony. That is indeed, contrary to Satan's wisdom, found in Genesis One. Man's autonomous wisdom therefore is foolishness before God because man is hostile to God, does not subject himself to the tôranic wisdom of God, and is unable to do so (Rom 8:7). The "things of the Spirit of God are foolishness to him" (1 Cor 2:14). If Dr. Collins would submit to these foundational biblical principles, then he would be able to see why it is necessary to interpret all of life through the eyeglasses of Scripture.

Collins tries to synthesize an empiricist philosophy of science with a Trinitarian philosophy of science.<sup>26</sup> It is a very erudite attempt to escape the perspicuous conclusions that the Scripture teaches about a recent creation and no death or suffering before the Fall. Hence,

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<sup>25</sup>1 Corinthians 3:18-19: "Let no man deceive himself. If any man among you thinks that he is wise in this age, he must become foolish, so that he may become wise. <sup>19</sup> For the wisdom of this world is foolishness before God." For those who would claim that Paul only is speaking about religious wisdom has already been deceived because Scripture does not divide between spiritual and material truth. All truth is God's truth, either flowing from his everlasting Being or upheld by his creative and providential power in the visible and invisible universe.

<sup>26</sup>For a detailed discussion of these issues, see (1) Paul Hiebert. 1999. *Missiological implications of Epistemological Shifts: Affirming Truth in a Modern/Postmodern World* (Christian Mission and Modern Culture). Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International. (2) Mark R. Kreitzer. 2007. Towards a Biblical Philosophy of Science. *Christianity and Society: The Biannual Journal of the Kuyper Foundation*. 17/2 (Winter 2007).

sadly, Collins denies the classic sola Scriptura and perspicuity principle. Clear Scripture interprets unclear Scripture (Scripture interprets Scripture) and not vice versa. Christ, not the consensus of man, is the final authority in interpretation. Though I must say it gently, in my opinion Professor Collins volume is another example of modernity bound exegesis and of Western syncretism with dualist philosophy. This wisdom does not come from above. This is not a step in the right direction that will help to win the elite scientist class. Evolution and its billions of years is a modernity bound fairy tale intrinsic to the religion of naturalism. It cannot be syncretized with our biblical faith with which Christ mandated us to reach all classes and groups of people.

Cornelius Van Til summarizes a more biblical approach:

The Bible is . . . authoritative on everything of which it speaks. And *it speaks of everything* . . . either directly or indirectly. . . . Moreover, the information on [all topics] is woven into an inextricable whole. It is only if you reject the Bible as the Word of God that you can separate its so-called religious and moral instruction from what it says, e.g., about the physical universe. (Van Til 1967, 8)<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Van Til, C. A. 1967. *In Defense of the Faith*. 3d ed. Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed.