

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.

# Letters

The most serious problem, however, is not that these concordist interpretations are contrary to the context, but that most evangelical laypersons can see that they are not what Scripture is really saying, and so they turn away from them to creation science. Bernard Ramm's book, *The Christian View of Science and Scripture*, sets forth the kind of concordism which Montgomery recommends, and it directly motivated Whitcomb and Morris to write *The Genesis Flood*. The creation science movement thrives on concordist re-interpretations.

Since obedience to 1 Thess. 5:21 and Deut. 18:22 demands that we reject the claim that the history-science in Genesis 1 is a divine revelation, we have no choice as Christians but to separate the history-science from the theological messages, just as we do with parables. The theological messages, because of their great contrast with the theology of the ancient Near East, stand out as glorious revelations from the true God.

<sup>1</sup>For further explication, see my paper, "The First Four Days of Genesis in Concordist Theory and in Biblical Context," *PSCF* 49, no. 2 (1997): 85–95; [www.asa3.org/ASA/PSCF/1997/PSCF6-97Seely.html](http://www.asa3.org/ASA/PSCF/1997/PSCF6-97Seely.html)

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## Lamoureux' Response to Montgomery

In the Letters section (*PSCF* 62, no. 4 [2010]: 302–3), John Warwick Montgomery raises a number of concerns regarding my essay review of Greg Beale's 2008 book, *The Erosion of Biblical Inerrancy in Evangelicalism* (*PSCF* 62, no. 2 [2010]: 132–8).

Montgomery contends, "Spiritual facts ("messages of faith") cannot be placed in airtight compartments so as to separate them from secular facts (scientific and historical information)." He then asks, "If the scientific and historical material in the Bible—which can in principle be checked for accuracy—is not reliable, why should anyone accept the spiritual/faith material set forth there—which cannot be checked?"

I certainly agree with Montgomery that the science and history in Scripture can be tested for their truthfulness. For example, we can ask, "Is the structure of the universe found in the Bible in alignment with the scientific facts?" The answer is "no," because the Word of God features a 3-tiered universe. Take, for example, the wonderful kenotic hymn (Phil. 2), which most of us sing in our praise and worship on Sunday mornings. Verses 10 and 11 state: "At the name of Jesus every knee should bow, [1] in heaven, and [2] on earth, and [3] in the underworld (Greek *katachthonios*; *kata*: down; *chthonios*: subterranean world, place of the dead) and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." If we use Montgomery's argumentation: since the astronomy in Phil. 2 "is not reliable, why should anyone accept the spiritual/faith material set forth there." Of course, I doubt any Christian wants to follow Montgomery and question

the Lordship of Jesus because Scripture has a 3-tiered cosmos.

A more cogent approach to this passage is simply to suggest that the Holy Spirit descended or accommodated to the level of the apostle Paul's understanding of nature. This is similar to the way that the Lord descends to our level when we are in prayer. As well, it is akin to the time Jesus poured (Greek: *kenōō*) himself out and came down to take on human flesh. In this light, we can indeed separate the inerrant message of faith (Jesus is Lord of the universe) in Phil. 2:10–11 from the incidental ancient science (3-tiered universe). And since the message is inerrant and eternal, it can be placed within a modern vessel featuring twenty-first-century scientific categories: "At the name of Jesus every knee should bow, throughout the 13.7 billion light year wide universe, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." Amen!

In fact, it must be added that the Lord Jesus himself often accommodated to his audience by employing the science-of-day. For his generation, the mustard seed was the smallest of all seeds (Mark 4:30–32), seeds die before germinating (John 12:23–24), stars are so small that they can all fall to earth (Matt. 24:29–30), Sheba is at the ends of the earth (Matt. 12:42), and Jesus spent three days and nights in the heart of the earth [i.e., the underworld] (Matt. 12:40).

In an attempt to justify that spiritual facts cannot be separated from secular facts, Montgomery asks rhetorically, "Are the death of Christ on the cross and his resurrection secular events or faith events?" Of course, the answer is both. I believe that Jesus did indeed rise physically from the dead, and that this is an actual historical event that has massive spiritual implications. The reason I hold this position is because of the literary genre. I view the Gospels as being built upon eyewitness accounts (see Richard Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses: The Gospels as Eyewitness Testimony* [Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2008]). I must confess I was surprised with Montgomery's rhetorical tactic, because the context of my criticism of Beale dealt with Genesis 1 (including Beale's breathtaking proclamation that young earth creation is a "possible" interpretation for twenty-first-century Christians) and not with the New Testament. Yet, I made my position on historicity of Scripture clear in my essay review. I accept "the beginning of actual history roughly around Genesis 12, as many conservative scholars do" (p. 134).

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