

A Response to John Sailhamer's
Genesis Unbound: A Provocative New Look at the Creation Account (1996)
(With excerpts from P. Rainbow correspondence, and commentary on B.B. Warfield)
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December 2001

To: Tim
From: Bruce

Thank you for introducing me to John Sailhamer and his work, *Genesis Unbound....* It is indeed "*A Provocative New Look at the Creation Account.*" Although I have not read the book in its entirety, I have thoroughly perused the theme he presents as well as the more salient portions of the text.

When I read a work such as this I find my Spiritual adrenaline (gift of *discernment*) propelling me to dig to the core of the argument. This is especially true when a recognized — although I'd not heard of Sailhamer before — evangelical theologian takes off on a tangent and authors a theological "Truth" treatise such as *Genesis Unbound....* (I identify completely with Steve Porter's assessment of the great confusion the intellectual/academic discipline(s) of theology have caused the Gospel Message.) As you probably know, I had a brief (five-month) but intensive encounter with *the* (only!) New Testament professor at our seminary over the very matter of the Genesis account earlier this year. Our voluminous (email) correspondence revealed, on a personal level, the sharp split between the educationally prepared (him) and the simple-minded (me) student of the Scripture. I will be referring to this correspondence extensively throughout this email.

Both John Sailhamer and Professor Rainbow (NABS) apparently suffer from the same intellectual malady: At the core, an inability to innately trust the Bible we hold as the inspired, inerrant, infallible, consistent, and complete, *Word* of God. They will, of course, repeatedly acknowledge it as so; but when they begin to extrapolate (exegeticate) the Scripture, they bring a critical and skeptical attitude to the authorship of the Book. Laypersons like ourselves don't approach the Scripture in that manner. It's as if one must be trained in such an "art."

You can see this suspicion of authorship at the heart of Sailhamer's thesis, best stated on page 220+. On two occasions on page 220, as he is building his case, he makes reference to "The author of the Pentateuch..." and "... it is likely that the author wants us to read the account in Genesis 1 within that same context." (I would estimate that he uses this terminology — *the author, the writer* — on at least 100 occasions throughout the book; so often in fact, that eventually you get the impression that God was not the one who gave us the Bible, Man was!) Both Sailhamer and Rainbow get hung-up on the theological notion of "The author..." of Genesis, etc., as if the Scripture is a mere anthropomorphically religious text. I fear that both took their university courses in anthropology too seriously!

Once they establish that Moses was the author of Genesis — (and here may be the crux — the foundation of the error, identifying Moses as the author and attributing a near-human quality to the text) — then they find it necessary to bring all manner of cultural factors to bear on the content. Professor Rainbow elaborates more fully on this than Sailhamer did in his book:

The minds of the first Hebrew readers, having been shaped by life in Mesopotamia (Abraham), Canaan (Isaac and Jacob), and Egypt (four hundred years down to Moses), brought to bear on this text a familiarity with the creation myths of those ancient cultures and the questions they were designed to answer: Where did we come from, and for what purpose were we made? Who are the gods with whom we have to do? How do they relate to the world, to one another, and to us? What do they require of us? People then were not asking the modern scientific question, how old is the physical substance of the earth? Genesis 1 shines rays of stunning truth into the murk of the mythological answers to the basic human questions. It is not designed to tell how long it actually took God to make things.

Calvin also allows for a degree of literary accommodation in the Genesis account--i.e. telling the story of creation in a form adapted to the limited horizon of the pre-scientific human mind. "Moses wrote in a popular style things which, without instruction, all ordinary persons, endued with common sense, are able to understand; but astronomers investigate with great labour whatever the sagacity of the human mind can comprehend; ...but because he was ordained a teacher as well of the unlearned and rude as of the learned, he could not otherwise fulfill his office than by descending to this grosser method of instruction" (Commentary

on Genesis 1:16). The specific point on which Calvin is commenting here is the fact that verse 16 presents the moon as one of the "two great lights," even though astronomers in his day had recently made the discovery that Saturn was actually a much larger body than the moon is, contrary to the impression got by the naked eye.

My response:

Are you suggesting that God told Moses to scribe these words (and further the belief) for the simple-minded ancients, like Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus — He offered no other suggestion — and Paul, knowing full well that at some later time mankind would finally become intelligent, sophisticated, and knowledgeable; and that then a great controversy would surely ensue?! If that be the case, surely God, in His infinite wisdom, could have expressed the details of His marvelous and miraculous Creation in a better way, thereby avoiding our contention.

If, for example, the Creator had simply started the Creation account with some reference to eons of time (i.e., "Over billions of years, God created the heaven and the earth."); or, even better, to begin the narrative with the much loved, and oft used children's story-line, "Once upon a time..." there would be no controversy (theological and/or scientific) today... (Or would there?). I submit that He meant exactly what He said!

You may not be aware that there is a neo-Gnosticism abroad today which finds science (mathematics, at least — those peering into the heavens) to be so refined that only a select few and gifted are able to actually comprehend the "truth" of its findings? Hawking discusses (and believes) this; and Hugh Ross manifests it!

Paul, what is to be done with simple-minded (but learned) folks like me who hold to the literal, 6-day (common sense meaning = 24-hour day) Creation account? Have we, who are "at a [relatively lower] stage of development," somehow missed something of God's revelation? And if so, I then wonder, do I really appreciate less the finer details of the micro- and macro-cosmic realms than, say, a Carl Sagan? If there is any danger of that, at least I can delight in the love of God, which somehow Sagan seems to have missed.

You impress me as one who sees Moses seated amongst a group of men of wisdom, busy compiling the oral — perhaps even written — accounts that were handed down by the ancestors, committed to putting together the family history, much as I do when I work on my own genealogy. It gets confusing for poor Moses however, because he not only has to listen to their stories and legends, he has to determine where pagan mythologies as well as certain inherent embellishments have entered these tales, making sure that such are not included in what must be the true account of God that he has been commissioned to write. Paul, I hardly view Moses in that setting as he undertakes this most important task.

I rather view the inspired author alone with God, carefully attuned to every Word He says — inspired, God-breathed Words — and carefully, and methodically records each word, thought, and nuance, that today — some 4,000 years later — we might come to place our faith in the God who Created the heaven and the earth, life, Man, all things; God revealing in detail sufficient for even the simplest of minds to see His marvelous and loving glory manifest during the six days of His labors. To me it is as if God said, "Behold..." and Moses beheld the wonders of His Creation — lacking any influence by pagan (especially Egyptian) creation myths finding place in this glorious revelation. And, in fact, what Moses saw (or heard) from God was indeed a revelation to behold.

Professor Rainbow replies:

On re-reading your communication of April 7, I noted one section that caused me some concern, and I would like to ask you about it. You say, "I rather view the inspired author alone with God, carefully attuned to every Word He says — inspired, God-breathed words — and carefully, methodically records [sic] each word, thought, and nuance..." It sounds as though you may subscribe to the Dictation Theory of biblical inspiration, namely, the idea that scripture originated in God pronouncing audible words in human language which the sacred author dutifully recorded. Is that your view?

If so, then we have a genuine difference which might explain some of the difficulties you and I have had with communication and mutual understanding.

I know of no biblical scholar, even in the most conservative of Bible colleges and seminaries, who would defend the Dictation Theory. It holds that revelation dropped virtually straight out of heaven onto the sacred page by a process which suppressed the personality of the human author. This notion flies in the face of many phenomena of scripture.

1. Each biblical book or group of books has stylistic features characteristic of the individual personality of its author. For example, Paul's epistles bear their own stamp over against the writings of John or the book of Hebrews.

2. Throughout scripture we find scattered references to written or oral sources used by the authors. Joshua and the author of 2 Samuel both used a Book of Jashar (Joshua 10:13; 2 Samuel 1:18). There once existed a book of the Acts of Solomon which is no longer extant (1 Kings 11:41). 1-2 Kings has many references to older annals of the kings of Israel and of Judah (e.g., 1 Kings 14:19; 15:7, 31) – not to be confused with the 1-2 Chronicles in our present canon, which were written after 1-2 Kings, not before. Luke relied on both oral and written sources in composing his gospel (Luke 1:1-4).

3. At each stage in the history of the development of the Bible, we find the sacred authors drawing true ideas from their cultural environment. Waltke has shown how in several places OT language reflects ancient Near Eastern concepts of Leviathan, Tiamat, and Rahab (purging out the falsehoods, of course!). Proverbs 22:17-24:22 shows many direct parallels, not only in substance, but even in wording, with the Egyptian Instruction of Amen-em-opet. Paul quotes directly from the Greek writers Epimenides and Aratus (Acts 17:28). Jude quotes from the Jewish apocryphal book of 1 Enoch (Jude 14-15). The Logos-concept of John 1:1 taps, among other things, a long history of Greek philosophical speculation about the Logos as the principle of order behind the cosmos. And so forth.

Because of these and many other facts, the far better founded theory of biblical inspiration is that of Confluence. According to this view, God providentially guided the course of history in general and the experiences of individuals in particular to prepare them to be fit vessels of exactly those words and thoughts which God would ratify as his own in scripture. Scripture is therefore a product of both historical causality (the "horizontal" dimension) and supernatural causality (the "vertical" dimension) at once—hence the term "confluence," or "flowing together." The ratio between these two influences on scripture is not 50-50 but 100-100. Like the Incarnate One himself, the enscripturated Word of God is not partly of human and partly of divine origin, but wholly human and wholly divine.

For this reason, the search for historical and cultural antecedents to truths expressed in scripture in no way threatens the divine authority of the final text. It is not an either/or choice, but a case for recognizing both/and.

How do you see it?

My reply:

I'm not a theologian, therefore not skilled in the discipline, and not versed in the many varied and diverse attempts to explain the Bible. But, I am a Biblical scholar (Bible student), and in that sense you have, it seems, met the first believing Christian who knows the Genesis Creation account to have been directly given (spoken) to the human author (what you prefer to call the "Dictation Theory").

Again Paul, try to look beyond what others — even "the most conservative..." — would have you understand about Biblical authorship. Let's stay with the text itself, and respect our own (yours and mine) faith-based ability to come to a complete understanding of Genesis. Again, let me see if I can be of assistance.

When God entered the Garden of Eden He spoke — that is, spoke audible words in human language — with its first inhabitants. Our first parents obviously understood his speech, since they responded directly to Him (also in human language!). I need not tell you — or assure you — that God spoke to many individuals in the Scripture, and He did so directly. He certainly did this on a number of occasions with Moses. I don't mean to cause you any concern, but the image I hold in my mind of God's giving His account of Creation to the human author is fully consistent with how He spoke with men in other accounts in Scripture.

On-the-other-hand, you subscribe to some formula that would put Moses in the position of merely "visualizing" (or fantasizing, perhaps?) an account of Creation that would somehow accommodate the early Hebrew's rather primitive pre-understanding of matters of origins. And in that regard, it is certainly true that we have a "genuine difference which might explain some of the difficulties you and I have had with communication and mutual understanding."

In point of fact Paul, I believe it could be said by an outside observer, that you and I hold to a different view of Scripture (and its authority) entirely. But this assertion is not new on my part. I shared this opinion (and concern) in my 2/17 e-mail, and I'll repeat some of that for you: "Paul, the common people today have a different view of the Bible than most theologians. They have a different respect for and approach to the

Scripture. We read a different Message (Bible) than you do. We have a different view of God than that provided by theology. We don't strive to know more about God (theo-ology), we work (and rest in our labors) to know Him personally. There is a fundamental difference here which the outcomes (and our discussions) reveal."

The Bible is a historical book of various accounts, by many human authors, all — the history, the accounts, and the authors — guided and inspired by the Holy Spirit. I have no problem with the rich variety you offer in your point two and three here; but I do notice that you fail — again — to mention Genesis, the primary topic of our discussion and our dialogue.

Paul, I can assure you that the "pre-understanding" of the Hebrew Children — and in particular, Moses — had absolutely nothing to do with the revelation of God as recorded in Genesis 1. This characteristic direct revelation is clearly seen throughout Scripture — Old and New Testament — and is particularly evident in the Torah. The Book of Exodus is replete with incident upon incident of God's direct intervention — and Spoken Word — in the behalf of His Chosen People.

God's Creation was a singular event, the process and details known only to Him. The mind of Man could never generate — indeed even imagine — the account as rendered in the opening verses of Scripture; a fact made evident by the many bizarre origin myths propagated by the ancient peoples, as well as the pseudo-science of today.

Nowhere is this more evident than in the historical books of the Scripture: Genesis, Exodus, Numbers; Joshua to 2 Chronicles; Ruth, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther; Acts and the Gospel of Luke.

Consider Genesis 1:26-28, and 2:7,18-25; and Luke 3:38 in particular. Both Moses and Dr. Luke were historians of the first order (trusted — indeed, directed by God Himself — to record HisStory), and divinely inspired writers. Neither man had any direct knowledge as to the manner of Adam's creation, yet each confidently recorded the event — Moses in some detail completely beyond any human understanding, or, for that matter, comprehension.

Now notice how Luke the historian gives credit to his sources prior to recording for us the Life of Christ: "For as much as many have taken in hand to set forth in order a declaration of those things which are most surely believed among us, Even as they delivered them unto us, which from the beginning were eyewitnesses, and ministers of the word; it seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write unto thee in order..., that thou mightest know the certainty of those things, wherein thou hast been instructed (1:1-4)." On the other hand, Moses makes no other declaration of source material for his history than God, the Creator, Himself: "In the beginning God...." In so many words, God was very careful that *all* transcendent prejudices of His people be set aside that the Truth of His Creation be revealed.

Moses had no way of knowing — or scribing — the literal details of Creation Week apart from God's direct revelation to him. And since Moses could not have comprehended the 6-day process — after all, he was educated an Egyptian prince! — we are assured that the words of Genesis 1 are the direct Words of God, spoken to the human author to be faithfully recorded. As a result, we can put complete confidence in God's written revelation of His methodical process of Creation, subjecting all of our cosmogonical prejudices to the Truth of His Word.

And, the Professor replies, in conclusion:

I, for my part, am deeply convinced that we can only understand Genesis 1 properly by allowing scripture itself, in its ancient Near Eastern context, to define for us the perceptual grid through which it should be read — that is, to define the questions which this text was designed to answer, and to define the literary genre and modes of language which were contemporary for the author and the original readers. With this set of problems, I could offer some help to you. It appears to me that in your enthusiasm about cosmology (and your dogmatic attachment to literalism) you are wholly unmotivated to embark on the patient labor required to interpret this text properly.

Of course, our correspondence continued. But the differences outlined above generally set the trend in our further missives.

It is interesting that Sailhamer, early on (p.24), acknowledged God's hand in authoring Genesis ("...[the] historical author, Moses, who was moved by the Holy Spirit to write the text just as we have it today in the Bible.") but in the rest of the Book it is always Moses as the author (or just "the author")

or “the writer” implying the human authorship) with no further mention of the Holy Spirit’s work. I find that to be significant.

Then, what he offers here is in the context of his discussion of the text: “My concern in *Genesis Unbound* is solely with the meaning of these chapters as intended by their historical author [Moses/Holy Spirit]....” In other words, he is on a quest for the meaning, and if the text itself gets in the way with his “meaning grid,” then the literal text will have to yield!

Although Sailhamer asserts that the Bible must be understood within the proper context, what he also reveals elsewhere in his book is the need to place the teaching — what *the author* meant — within the proper cultural context of the time it was written. Sailhamer fails to realize the terrible — and heavy — constraints this places on the total message of the Scripture. Such thinking always places the reader in the dilemma of trying to figure out what the Bible meant back then — to the subject primitive culture! — and what it means to us, of a more *enlightened* state. Such thinking makes Man the focus of the Scripture, rather than God. God would certainly lose His consistency — and relevance — in any number of situations throughout history if this approach is followed and maintained!

Man’s interpretations become the measuring stick of what the Bible says, rather than the Bible being the standard by which to judge (and instruct, reprove, correct, and for doctrine) through the ages. It is dynamic (and not limited) and powerful... and is the discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart!

Sailhamer asks, “But what is the appropriate context for reading Genesis 1 and 2?” (p.79). He answers in two possible ways which, each in turn, only serve to raise additional questions.

For instance, although modern historiography has shown that the ancient civilizations (the “ancient Near Eastern view of the world...”) were “fraught with mythological powers and dark forces... there is little basis for assuming the biblical writers used or had access to any known ancient Near Eastern creation myth.” (p.80) This is comforting to know, but is completely irrelevant if the Bible is taken literally as the *Word* of God.

Viewing the Scripture as anything less than the inspired Word of God (as Sailhamer/Rainbow arguably do) only leads to “Another question...”: “Does the Bible share the *general* world view of the ancient Near Eastern creation myths?” Although the answer is “No,” he qualifies his answer by exclaiming that, “The Bible is an ancient book written [only?!] to people in an ancient world.” (p.81) According to Sailhamer, “the writers” of the Bible held a particular (and severely limited) viewpoint and perspective.

Sailhamer can suggest that we reject this view — which certain other theologians have held (and still hold) — but he never should have entertained such notions in the first place. By entering into that academic debate he has gotten himself trapped in a classical Hegelian Dialectic: Prepare a *thesis* (the mythological influence on *the author* of Genesis), reject that thesis (the *anti-thesis* —? — when a thesis is in error its best not get into “the mix!”), and then propose a *synthesis*, in this case being a formula to understand the *literary context*, the purpose and central theme of the Pentateuch: “God’s covenant with Israel at Mount Sinai.”

Using this questionable approach it is determined that the overall purpose of the Pentateuch is that the Creator prepared, preserved, and then delivered The Promised Land to the Children of Israel. God created all things in the beginning (Genesis 1:1), but after that “The primary purpose of Genesis 1 is to show that God made ‘the land’ and prepared it as a place for the man and woman to dwell in peace.

This *synthesis* may certainly sound theologically reasonable and intellectually astute, but it is reminiscent of the way the Serpent used his alteration of God’s Word in The Garden to deceive the couple (notice the dialectic):

The serpent was the craftiest of all the creatures the Lord God had made. So the serpent came to the woman, [he proposes the false *thesis*] “Really?” he asked. “None of the fruit in the garden? God says you mustn’t eat *any* of it?”

“Of course we may eat it,” the woman told him. “It’s only the fruit from the tree at the *center* of the garden that we are not to eat. [True, but...] God says we mustn’t eat it *or even touch it*, [false interpretation of God’s Word, instigated by a false thesis — a true theological quagmire], or we will die [surely die].”

“That’s a lie!” the serpent hissed. “You’ll not die [the *anti-thesis*!]! God knows very well that the instant you eat it you will become like him, for your eyes will be opened — you will be able to distinguish good from evil [the *synthesis*]!” (Genesis 3:1-5)

Of course, the woman was convinced. She bought into the *synthesis* and lost the *thesis*; and lost innocence, and gained the Knowledge of Evil! The point being that we must not add to God’s Word or Satan will use the opportunity to plant some new (and often intellectually creative) knowledge into our understanding of Scripture. Notice also how the synthesis is a half-truth: Their eyes were opened, but of course they were not to become as God, to be able to distinguish good from evil. Isaiah spoke of this propensity (5:20).

Sailhamer (p.223, *epilogue*) moves from what the Bible says concerning Genesis — *literally* and *realistically*, and we *are* to read it literally — to what it *teaches* us, and “I don’t believe it [teaches what it says].”! Here is how he expostulates on this conundrum:

I think there is a place for asking how the early chapters of the Bible relate to science. After all, the Bible does seem to imply that it is describing actual events. It does seem to suggest that we are to read it literally. If Genesis 1 were written as poetry, we might have grounds for saying it should not be read literally or realistically — but it’s not poetry. It’s written as a straightforward account of God’s work and thus invites us to read it literally and realistically.

But where does that put us with modern science? Must we tell our children when we send them off to school that the universe was created in six days and that the sun, moon, and stars were not formed until the fourth day? Must we tell them that this all happened just a few thousand years ago? Must we tell them that Noah’s ark was stuffed with every kind of dinosaur, pterosaur, and ancient mammal that ever existed? Certainly we must, if that’s what the Bible actually teaches. But the question I have tried to raise in this book [*Genesis Unbound*] is, does the Bible really teach such a thing?... I don’t believe it does.

Although the account clearly says that God created at the beginning over a period of six complete and distinct days, Sailhamer asserts that what the Bible really teaches is that the whole universe was created in the beginning prior to the six days during a time-frame covering an indeterminate duration, which “may have been millions, or even billions of years — the text simply doesn’t say.” And since the text doesn’t say this it therefore must be implied — and taught as such — because this is what “science” teaches (and says)! Obviously, the only means by which Sailhamer can accommodate such a view is to adopt some form of Gap Theory, placing a sharp and distinct cleavage between verses one and two of Genesis 1. (The Noah’s Ark diatribe is simply his polemic against the teaching of a world-wide Flood.)

By separating verse one from the rest of the account Sailhamer can then try to again combine what the Bible teaches based on what it says. At some point man’s interpretative instinct enters into this exegetical process and ... well, we find that the Garden of Eden was, and is in fact, the Land of Promise, indeed the land of Palestine which Israel rightly occupies today because God purposely prepared it for His Chosen Children (the Children of Israel, not Kedar — Ishmael) from the beginning — well, not really *the* beginning — unto this day! *Provocative* indeed!

The problem inherent in Sailhamer’s thesis is his notion of — invention really — of a “mega-historical framework” (p.240) context in which to form the analogies the human author (Moses) would need in order to describe the indescribable, and explain the inexplicable. It could not be that God wrote these chapters: that He dictated them to Adam or Moses. Perhaps God planted the seed of an idea and allowed some author to nurture and finesse an account that fit well in the culture to whom the author was writing. If the mega-history is sufficiently broad-ranging, then all cultures down through time could fashion their own history of the creation: “Thinking of the history of creation as a ‘mega-history’ allows us to seek analogies of creation in our everyday experience...”(p.242).

Ironically, Sailhamer also realizes the danger in such an approach: “By identifying God’s act of creation with an element or a feature of our own experience in the world, we lose sight of the actual work of God in creation (p.244).” Indeed, all of this theological tinkering with Genesis 1 to try and accommodate it to a form (geological, biological, astronomical) of modern pseudo-science does nothing but confuse the account. What we have instead is *HisStory*, and from that we should learn.

Another critical point to remember is that Sailhamer gives absolutely no indication that he is aware of the underlying assumption (false) upon which “geological history” is based, i.e., Lyellian Uniformitarianism. Yet he repeatedly refers to “geological history” as if it is to be taken as fact (cf. p.33). It is this lack of understanding that has propelled him to attempt to originate yet another bizarre theory, one to be classified as *neo-Gap Theory* (although I seriously doubt that any true Gap Theorists would subscribe to Sailhamer’s model). Point-of-fact, Sailhamer’s “Historical Creationism” is a serious misnomer!

Sailhamer’s distorted (and self-distorting) view of history has placed him in the classical limbo-trap that such thinkers eventually find themselves, a pit somewhere between what the Bible says (and teaches) and what Uniformitarian Naturalism (biological evolution, historical geology, uniformitarian — light-years as Time — cosmology/cosmogony) believes. This delusional conundrum is clearly seen in his discussions of human history found on pages 31-33.

Sailhamer cites the work of B.B. Warfield as his authority on the subject of human origins. That being the case it is clear to see why he is so confused. Prof. Rainbow also cited Warfield as his primary resource on human history in his dialogue with me, but when confronted with the inane quality of Warfield’s assertions, especially in light of the trends of science today, the Professor had to acknowledge that Warfield had gone too far afield with his doltish notion:

The Professor writes:

Let me share with you some good news. We know what is of first importance. St. Paul states it with crystal clarity in 1 Corinthians 15:3-5. The focus is on Christ's death and resurrection, as evidenced by his burial on the one hand and the many witnesses of his post-resurrection appearances on the other. That is the basket that holds our eggs as Christians. It is on those well-attested facts that Christian faith ultimately rests. One can conclude that Jesus is Lord and follow him in faith, on the basis of those facts alone. And a Christian is someone who follows Christ in faith. Christian identity does not depend on our being convinced about an inerrant Bible (though the Bible is indeed inerrant), nor on our being convinced that the world was made in six days (though Genesis says so, and this is confirmed by Exodus 20:11; 31:17).

I make this point, because I do not want your faith to be shaken by what you learn from Warfield, Kidner, and Waltke. Warfield will prove to you, from scripture itself, that the genealogies in Genesis do not teach after all a 6000-year age for the earth. Kidner will lay out a number of possible ways of looking at the six days of Genesis 1. And Waltke will prove, from the Hebrew of Genesis 1:1-3, that the creation account proper begins in verse 3 and not in verses 1-2. These men are godly, they are acute, their concern is for the truth of scripture, and they will show you a way more in keeping with the very words you are so eager to be able to trust. And I want you to be free enough from fixation on young earth creationism to profit from what they argue and become a disciple more faithful to God's infallible revelation in scripture.

My response, after perusing Warfield’s *Biblical and Theological Studies* (1911):

Allow me to begin with a rather large exclamation. Warfield's underlying assumption is not only flawed and in error, it is a monumental "IF" indeed:

And if the Scriptural genealogies supply no solid basis for chronological inferences, it is clear that we are left without Scriptural data for forming an estimate of the duration of these ages (p240).

Professor Warfield's error occurs — and he builds his assumption, and his theory on this — because he finds insufficient data in the genealogies of the Scriptures to be able to formulate a definitive chronology. But the reason he finds insufficient data is because, for some strange reason, he has placed a self-imposed limit on his sources to the genealogies recorded in the fifth and eleventh chapters of Genesis only. He has neglected other Genesis references (in ch.4, 10, 36, 25, 37, 46, 47, 49, 50), Exodus 12, 1 Chronicles 1-9, and 1 and 2 Kings! And having done so Warfield left himself open to a rather profound speculation: "For aught we know they [the duration of ages, "... the whole space of time before Abraham"] may have been of immense length (p240)."

Warfield draws another broad assumption — and calls it a "general fact" —, "... that the genealogies of Scripture were not constructed for a chronological purpose." Does lack of purpose mean anything in light of historical fact I wonder? And who is to say that a chronological purpose was not, in fact, a reason for the methodically enumerated genealogies and contextually complete lineages? In point of fact, it is precisely the

"simple Bible readers (p239)" who find the whole of Scripture from Genesis 1:1 to Revelation 22:21 to be *HisStory*, the only chronologically complete compilation of historical value known to Man!

And yet Professor Warfield is prone to conclude that Man is of recent origin — ten to twenty thousand years[!] — but not on the basis of biblical data — which he largely rejects — but on the basis of general understanding (p.248). Even if that were the consensus at the turn of the last century (1911) — and that is even doubtful among those in his contemporary academia as he goes on to discuss — it certainly is not the general understanding today. If you care to, I can show you word for word, line for line, what we, as teachers of science, are supposed to instruct our students in terms of the ages of the cosmos, the earth, life, and the antiquity of Man. This doctrine is encoded into our education frameworks, standards, and textbooks, and nowhere does it suggest anything close to Dr. Warfield's findings.

Now, it is indeed a curious journey that the good professor takes in getting to his completely unfounded conclusion. Please follow as I try to unfold his road map for us.

As Warfield introduces his methodology for forming his conclusion on the origin of man for us, he recognizes the "changing [ever changing!] forms of current anthropological speculation..." that just happens to be the basis for the subsequent concerns with Biblical teaching. He correctly notes Darwin's treatise and its influence, but then goes on to consider it a valid "... theory ["only"] of the divine province."

(At times I think that I am hyper-sensitive to the word *speculate* and its various forms, since it occurs so often in our science textbooks, especially in discussions dealing with the origins of life, and the age of things. But take note of the word, as I'll be referring to it more throughout this response.)

Professor Warfield makes a rather strong assertion that "... [t]he question of the antiquity of man has of itself no theological significance... a matter of entire indifference ... (p238)," and I wonder why, since it has all to do with the historicity of Scripture, as well as being necessary for our more complete understanding of the human nature of Christ. Our Lord was very careful to give us all necessary details regarding his direct human lineage.

Warfield understands the nature of the debate, recognizing "... the short period which seems to be allotted to human history in the Biblical narrative, and the tremendously long period which certain schools of scientific speculation have assigned... (p238)" to human life.

Writing around the turn of the last century it is understood that Professor Warfield could not have known the developments and progress of speculative science. If he had foreseen the current quagmire, it is doubtful that he would have penned these words: "Science does demand an inordinate period for the life of human beings on earth: this is done only by a particular school of speculative theorizers, the validity of whose demands on time exact investigators are more and more chary of allowing (p239)." Unfortunately, the chariness he entrusted to science has proven elusive, and the speculators abound! The observations of Lord Kelvin and Professor Tait have not been heeded; indeed, they have been left far behind in the race to see who can be first to top the millions and billions scale of speculative antiquity.

With this in mind then, it is not difficult to ascertain Warfield's dilemma, as well as to discover where he is heading. For although he recognizes the presence of speculation on the part of the effected sciences, he fails to understand the nature (and power) that speculation holds in today's scientific community.

Warfield is then forced to state his assumption — but first his confession: that a literal view of the Biblical record shows a human history of recent origin. Since the Professor gives every indication of not wishing to hold to that record, he is then called upon to seek (or furnish) an interpretation as to why the "*prima facie* view" is for "simple Bible readers" only. And in order to employ an interpretation in this business one must develop assumptions and engage in some speculation. (p239)

Since "... nothing can be clearer [assumption] than that it is precarious in the highest degree to draw chronological inferences from genealogical tables..." it therefore holds that ("And if") "... the Scriptural genealogies supply no solid basis for chronological inferences, it is clear that we are left without Scriptural data for forming an estimate of the duration of these ages. For aught we know they may have been [speculation] of immense age (p240)." But who (and on what authority) says it is precarious; and why would it be so?

Now, having established the assumption — based on the speculation — we can be given the *fact*: "The general fact that the genealogies of Scripture were not constructed for a chronological purpose... has been repeatedly shown very fully...(p240)." But then, just what exactly was (is) the purpose of the wonderful genealogies — many of which, with their chronologies — included in the Book of books? And here is where the rather elaborate logical progression Warfield has constructed begins to break down.

Professor Warfield acknowledges that the "... genealogies must be esteemed trustworthy for the purposes for which they are recorded..." but fails to give us those purposes! Only "... other purposes for which they are not intended ...," and, "... compressed for all sorts of purposes..." but no specific purposes enumerated!

And these genealogies of Scripture being thus freely compressed — another major assumption of questionable motive — it is thus established to be "... obvious that a very large number are omitted (p241)."

And then things get a bit bizarre: "There is no reason inherent in the nature of the Scriptural genealogies why a genealogy of ten recorded links, as each of those in Genesis v. and xi. is, may not represent an actual descent of a hundred or a thousand or ten thousand links (p241)." Seems to me that it is rather difficult to establish genealogical legitimacy (necessary for the Messiah among the Jews in particular) if interrogatory gaps exist in the record — gaps numbered in the hundreds, the thousands, or even in the tens-of-thousands! That would surely be the view of our courts today, and the evidence summarily thrown out!

Amidst all this confusion you should realize that the field of Biblical criticism — and exegetical pursuits — was in its relative infancy in the days of Warfield, prompted by Darwin's fantastic notions, and spurred on by the ludicrous assumptions of Hutton and Lyell. Collectively, they proposed a naturalistic cause, and immense — incalculable, really — ages to things. And following suit, the biblical skeptics and critics set about to determine if these notions could be true, and if, in fact, the Bible could be found friendly in that context.

Now I believe I could have been of some help to Professor Warfield, and in the same regard, hope to help you in this concern over the genealogies, the lineages, and the chronologies rendered in the Bible. For I sense that because you furnished me with this section of Warfield's work, you hold to much (most?) of his view, especially since you earlier assured me that, "Warfield will prove to you, *from scripture itself*, that the genealogies do not teach after all a 6000-year age for the earth (2/9/01 e-mail, *emphasis added*)."

Let us begin by considering the New Testament genealogies of Jesus as the Professor has done. Matthew's record from Abraham to Jesus covers the line of Joseph; while Luke's list from Adam to Christ is Mary's lineage.

But before we can commence our discussion on this matter we must pause to observe a serious error (and another false assumption) that the good Professor made in his critical analysis, that being the discontinuity in Matthew projected onto the other genealogies of the Scripture. That is an unfounded conclusion based on a curious misapprehension. And this diminished understanding of the full chronologies of the genealogies leads Warfield to the rather narrow-minded conclusion that this data served merely to "... make a vivid impression upon us of the vigor and grandeur of humanity in those old days of the world's prime (p244)." This may well be the limited impression such a rich and wonderful text made on Warfield; but I, for one, receive a fuller meaning, one which does not place an artificial and fallible interpretation on the Power of God's Word.

Some have concerns with Matthew's listing because they find alleged gaps in the genealogy. In order to assist with these concerns it is necessary to be familiar with both books of Kings, where the necessary details are given as to why the names of Ahaziah, Joash, and Amaziah are not included in Matthew. A study of other Old Testament passages gives the principle upon which the names were excluded (Exodus 32:33; Deuteronomy 9:14; 25:19; 29:20; 2 Kings 14:27). (And a quick study of 1 Chronicles 3:15-16 gives us the true picture for the two Jechoniah's that appear in verses 11 and 12 of Matthew 1.)

It is curious to me as to why one would even allege gaps — and the effect this places in general upon all the genealogies — when the premise of such an allegation is based on the knowledge of a more complete list found elsewhere in the Scripture. The careful Bible scholar would then seek for a reason as to why Matthew excluded the names, rather than to get mired in the notion of a gap. Indeed, such a search actually furnishes the Bible student with a deeper understanding of God's judgment and condemnation as recorded in the Old Testament passages cited above.

Since Luke's genealogy of Mary goes back to Adam we have the opportunity to use the wonderful accounts found in Genesis chapters 4, 5, 10, 11, 25, 36, 37, 46, 47, 49, and 50, Exodus 12, and 1 and 2 Kings to discover the complete chronological record from the Beginning (Genesis 1:1) to the coming of the Messiah (6 days plus one, Adam to Christ). (Luke's list in our translations does contain an extra name — Cainan — which does not appear in the original Hebrew texts.)

Reading Warfield can be rather laborious, especially when trying to follow his inconsistencies. After expending considerable ink attempting to lay out a "vigor and greatness of humanity" scenario to attempt to define the purpose of chronological data given in the early genealogies, he then furnishes a different (and correct) understanding: "It is only when the names, with the accompanying comments, are put together, one after the other, that a chronological inference is suggested (p244)." And that is precisely how they are!

After producing such a confounding treatise, it is hard to find in Warfield one who would be qualified to tell us of the characteristics of Scripture genealogies in general, other than his astute inference that these are not simple genealogies. But the Professor is not shy, and does not lack confidence. His notion of chronological detail is that it is interesting and *parenthetical*, and that leads to an "... illusion of a chronological scheme [that] is a mere accident ...(p247)!"

Warfield strives (without ceasing) to show the genealogies as much compressed, as if this is the thesis of his effort. He seems to be seeking a numerical goal, and after a number of attempts, and by means of some rather painful contortions, he finds his number: "... something like two hundred thousand years...(p247)." If only the good Professor knew how inadequate that speculation would turn out to be! Question: Would Warfield find 4.6 billion years to be reasonable?

It would be interesting to be able to discuss his antiquity perimeters with Warfield today. Since that is not possible, perhaps you would play his surrogate? Let's proceed.

This relates to the antiquity of man. Your numbers confuse me. Seeking extra generations (to account for your alleged compression of the genealogies) you indicate your comfort with two hundred generations (instead of twenty) or even two thousand generations between *the Creation* and Abraham.

Now, you acknowledge that *that* would give us on the order of two hundred thousand years for this interval, and that is apparently within the purview of your reasoning.

You give every indication that you are seeking a reasonable number here, and so you've stated (p247). I have to assume that the logic you have employed finds the 200,000 figure to be reasonable. Yet — and here is where I'm confused — you have clearly stated elsewhere (p248) that "... it is becoming very generally understood that man cannot have existed on the earth more than some ten thousand to twenty thousand years."

I have to believe you know the tremendous difference when one zero is added to 20,000 (200,000). How do you then handle the numbers when they are multiplied twenty fold ($200,000 \times 20 = 4,000,000$) since that is pretty much where we are at today in terms of current scientific speculation? And could you handle multiplying that number (4,000,000) by a thousand (4 billion) to get to the current speculative age of the earth? Or even 18,000,000,000 for the age of the whole of creation? In the final analysis, could it be possible that even your ten thousand to twenty thousand years is nothing more than mere speculation? And, are you really comfortable with so much speculation, especially when dealing with the foundation of your (and our) faith — the Book of Genesis?!

You rightly call these "tremendously long estimates" the result of a "special type of evolutionary speculation...", but your glance into the future was sorely lacking. If it weren't so tragic, it would indeed be comical: "[Evolutionary speculation] is rapidly losing ground among scientific workers (p249)." Knowing what we do now — and realizing how wrong you were — would you be candid and kind enough to suggest to one of your studious followers — a certain professor at the North American Baptist Seminary — that he consider the rest of your work in the same light? Charles Darwin surely had a "brooding mind" — (actually, a theophobic malady) — as you suggest, but today the disciples of science worship him!

You're right about some of the bizarre notions of evolutionary thinking (chance plus time are the true causes, p249; living and organized beings can be spontaneously produced, p250; a form of punctuated equilibrium, p254), but can you believe that this has become the unquestioned dogma of our culture today, and that any number of well-meaning but deceived Christians subscribe to this thinking; some in part, others in whole?! What do you think of where we, as the Bride of Christ, have come to today?

Would you have any regrets knowing today that you are viewed as one of the prominent theologians of a century ago who opened the door to an accommodation of Genesis to the world-view of a rapidly deteriorating culture? For that matter, what do you think of Princeton University today? Would you be comfortable remaining a part of its faculty? And if you would remain, would you change any of the things you've said about Darwin and evolution, or Hutton and Uniformitarianism?

And finally, having understood the inherent dangers in the numerous speculations and assumptions that the uniformitarians and evolutionists employ, and having followed somewhat the same speculative pattern, forming any number of assumptions; seeing where we are today, what advice would you give us? It would be my suggestion that we return to the method of the "simple Bible reader" and learn from what the Scripture tells us, rejecting the fallible notions of man: evolutionist, uniformitarian, and theologian alike.

I'll not address Warfield's discourse on the unity of the human race, since he has done a good work, and I largely agree with his findings; other than to point out that he would have done well to leave all of the speculating of evolutionists alone and relied solely on the chronological genealogies of the Scriptures. For recent history — largely that of the twentieth century — has shown that the Social Darwinists took the very notions that Warfield toyed with and turned them into a ubiquitous eugenics movement and a racist doctrine such that he would never have believed (indeed even today, who can fathom the things that the Hitler's and Stalin's of the world have done?!).

In this regard, there is (and was) nothing to "... thank in the evolutionary hypothesis." (We've since learned through critical scholarship, of course, that there is no truth whatsoever in the evolutionary hypothesis!) The mere *differences* progressed into *distinctions*, and from there into *scales of values* which led to some being higher, some lower — some Super and invincible, with others seen as worthy of destruction — based on an evolutionary doctrine. We live with that ignoble and cursed legacy today.

The Professor responds:

Turning to Warfield: Again you and I have something of a problem communicating with each other right from the beginning. Rather than ask me to what extent I agree with Warfield, you simply jump to the conclusion that I "hold to much (most?) of his view". In fact I am not open to Darwinism, as Warfield apparently was. The chief value of his article, as I see it, is limited to his analysis of the biblical genealogies.

If you want to have a fruitful exchange with me, you simply must get over your irritating habit of attributing to me thoughts I do not entertain. Ask me anything you wish, but please don't tell me any more what I believe, since you do not know that.

The purpose of the genealogies in Genesis 5 and 11 was to trace the general line of descent from Adam to Abraham. For this purpose it was not necessary for every link in the chain to be included. Since we have no independent lists against which to check these, we do not know whether the generational links are complete.

Ancient Near Eastern genealogies often omit intermediate generations. A Sumerian king list dating from about 2700 B.C., covering five generations of the First Dynasty of Ur, is known (by comparison with an independent list found in the same location) to have omitted one link and to have added the regnal years of the son to his father's reign. Egyptian Pharaoh Tarhaqa (685 B.C.) refers to Sesostris III (1850 B.C.) as his "father."

The same can be demonstrated in the Bible. Exodus 6:16-20 = 1 Chronicles 6:1-3 gives but two generations between Levi and Moses during a period which covered over four centuries. Likewise Ezra 7:1-5 gives only four names between Zadok (966 B.C.) and Ezra (458 B.C.). An extreme case is in Matthew 1:1, which jumps straight from Abraham to David to Jesus, omitting the great bulk of generations in between. And, as you note, the names of Ahaziah, Joash, Amaziah, and Jehoiakim are lacking even in Matthew's more expanded form (1:2-16).

In Genesis 5 and 11, the two neat groups of ten names each, strongly suggest some degree of schematization (comparable to Matthew's triple series of fourteen generations).

Therefore, I cannot agree with the assumption you make throughout your message that the Bible must be giving "contextually complete lineages." All the actual facts outside of the Bible and within it militate against such an assumption.

(Just a small point by the way: Matthew's genealogy of Jesus, like Luke's, traces the line through Joseph, not Mary. Read verse 16 carefully and you will see.)

It would be precarious to base an estimate of the chronological age of the earth on such information as we have in Genesis 5 and 11. As a scholar, it is incumbent upon me not to step beyond the evidence we have, and we have no reason whatsoever to believe that the lists are exhaustive in their details.

My reply:

I think it is fair to say that you see a limited purpose to the genealogies of Scripture, and insert the word "general" (as in "trace the *general* line of descent...") as the essential in your premise. Of course, those who see a fuller — and perhaps more inspired — purpose in these lineages, would have a different view of the historicity of Scripture; and perhaps even the essential authority of the Word.

You seek "independent links" to confirm either of our positions; but what sort of corroboration do you desire; and why do you feel you need this? If that found elsewhere in Scripture (from Genesis 5 and 11) is not independent enough to meet your requirements, then what leads you to think God would need (or want) to provide more than one inspired list; one in the Scripture, and another elsewhere? And, are there inspired scriptures elsewhere?

The examples of ancient Near Eastern and other historical genealogies are interesting, however, I don't know of anyone who would consider them to be inspired by God, thereby being, by nature, fallible lists. I believe we both view the Scripture as inspired, inerrant, and infallible. Here, you seem to be comparing apples and oranges. Personally, I love history, and consider myself an eager and principled scholar in the discipline; however, as in all areas of my life, I try hard to use Scripture as *the* standard when comparing information of an academic nature.

Providing us with the direct (and complete) lineage of Adam to Christ is the purpose of the genealogies of the Scripture, and the specific chronologies are provided to show the direct linkage of each generation. Anything short of that purpose (and methodology) would leave this lineage open to a myriad of strange notions, which indeed has happened for those who have not held to a high view of the integrity of Scripture.

And Paul, don't forget that we were attempting to contain our discussions to the context of the Bible alone. So your point regarding my belief is but half germane: "I cannot agree with the assumption you make throughout your message that the Bible must be giving 'contextually complete lineages.' All the actual *facts outside of the Bible* and within it militate against such an assumption." Let us then look at your understanding of the Bible on this matter.

Recall, the chronological linkage applies only to the Promised Seed of the Messiah, therefore the genealogy of Moses — man of God such as he was — does not need to be complete (Exodus 6:16-20/1 Chronicles 6:1-3 — we only need to know that Moses was of the tribe of Levi). And in the Exodus reference, this is denoted by giving us "... the sons of Levi *according to their generations* (v16)." (Ken Taylor actually picks up on this by including in the Chronicles reference (v3) this phrase: "Amram's *descendant's* included...") And, of course, Zadok and Ezra are not of the lineage of Jesus either.

Matthew 1:1 is a summary introduction to the genealogical list of Christ. The details are then found in verses 2-16. Here again the language is helpful: "The book *of the generation* [Taylor suggests "the ancestors/descendent of"] Jesus Christ (v1)...". The matter of Matthew's genealogy of Jesus (as opposed to Luke's) requires a bit of the "scholarly hat," I'll admit; but let me see if I can be of assistance here.

At first sight it would appear that the genealogies of Matthew and Luke are mutually destructive since they both are different lists, yet both end (at Christ) with Joseph, a seeming discrepancy. But in dealing with this concern, we learn something very interesting.

We first note that at David, there are two sons named: Solomon in Matthew (1:6), and Nathan in Luke (3:31). The descendents of the two accounts are of different fathers, and therefore the names of the two lists are different (with the exception of the convergence at Shealtiel and Zerubbabel which is accounted for in 1 Chronicles 3:17-19, and provides an interesting peek into the care taken in preserving the genealogies in spite of the conquest of Judah — cf. Nehemiah 7:5-65).

Now the logical question (and the most troubling apparently for some Bible scholars) is, Why is not Mary's name included in Luke's genealogy?

Among the Jews (set down by God Himself, and set forth in Scripture) it was paramount that the Messiah be the legal descendent of David. Since Christ was born of a virgin, Joseph was his step-father. So, even though the legal line (and royal line through Solomon) came down through Joseph, Jesus was not Joseph's physical descendent (God was the Father), a Messianic requirement.

Mary of course was the physical mother of Jesus, but not to be considered His legal or royal progenitor. But the legal line *is* established through the head of the household, in this case, Joseph. And when we realize that, according to Jewish custom, the man who married could claim his wife's father as his own, then we understand why Joseph, in a sense, had two fathers.

Our culture also recognizes this custom to a degree, only we make the distinction of saying "father-in-law," rather than "father" (cf. 1 Chronicles 2:31-35 for another example of this practice). This is precisely why Matthew notes Joseph's father as being Jacob (1:16), while Luke identifies Joseph's father as Heli (3:23), who was actually the father of Mary. And because the term "nominally" (or "as was supposed," as in "Jesus was known as the son of Joseph" — LB) is used in the Luke reference as the relationship between Jesus the "son," and Joseph the "father," it was recognized that Jesus was the son of Joseph legally, but not by natural generation.

It represents a rather interesting and inspiring conundrum: The Messiah was to be of the Seed of David (in Revelation 22:16 He actually identifies Himself as the root *and the* descendent of David), and was also to be the King of kings, of the royal lineage (1 Timothy 6:15; Revelation 17:14; 19:16). Although God's judgment against the House of David was fulfilled in 2 Kings 8-14 — and shown in Matthew 1:7-9 and 1 Chronicles 3:10-16, the royal lineage passed from Solomon to Joseph as faithfully recorded in those passages. Jesus the Christ (Messiah) was the only one who could unite the royal House with the generational Seed since God was the Father, Mary the natural mother, and Joseph the "father" acknowledging the legal descent from David to Messiah. Matthew and Luke's accounts are replete with references of the people, the blind, the woman possessed, the multitudes, the children crying in the temple, and saying "Hosanna to the Son of David" (Matthew 21:15).

When understood within the entire context of Scripture, there are no conflicts between the Old and the New Testament records, or between Matthew and Luke. The validity of the claim that Jesus was the promised Messiah as the Son of David, the Seed of the Woman as virgin-born through Mary, the Savior of mankind as the Son of Man (from Adam — indeed, we must show a direct lineage/linkage) and the Son of God (as conceived supernaturally by the Holy Spirit) is assured on every ground.

Now can you see why I hold to "contextually complete lineages," and why I bring all of the genealogical references and chronological data sets (I don't find them *parenthetical* — i.e., Warfield) to bear in ascertaining the historicity of Scripture? Viewed as vehicles for conveying information, the genealogies of the Bible are supportive of one another. Were it not for the genealogical/chronological material in the Old Testament, the genealogies in the New Testament would be without historical foundation; and were it not for the genealogies in the New Testament, the genealogical material of the Old, preserved with such exactitude, would be pointless. One set of data looks forward, and one looks backward! Each is required to complete the other.

Rejecting this contextually complete information, I believe, places you in the same quandary as Warfield, which I sufficiently (and rather exhaustively) covered in my recent critique of his work.

In point of fact, I do not "... base an estimate of the chronological age of the earth on such information as we have in Genesis 5 and 11." Instead, using the entire context of the Scripture, with its accurate and complete genealogies (chronologically set) I actually find the age of the universe (the heaven and the earth, and all things) from the Beginning (no gaps between Genesis 1:1 and 1:3, and no gaps in the genealogies), and subscribe to the traditional Jewish calendar, finding the age from Creation to be 5,761 (2001 AD) years. I know of no problem which cannot be adequately addressed with the Biblical information which would lead to any other conclusion, and that is the evidence we have, and the evidence which we shall consider.

I continue in a later email:

I wonder about your last sentence: "It [Genesis 1] is not designed to tell how long it actually took God to make things." On the surface that is a rather dogmatic statement; but at a deeper level, where in the Scripture does it suggest such a conclusion?

It is my contention that a full understanding of the genealogies and chronologies is encouraged precisely to establish an uninterrupted lineage from Creation (Adam) to Christ, which in fact, they do. At the least, we are certainly invited to use the genealogies/chronologies to determine the *HisStorical* timeline. And when this is done we then possess a complete chronological history from the Creation of the Universe ("In the Beginning..." — remember, no gap between 1:1 and 1:2) to Christ. And we are reasonably sure of the time from Christ to the present, totaling approximately 6,000 years. Since the Jewish calendar is probably more accurate, we can then know the age of Creation to be 5,761 years.

As I indicated earlier, I would be most interested to read your version of the Creation Account, written clearly enough so that all readers of the Bible would find consensus on the issue of origins. Ken

Taylor felt sufficient inspiration to paraphrase the Scripture, and did a generally exemplary job. I ask of you only the first chapter of the first book. [By-the-way, Sailhamer was kind — and honest — enough to do this, starting on page 99 in the book.]

I think you gave us a clue — a glimpse — into your wording in this regard when, in your advent devotional, you attributed to Christ the mighty power behind the Big Bang, some billions of years ago. I have yet to see a paraphrase of Genesis 1 that would include these notions, though I have seen many interpretations of fallible man that attempt so.

You fail to understand that in Genesis 1, whenever the word "day" is used with a number in the Scripture — more than 400 times — it means an ordinary day. Whenever the phrase "evening and morning" is used without the word "day" — 38 times — it always gives reference to an ordinary day. Whenever "evening and morning" are used with the word "day" — 23 times — it always means an ordinary day. Never within the context of Scripture does day used in this manner — "evening and morning"/*number*/"day" — mean anything other than an ordinary day. Therefore, those who get hung up on cosmic evolutionary notions (billions of years) as you have done, must formulate some sort of extra-Biblical explanation, apply scholarly analysis, and ultimately render the Genesis account unrecognizable to the person, who in simple faith, believes the text as clearly written. In this regard, text taken outside of context, produces pretext!

Allow me to share (again) a further concern: When it comes to reading the Bible, you put too much value and credence in the scholarship of fallible man. This persistent attitude on your part plays havoc with the faith of the believer.

With some hindsight I now appreciate the coursework at the university that taught me — no, actually conditioned me — to question all assumptions, all faith premises, all scholarship; to appreciate them for what they are, that being means to foster in the true scholar a knowledge — and eventually a Wisdom — that are truly personal. Of course, all of my professors at the state university — especially my Jewish mentors, for some reason — intended for me to include the Holy Scripture within this epistemological criteria; but God used the challenge and the discipline to help me to see that His Word stands apart (and far above) the works of mere men.

I sense that you have not yet come to that point in your own faith development. My understanding here is based on the writings you have shared with me. As I've said before (and you now recognize) we see a different Bible, and quite possibly — and most likely — a Creator of different character.

Apparently your understanding of God emanates from our human understanding upwards through our means of "pre-understandings" as you call it; my understanding of God is of His Word coming down to man. Your view of the Scripture is of a text that is ripe for interpretation, filled with problems needing critical scholarship; my view is of a divinely inspired and infallible Work which is my standard for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, and for instruction in righteousness. Your mind is open to the many perceived problems (discrepancies, inconsistencies, gaps) in the Biblical text and challenged to search the scholarship of often brilliant minds for answers; I am open to the challenges that my limited understanding brings to the Scripture, and search the specific text (in the broader Biblical context), discovering in the process some of the most wonderful and miraculous insights, affirming my faith and continually drawing me closer to Him.

I have had the occasion over the years to have read hundreds — perhaps a thousand or two — books which have, from many disciplines, and varied and numerous subjects, been the source of a rich flow of personal knowledge and intellectual stimulation. My libraries are filled with some of the most profound and thoughtful reference materials, produced through human effort. I have even had the privilege of reading snippets of works of theology which you have been kind enough to send my way. I am one who will read most anything of a scholarly nature.

But I have for years considered all these works within a proper context; always open to a skeptical and critical mind. I think it is fair to say that I hold a lesser — and much more limited — view of the works of men than you do.

A case in point would be the confident assurance you expressed when sending me the works of Warfield, Kidner, and Waltke: "Christian identity does not depend on our being convinced about an inerrant Bible (though the Bible is indeed inerrant), nor on our being convinced that the world was made in six days (though Genesis says so, and this is confirmed by Exodus 20:11; 31:17). I make this point, because I do not want your faith to be shaken by what you learn from Warfield, Kidner, and Waltke.

Warfield *will prove to you*, from scripture itself, that the genealogies in Genesis do not teach after all a 6000-year age for the earth. Kidner will lay out a number of possible ways of looking at the six days of Genesis 1. And Waltke *will prove*, from the Hebrew of Genesis 1:1-3, that the creation account proper begins in verse 3 and not in verses 1-2. These men are godly, they are acute, their concern is for the truth of scripture, and *they will show you a way* more in keeping with the very words you are so eager to be able to trust."

In fact, although I appreciated reading these learned men — and accepted the challenge to critique their works as all scholars worth their mettle would do —, I found nothing in their writings that in any way bolstered my understanding of the Scripture; and I spent considerable effort in penning my thoughts in this regard. In my opinion, the Church today would be far better off had not B.B. Warfield written his Chapter IX in *Biblical and Theological Studies*; had not the Rev. Kidner put on paper some of his confused thoughts; had not Professor Waltke lectured on Biblical cosmogony, going on to reformulate the now discredited Gap Theories of Chalmers, Scofield, Warfield, Ramm, and others.

You seem to categorize the Bible as in some way the work of men. I see a special relationship between God and a chosen few inspired to scribe His Message — His Gospel — to mankind. Having been one who has experienced the exhilaration of a level of inspiration in writing on a number of occasions, I can assure you that there is no other person in all of history who can even begin to understand the unique relationship that the Bible authors had with God. I don't sense that exuberance and appreciation on your part as I read your often labored explanations of why the Bible can not do this, or do that.... You read too much — or too little — into the authorship, the purpose, the dynamics of Scripture.

I think I see in the nature and verse of your writing a distance from our personal God. I see, as it were, a wall of theological scholarship — a perverse arrogance — standing between you and God. God has moved in the hearts and minds of men throughout time, inspiring them to greatness; but He has on occasion clearly spoken to them directly, moving them to record His Words. I see a personal God, providential in the affairs of men, bringing great comfort to my soul. In that regard, the words of Lowell come to mind — "Careless seems the great Avenger,/ History's pages but record/ One death grapple in the darkness,/ 'Twixt old systems and the Word;/ Truth forever on the scaffold,/ Wrong forever on the throne;/ Yet that scaffold sways the future,/ And behind the dim unknown/ Standeth God within the shadows,/ Keeping watch upon his own.

You are walking on shaky ground by implying that the pre-understanding of people like Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses as being less sophisticated, somehow less "scientifically" astute than the cultured and more refined pre-understanding (prejudice) we possess today. Then consider this, how could God ever minister the Truth about the Creation to folks like us (you and I) — you obviously must have a different pre-understanding than my pre-understanding on the origin of God's Creation. Where is the Standard (Bible) that could bring our minds together? I maintain it is clearly given, and recorded literally for us. You see it as allegorical, perhaps metaphorical, perhaps of a poetic, literary style.

You continue to give too much credence to the influence that other creation stories had on the understanding that the Hebrews "brought to bear on this text [Genesis 1]...." And I'm wondering, could it be that the text was given to tell the truth about the Creation, to draw the Chosen People away from their errant pre-understanding gleaned from the pagan societies around them? Could it be that the truth about the Creation as recorded in Genesis 1 is meant to draw our minds away from the pagan society around us today?

In other words, the text was given to stand against the myths of other cultures, those in the days of Moses, as well as those we endure today. There is essentially little difference between the ancients of Moses' time, and the population of today. The sins of mankind are generally the same, and so is the propensity towards gullibility in embracing the false notions of fallible men.

Again Paul, I ask that you stay with the Bible in the course of our dialogue, and not meander afield. We do not read the Scripture as we do a newspaper. We know that papers and books inform, often incorrectly; but the Bible transforms. It gives a higher knowledge — known as Wisdom — which simply means that it leads us to look at things from God's point of view.

So it is with the Creation, and the way He views — and did — it. This account — given supernaturally to the author of Genesis — is in direct conflict with the wisdom of the world, and has been so from the Beginning.

Science, in its many forms is an ancient discipline. It has been wrong, and done more harm than it has been right, and done good. Throughout its long history, collective science has been busy trying to formulate and promote various cosmogonies. Today we find our cultural myth in the fundamental notions of evolution and Uniformitarianism. The foundation for these strange ideas rests in the *Millions and Billions Mantra of Foolishness*, that mythology which you have naively ascribed to Christ Jesus, the Creator.

Those who hold to Darwinian Evolution, Lyellian Uniformitarianism, and materialistic naturalism are generally also atheists (or deists of various sorts), and they are the ones who most strongly embrace the ubiquitous *Mantra* (although many Christians are also caught in the nonsense) which you apparently also espouse (though you indicate rejection of evolution, Uniformitarianism, materialism, naturalism). The Bible speaks clearly to these poor folks: "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God (Psalm 53:1)."

And the Professor adds a final note regarding Warfield (in the context of a larger missive):

So I repeat: The genealogies contain selected names to document the general line of descent from Adam to Abram. The reason why the numbers are included is to illustrate how the human life-span gradually diminished in a fallen world. Genesis itself does not total the numbers for chronological purposes, and we should not step beyond the evidence either. The lists may be presumed accurate as far as they go, but the information they give us is too sketchy to serve as a secure basis for estimating the antiquity of mankind. Warfield may well have waxed a bit too rhetorical when he speculated that the actual descent might have had "a hundred or a thousand or ten thousand links" (p. 241). Yet he had a point.

Where Warfield found not twenty generations from Creation to Abraham, but perhaps two hundred, or even two thousand generations (what I call the *Little Gap Theory*) — (this in 1911!) — today he'd have to acknowledge two hundred thousand gaps to account for the 2+ million years of human history ascribed by "modern science" — Sailhamer ends up asserting a number out of the blue; a number that neither Bible (6,000 years) on the one end, nor "science" (2-3 million) on the other end: "Clear traces of human beings date back only about thirty thousand years ago..." (p.33) This makes of him a laughing-stock in evolutionary-minded circles, and one to be dismissed in the field of Bible scholarship.

Sailhamer so seeks to appease evolutionary thinkers (while at the same time inviting their scorn) that he is forced to make this rather ludicrous statement: "As far as the biblical record is concerned, nothing in Genesis 1 and 2 contradicts modern science..." (p.33) He apparently fails to realize that "modern science" certainly doesn't subscribe to only 30,000 years of human history. Even Warfield in his day recognized the need to add a few more years if he hoped to appease the voracious Time machine of Naturalistic thinkers.

Now I have shared portions of this rather lengthy correspondence partly due to my strong impression that, for the most part, theologians are not very helpful, in fact they tend to add a significant amount of confusion when it comes to a proper understanding of the Genesis Account.

All-in-all, *Genesis Unbound* goes to show us that we need to be extremely careful, in fact it is imperative that we be consistent Acts 17:11 Berean Believers when it comes to interpretations of Genesis that theologians offer to us. I notice in the testimonials for the book that Walter Kaiser of Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary feels that "This volume will be talked about for years to come [implying a "mega-reception"?]." I doubt it. Published in 1996, I'd not heard of the book before your introducing it to me (except for the review in *Creation* magazine), and I note that it is now out of print.

I do hope to meet with you in the near future to discuss this book. Use the book and/or this memo to generate questions you might have. I'd cherish the opportunity to dialogue those inquiries.

Indeed, reading Sailhamer raises a couple of key questions in my mind. On page 28 he says, "... little in [Genesis 1] conflicts with modern science. Questions: 1)What is "modern science?; and, What conflicts, and what doesn't? (note: cf. p.33 for information.)

Let us then focus on the “Six Key Questions” (p.28) that Sailhamer himself raises: 1)The age of the universe (is there a way to figure-out what Sailhamer actually believes about the age of the universe?); 2)What are the implications of long periods of time, (did the dinosaurs really die-out 65 million years ago — before the Fall?); 3)What was God doing in “the week”, (What — and why — is Moses really trying to teach us?); 4)What about the fourth day, the third, the fifth, (Are *days* really *days*?, and what actually happened during these days?); 5)What about the origin of human beings, (two kinds of human beings?; and when in “geological history” did *we* first appear?); 6)Where do we put the dinosaur, (specifically, did God really create and then allow species of animals to fall into extinction prior to the fall!?).

The ultimate outcome of Sailhamer’s faulty logic is actually found in his effort to answer his sixth “Key Question.” He actually thinks that God’s creation “in the beginning” was full of death and struggle, extinction, surviving bones and fossil traces from earth’s distant past eons ago. In his mind Sailhamer has to have a god (the *god of creation past*) who clearly did some bad and terrible things before he mended his ways and started to create in a good fashion as found in Genesis 1:3—!

Sailhamer clearly knows of the Fall and its effects. Although he seems to discount suffering, death, extinction as results of sin (the Fall) — these occurred “*in the beginning*” before the earth was made habitable for the human — he recognizes the Fall’s effect on the purpose for which Man was placed in the Garden (Promised Land #1). He notes that *working* and *keeping* the Garden — the commonly understood purpose — is a result of the Fall; that previous to sin Man’s sole task was to worship God and fellowship in His presence (pp.74-75). In that sense then, work and stewardship are seen as the consequence of Man’s sin and the Fall! I don’t sense that notion at all from the Scripture.

In that regard, Sailhamer also enters into some strange contortions in trying to *locate* the Garden of Eden, while at the same time not being concerned with the physical *location* of the Garden:

Our concern here... is not with the physical location of the garden of Eden but with the textual identity of the garden. Where is the biblical writer telling us the garden was located? Can the borders of the garden of Eden given in Genesis 2 be identified with any other specific area within the subsequent Genesis narrative? (p.70)

And viola! The Garden of Eden equals The Promised Land, promised to Abraham and his descendents, but revealed to Adam in his sinless state, only to be lost by sin, now to be regained by his descendents, and to be occupied today by the state of Israel. *Provocative* indeed!

brs