

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.

¹For 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

Paul H. Seely
ASA Fellow
1544 SE 34th Avenue
Portland, OR 97214
phseely@msn.com

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).

Denis O. Lamoureux
ASA Fellow
Associate Professor of Science & Religion
St. Joseph's College
University of Alberta
Edmonton, AB Canada

✉