

Book Reviews

and seeing things that seem to be major concerns. One would like to see the rest of the room. There are good reasons for skepticism about the perspective the keyhole provides. For one, Frischmann and Selinger point out that humans possess a basic resistance to being manipulated and conceivably could successfully resist the kind of control they warn against. But they do not develop this point. Also, they do not engage existing empirical research on the impact of internet usage. Anyone who has programmed computers or worked much with them knows that doing so can be a source of great joy. Such work need not be manipulative or controlling and can be done with an aim of helping others. But joy and service never make an appearance in *Re-Engineering Humanity*. As a result, the book comes across as too much of a jeremiad.

What is needed in the face of such a serious challenge is a view of the big picture as well as careful attention to the particular concerns Frischmann and Selinger address. To their credit, the authors do a normative analysis, employing a consequentialist approach. However, for Christian scholars, a more comprehensive, more principled theory is not out of reach. Here are some components such a theory might include: (1) an affirmation that the capacity for technology is God's creation, a gift to humanity, and part of the cultural mandate—as such it is good; (2) a broader scholarly context that would include more studies by more critics of technology than this book includes; (3) a sense of the joy of technology, of both making it and using it; (4) a recognition of human sinfulness and hence the seriousness of dangers such as the one the authors highlight; and (5) a framework of guiding principles for developing technology in ways that are constructive and that include checks and balances for protecting against evil consequences.

Perhaps some reader(s) of *PSCF* can articulate such a theory. In the meantime, we can listen seriously to the warning Frischmann and Selinger offer.

Reviewed by James Bradley, Professor of Mathematics Emeritus, Calvin College, Grand Rapids, MI 49546.

Note to ASA/CSCA Members

Along with all their other contributions, many members of ASA and CSCA publish important works. As space permits, *PSCF* plans to list recently published books and peer-reviewed articles related to the intersection of science and Christian faith that are written by our members and brought to our attention. For us to consider such works, please write to pfranklin@tyndale.ca.

THEOLOGY

THE LOST WORLD OF THE FLOOD: Mythology, Theology, and the Deluge Debate by Tremper Longman III and John H. Walton, with a contribution by Stephen O. Moshier. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2018. 192 pages. Paperback; \$16.20. ISBN: 9780830852000.

In *The Lost World of the Flood*, Tremper Longman and John Walton put forward an interpretation of the Genesis flood narrative that treats it as an inspired, authoritative, and purposeful theological story of a real event. In so doing, they promote a serious view of the Bible while also alleviating unnecessary conflicts with science.

Structurally, the book's seventeen chapters are sorted into four parts and titled as propositions, a trademark of the Lost World series. Part 1 (propositions 1–6) addresses the “cognitive environment” and literary character of the Genesis flood story. Worldview, genre, and rhetoric are central concerns. Longman and Walton argue that ancient worldviews framed ancient genres, such that the modern categories “myth” and “history” are inadequate for the flood story. Genesis 1–11 is “history” in the sense that it refers to events that really happened (signaled in part by the use of the Hebrew word *toledot*, pp. 16–17). But the flood story is a *theologically interpreted* and *rhetorically shaped* story about a real flood. To express this idea, Longman and Walton propose “theological history” as a more accurate and faithful genre-label than “myth.” As for rhetorical shaping, the flood story and its larger literary context (Gen. 1–11) bear the marks of figurative language (pp. 24–28), anachronisms (pp. 28–29), and hyperbole (pp. 36–50).

Part 2 (propositions 7–8) summarizes three Mesopotamian flood stories and compares them to the Genesis story. The Mesopotamian stories summarized are Eridu Genesis (Sumerian), Atrahasis (Babylonian), and Gilgamesh (Babylonian) (pp. 53–60). In their comparison to Genesis, Longman and Walton discuss theologies, portrayals of humans, details of the flood plot, descriptions of the rescue boat, and the roles of the key protagonists (pp. 61–87). They argue that readers should understand the Israelite story “not in terms of borrowing but rather in terms of Mesopotamia and Israel floating in the same cultural river” (p. 85). Even so, the authors alert readers to a fragment of the Gilgamesh Epic found in the land of Israel (p. 63, n. 3) and to words in the Genesis flood story that were probably borrowed from Akkadian, the language in which the Babylonian stories were

written (pp. 77–78). All four stories are said to preserve a memory of a real flood in the past, though interpreted to communicate significantly different messages. In the case of Genesis, “what is inspired and thus the vehicle of God’s revelation is the literary-theological explanation that is given by the biblical author” (p. 85).

Part 3 (propositions 9–13), then, lays out the biblical author’s literary-theological explanation of the flood. According to Longman and Walton, the Genesis story presents God responding to two distinct, but still related, concerns: (1) sin; and (2) disorder. The sin-judgment interpretation fits patterns of sin, judgment, and grace found throughout the book of Genesis (pp. 100–111), as well as interpretations of the flood found in Second Temple Jewish writings and the New Testament (pp. 96–99). Longman and Walton next argue that Genesis and its flood story have an even greater theological concern with God’s presence in, and continued ordering of, the creation. Appeal is made to every major narrative constituting Genesis 1–11, including stimulating discussions of the “sons of God” (pp. 122–28) and the Tower of Babel (pp. 129–36). Both readings of the flood story—the sin-judgment interpretation and the presence-and-order interpretation—are shown to have intimate, purposeful connections to the patriarchal narratives (Gen. 12–50): the call of Abram is God’s act of grace amid the sin and judgment that occur after the flood (pp. 109–10), and “the covenant [with Israel’s patriarchs] can now be recognized as having its focus in the reestablishment of access to God’s presence on Earth” (p. 140).

Lastly, Part 4 (propositions 14–17) summarizes scientific evidence relevant for claims about the flood that is narrated in Genesis, and follows this summary with an assessment of the value of science and Christianity for each other. The central sciences consulted are archaeology, geology, and anthropology. Longman and Walton discuss evidence of actual prehistoric floods in the Mesopotamian world, helping readers imagine the kind of flood that could have generated the stories found in Mesopotamia and Genesis. Guest writer and Christian geologist Stephen Moshier takes seriously the claims of flood geologists to demonstrate that Earth’s geologic record simply does not preserve evidence of a global flood. Longman and Walton then return to discuss proper ways of understanding the proliferation of flood stories in cultures from around the world. All of these scientific insights, they go on to argue, help Christians clarify the word that God intends to convey through the Bible, even as Christians profess a faith that is poised and tooled to participate in science—both to learn through it and to challenge it

when it becomes a pretentious philosophy and religion of its own.

The Lost World of the Flood has numerous strengths. Its style, structure, and content are accessible and manageable. Complexities are managed effectively and with nuance. The theological insights are thought-provoking, even for seasoned interpreters of the Bible. Science is handled respectfully, and so are the Bible and the concerns of sincere Christian readers, such as the Bible’s inspiration, authority, and perspicuity. The virtue of humility pervades the book, and is most evident in the book’s tone, in the way the authors offer suggestions instead of dogmatic, only-way solutions, and in their use and crediting of the interpretations that their own students have proposed.

Although few in number, the book’s shortcomings are still noteworthy. When Longman and Walton argue against the view that the flood was actually local but was universal from the *perspective* of the survivors, reporters, and author(s), they say,

The language used in the flood story does not support the idea that the flood was only a local, even if widespread, flood. And this conclusion is, in our opinion, inescapable whether the author of the account was describing it as local or the initial reporter ... thought a local flood was actually a worldwide flood. (p. 48)

But if the initial reporter thought a local flood was actually worldwide, wouldn’t this perspective precisely generate the universalistic language that appears in the Genesis story? And couldn’t perspectively universal language undercut the claim that the story’s author(s) used hyperbole? The actually-local-but-perspectively-universal flood theory is not adequately answered.

Second, the excurses, while informative, fall flat and are not integrated into their propositions. The excursus “Genealogies” (pp. 107–9) shows that ancient genealogies are referentially historical, factually fluid, and ideologically purposeful, but then ends without making clear how these insights inform the proposition that “the flood account is part of a sequence of sin and judgment serving as a backstory for the covenant” (pp. 100–111). The excursus “Modern Quests for Noah’s Ark Are Ill-Founded” (pp. 165–66) is not integrated into its proposition about flood stories from around the world, and would actually seem to suit better the purposes of Proposition 14: “The Flood Story Has a Real Event Behind It” (pp. 145–49).

Third, since the origin and development of the Genesis flood story is a central concern of the book, it is surprising that Longman and Walton do not at

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least discuss the widespread belief among biblical scholars that the Genesis flood story bears the marks of originally different stories that have been stitched together and reworked before taking a final form as a single story in the theological history of Genesis 1-11.

Fourth and finally, since the book insists that the Genesis flood story refers to real events in a real past, and since Longman and Walton show themselves highly alert to the concerns of evangelical and fundamentalist Christian readers, it is surprising that there is not a more direct and thorough discussion of human ancestry. Many Christian readers in the target audience will believe that all humans today have descended from Noah. If they are to entertain a different reading of the flood story, whereby a local flood is rhetorically and theologically reworked, then how should they go about rethinking the story of Noah's descendants, which is itself part of the flood story?

These criticisms notwithstanding, *The Lost World of the Flood* is a recommended read. It fills a niche in the library of Christians who care about Bible-science relationships. It educates in accessible ways. It models humility, inquisitiveness, and open-mindedness. It acknowledges complexity and elucidates nuance. It is ideal for Christian readers who see themselves as Bible-believers, but who need guidance that is wise and sound, at once committed to Christian faith and truthful with scientific findings. This reviewer has gained much in the way of content knowledge, resources, and theological insights. Readers are fortunate to be beneficiaries yet again of Tremper Longman and John Walton's ongoing work in the important field of science and Christian faith.

Reviewed by Daniel Gordon, McClure Professorship of Faith and Science, Lipscomb University, Nashville, TN 37204. ✧

Letter

Know, Believe, Understand

As a member of the Atheist Society of Denver, I would like to comment on Walter Bradley's article, "The Fine Tuning of the Universe: Evidence for the Existence of God?" (*PSCF* 70, no. 3 [2018]: 147-60), and the letters to the editor that it triggered. The argument from nature for the existence of design and hence a Designer, is an argument I almost always use as a starting point, to drive home the fact that atheists are not willing to go where the evidence leads them. This is articulated by the former atheist Antony Flew in his book *There Is a God: How the World's Most Notorious Atheist Changed His Mind*.

The quote Bradley used from John 20, where Jesus emphasizes the signs he performed to lead skeptics to accept his words, can be expanded further by checking on a few more scriptural references that address the question of which comes first, faith in God followed by confirmation of his existence using arguments such as the fine-tuned universe, or using arguments from design in nature, to whet the interest of an unbeliever for considering faith in God. Isaiah 43:10 reads, "... that you may know and believe me and understand that I am he." Also, the more commonly quoted passage of the same is Romans 10:14. Both imply that knowledge comes before faith, which then leads to faith, and eventually to understanding who God is. This is an important sequence (know-believe-understand) to get an unbeliever to start thinking.

Ken Touryan
ASA Fellow

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How, then, can they *call*
on the one they have not believed in?
And how can they *believe*
in the one of whom they have not heard?
And how can they *hear*
without someone preaching to them?

~Romans 10:14