

Thus they sinned. Schneider reaches a similar conclusion by considering our evolutionary heritage.

Humanity represents a paradox: The most independent being creates an image of himself or herself, which by its very creatureliness is most dependent. God solved that problem for "he who is united to the Lord becomes one spirit with him." And once we are one with him, we share his will and independence.

But this is only a beginning, for "Creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and obtain the glorious liberty of the children of God," which includes the freedom to do whatever we want because God's desire has become ours. This is the perfected creation; only this creation is very good, and only this is what God viewed at the end of day six and declared to be very good (Gen. 1:31).

If you doubt, consider that if Gen. 1:20, 24 imply that day five ended with oceans teeming with swarming creatures, then day six ended with a planet densely populated by humanity, for God had commanded them to "fill the earth" and declared that "it was so."

Nothing in Genesis 1 should hinder us from pursuing studies as presented by Dennis R. Venema, according to which "our species has maintained a population size of at least several thousand individuals since our speciation from the ancestors of other apes."

As to the historicity of Adam and Eve, I agree with Daniel C. Harlow (p. 190) that a historical Adam is not essential to Paul's teaching. A literary Adam detracts nothing from my faith. And yet I prefer Collins' view of a historical "first couple," because I hope to meet them one day. Even so, a literary Adam will not wreck my enjoyment of an eternity spent in the Lord's presence.

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Response to John Collins

I refer to John Collins, "Adam and Eve as Historical People, and Why it Matters" (*PSCF* 62, no. 3 [2010]: 147-65). He refers to "several scholars" who "have made proposals consistent with the criteria" of "modern humans" "between 100,000 and 40,000 years ago ... both with and without animal 'forebears'" (p. 160), and in the footnote refers to my article, "Soteriology: Adam and the Fall," *PSCF* 49, no. 4 (1997): 252-63. While I am not dogmatic on the Adamic date I would now consider the most likely date for Adam and Eve to be at about 70,000 years ago. But I would also remind readers that some time ago now I repudiated theistic evolution in favor of old earth creationism. See Gavin McGrath, "Intelligent Design from an Old Earth Creationist Perspective," *PSCF* 58, no. 3 (2006): 252-3; "The Gap [School] in Creation," *PSCF* 59, no. 4 (2007): 318-9; "Old Earth Creationists," *English Churchman* 7779 (6 and 13 Nov. 2009): 2; and "Old Earth Creation," *English Churchman* 7782 (18 and 25 Dec. 2009): 2.

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Absolute Biblical Inerrancy Is Not Biblical

According to his recent letter (*PSCF* 62, no. 4 [2010]: 302-3), John Montgomery thinks that the spiritual revelations in the Bible cannot be separated from attached scientific and historical facts. He asks: If the scientific and historical facts, which can be checked, are not accurate, why would anyone accept the spiritual revelations which cannot be checked?

The more biblical question is this: If the scientific and historical facts, which can be checked, prove to be false, why would anyone suppose they are divine revelations? Scripture itself teaches us to check alleged divine revelations of empirical facts by means of empirical data; and if they prove empirically to be false, they should not be accepted as divine revelations (Deut. 18:22; 1 Thess. 5:21). When the science-history in Genesis 1, as an example, is checked by empirical data, it is proven by that data to be false: e.g., earth history does not begin with a primeval ocean. If we obey Deut. 18:22 and 1 Thess. 5:21, then we must conclude that the science-history in that chapter is not a divine revelation.

When the history-science of Genesis 1 is compared to ancient Near Eastern literature, it becomes readily apparent that its concepts about the natural world are ancient Near Eastern concepts; this again tells us that they are not divine revelations. The view which emerges from obeying Deut. 18:22 and 1 Thess. 5:21 and from comparing the history-science in Genesis 1 to ancient Near Eastern literature is that God, like a wise Father, has chosen to reveal himself and his will to his children in terms of *their* understanding of the natural world.

This biblical and forthright view of the science-history in the Bible is, unfortunately, excluded by the doctrine of absolute biblical inerrancy which Montgomery is espousing. In his view, the Bible *must* agree with scientific truth; therefore God cannot speak to his children in terms of *their* understanding of the natural world. Montgomery's doctrine leaves Christians with just two choices: Either set aside modern science in favor of a contrived private science or set aside the historical-grammatical interpretation of Scripture in favor of a contrived private interpretation.

In the essay which Montgomery wrote and recommends, the latter course is chosen. Rather than testing the history-science of Genesis 1 by empirical data as Scripture enjoins, his essay refers us (p. 21, note 17) to the book, *Modern Science and Christian Faith*, which gives us interpretations of Genesis 1 that at first glance harmonize the biblical statements with modern science. Unfortunately, the relevant chapters were written by an astronomer and a geologist, who understandably were oblivious to the fact that Genesis 1 reflects ancient Near Eastern "science" — from the primeval ocean of Gen. 1:2 to the rising of animals out of the ground like plants in Gen. 1:24.

The concordism found in that book and concordist interpretations in general depend upon lifting the biblical text out of its historical and biblical context, setting it back down in the context of modern science, and then having modern science determine the meaning of the words. In short, they depend upon taking the Bible out of context.