



EXEGESIS OF GENESIS 1–11

STUDY NOTES

ONLINE COURSE

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GENERAL INTRODUCTION

Exegesis of the text of the Old Testament needs to include the placement of the interpretation in the overall context of the teaching of the Old Testament. Therefore, the exegete must be well acquainted with certain Old Testament texts containing major contributions to specific doctrinal themes. This acquaintance must not be from a translation alone—it must be rooted and grounded in the Hebrew text itself.

“One who made it his life’s work to interpret French literature, but who could only read it in an English translation, would not be taken seriously; yet it is remarkable how many ministers of religion week by week expound a literature that they are unable to read save in translation!”

— H. H. Rowley, *Expository Times* 74, no. 12 (September 1963): 383;
cited in Nigel Turner, *Grammatical Insights into the New Testament*
(Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1965), 2–3

Although the exegesis of the Hebrew text of the Old Testament focuses upon the language, the linguistic factor is not the only factor to be considered. The social, historical, and geographical setting must also be taken into account. Everyday life differed greatly from our present day Western culture. In the Old Testament, culture changed from one century to another, from one people to another, and from one environment to another—just as it changes within our own setting. Attention must be given to identify the separate context for each passage. So much is unfamiliar to the modern, Western reader: clothing, food, the medium of exchange, local customs, religious observances, and dialects. How did these factors affect the meaning for both writer and recipient? That is the exegete’s challenge.

It is reported that an old prospector summed up his life in the following words: “I spent five years looking for gold and twenty years looking for my burrow.” Striking exegetical gold has about the same ratio. For every nugget the exegete finds, he can expect to spend four hours looking for it. Exegesis is not for the lazy or the quitter. It is a labor of love requiring commitment and perseverance.

Word studies alone will not suffice. Indeed, the over-occupation with word studies is a sign of the laziness and ignorance of the vast majority of what passes for biblical exposition in our times. It tends to be as inaccurate as translation solely by means of a dictionary.

Just as a sentence is more revealing than a single word, so the examination of a writer’s syntax and style is that much more important to a biblical commentator. It is not surprising that fewer books have been written on this subject than on vocabulary, because whereas students of vocabulary can quickly look up lists of words in concordances and indices, in the field of syntax the study is more circuitous. There is no help except in a few selective grammars and monographs, so that the worker really must work his way through all the texts in Greek.

— Nigel Turner, *Grammatical Insights into the New Testament*
(Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1965), 2–3

Having decried the over-emphasis on philology or etymology, we must recognize that the choice of individual words was significant to the writers of Scripture. It is legitimate for the exegete to ask, “Why did the writer choose this term as opposed to one of its synonyms?”

EXEGETICAL PROCEDURE

Utilize the following steps as a guide in fulfilling both the weekly assignments and the final written assignment for this course. A simpler outline to keep in mind at all times contains three words: **Information**, **Relationship**, and **Emphasis**.

1 TRANSLATE:

Perform a provisional translation of the text.

2 OBSERVE:

Read and reread the text until saturated with it. Begin to ask questions about anything and everything in the text. What information does it give?—Who? When? Where? What? How? Why? Pay attention to details—be a Sherlock Holmes!

3 IDENTIFY:

3.1 Grammar and syntax.

3.11 To what is each word, phrase, clause, sentence, and paragraph related? in what way? for what purpose?

3.12 Where is the prominence or emphasis? Pay attention to word order and the employment of emphatic words.

3.2 Expression.

3.21 What idioms are employed?

3.22 What is the literary form?

3.23 Do a word study for each word crucial to the text.

3.24 State the argument and/or the development of the theme in your own words.

4 EXAMINE:

4.1 The circles of context to determine how the passage fits into each one (immediate context, remote context, and external setting). The external setting is in the ancient near eastern cultural, historical, geographical, political, economic, and spiritual milieu.

4.2 Parallel passages and identify both the similarities and dissimilarities in all areas (especially related to steps 2–7, above).

5 SOLVE:

List all potential solutions for the significant interpretative problems encountered.. Choose one as the preferred solution and compare its adequacy with all other potential solutions.

6 CONSULT:

Check the commentaries for their interpretation. Watch for alternative interpretations and note any additional problems which you failed to note during your own study.

7 EVALUATE:

7.1 Be willing to modify and/or refine your conclusions.

7.2 Acknowledge any uncertainties, ambiguities, lack of knowledge, and/or need for additional information. Outline a method of conducting further investigation.

Worksheet for Genesis 2

Meaning has to do with resultant translation and categories of interpretation.

Syntax has to do with the technical data described and defined in its contribution to grammatical relationships and emphasis.

Exegetical significance has to do with the application of that technical data in making a decision on which interpretation it supports or contradicts.

- Where are the four rivers of Eden?
- How would it be possible for Adam to name all of the animals in less than a day?
- What is the significance of Adam's declaration in verse 23?

Worksheet for Genesis 3

Meaning has to do with resultant translation and categories of interpretation.

Syntax has to do with the technical data described and defined in its contribution to grammatical relationships and emphasis.

Exegetical significance has to do with the application of that technical data in making a decision on which interpretation it supports or contradicts.

- 3:16** What is the meaning of **יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי-בָרָא**?
What are the implications of the various viewpoints on this particular text?

Worksheet for Genesis 4

Meaning has to do with resultant translation and categories of interpretation.

Syntax has to do with the technical data described and defined in its contribution to grammatical relationships and emphasis.

Exegetical significance has to do with the application of that technical data in making a decision on which interpretation it supports or contradicts.

- 4:7** Compare the phraseology and syntax of this verse with that of **3:16**. What is the exegetical significance?

What conclusions can be reached as a result of such a comparison?

- 4:26** What is the meaning of אֵץ הַחַיִּל לְקָרָא בְּשֵׁם יְהוָה?

Worksheet for Genesis 5

Meaning has to do with resultant translation and categories of interpretation.

Syntax has to do with the technical data described and defined in its contribution to grammatical relationships and emphasis.

Exegetical significance has to do with the application of that technical data in making a decision on which interpretation it supports or contradicts.

5:3–31 What is the syntactical pattern or structure of this genealogy?

What other genealogies in the OT follow the same pattern?

Identify the pattern's exegetical significance.

Worksheet for Genesis 6

Meaning has to do with resultant translation and categories of interpretation.

Syntax has to do with the technical data described and defined in its contribution to grammatical relationships and emphasis.

Exegetical significance has to do with the application of that technical data in making a decision on which interpretation it supports or contradicts.

6:1–4 What are the exegetically significant elements of these verses?

What are the various interpretations offered for these verses?

Worksheet for Genesis 7

Meaning has to do with resultant translation and categories of interpretation.

Syntax has to do with the technical data described and defined in its contribution to grammatical relationships and emphasis.

Exegetical significance has to do with the application of that technical data in making a decision on which interpretation it supports or contradicts.

7:1 What is the meaning of כִּי־אֶתֶדָּרְאִיתִי צְדִיק לְפָנַי בְּדוֹר הַזֶּה?

- What is the biblical evidence for a worldwide Flood?

Worksheet for Genesis 8

Meaning has to do with resultant translation and categories of interpretation.

Syntax has to do with the technical data described and defined in its contribution to grammatical relationships and emphasis.

Exegetical significance has to do with the application of that technical data in making a decision on which interpretation it supports or contradicts.

8:1 What is the meaning of וַיִּזְכֹּר אֱלֹהִים אֶת־נִחַם?

8:3 What is the syntax and exegetical significance of וַיֵּשְׁבוּ הַמַּיִם מֵעַל הָאָרֶץ הַלּוֹף וְשׁוּב?

Worksheet for Genesis 9

Meaning has to do with resultant translation and categories of interpretation.

Syntax has to do with the technical data described and defined in its contribution to grammatical relationships and emphasis.

Exegetical significance has to do with the application of that technical data in making a decision on which interpretation it supports or contradicts.

Genesis 9 contains an abundance of potential exegetical problems to solve. List three exegetical questions and their references below:

(1)

(2)

(3)

9:12, 16 What is the theological significance of לְדַרְתַּת עוֹלָם (v. 12) and בְּרִית עוֹלָם (v. 16)?

Worksheet for Genesis 10

Meaning has to do with resultant translation and categories of interpretation.

Syntax has to do with the technical data described and defined in its contribution to grammatical relationships and emphasis.

Exegetical significance has to do with the application of that technical data in making a decision on which interpretation it supports or contradicts.

10:25 What are the interpretive options for כִּי בְּיָמָיו נִפְלְגָה הָאָרֶץ?

Worksheet for Genesis 11

Meaning has to do with resultant translation and categories of interpretation.

Syntax has to do with the technical data described and defined in its contribution to grammatical relationships and emphasis.

Exegetical significance has to do with the application of that technical data in making a decision on which interpretation it supports or contradicts.

11:1–9 What are the theological implications of the Tower of Babel and its judgment by God?

11:28, 31 Describe the problem involving אור כְּשָׂדִים.

Herman Bavinck. *In the Beginning: Foundations of Creation Theology*. Edited by John Bolt. Translated by John Vriend. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1999. 291 pp. \$15.99 (paperback). Reviewed by William D. Barrick, Professor of Old Testament.

Teaching theology for nearly forty years, Herman Bavinck (1854–1921) succeeded Abraham Kuyper at the Free University of Amsterdam. This volume is a translation of only the fifth chapter in the second volume (out of four volumes) of Bavinck's *Gereformeerde Dogmatiek* (*Reformed Dogmatics*; original Dutch published 1895–1901). The chapter's original title was "*Over de Wereld in haar Oorspronkelijke Staat*" ("Concerning the World in Its Original State"). Translated from the second expanded edition of *Gereformeerde Dogmatiek* (1906–1911), *In the Beginning* is the Dutch Reformed Translation Society's second volume in its project to translate the entire work. The first translated volume was *The Last Things: Hope for this World and the Next* (Baker, 1996).

Bolt's "Introduction" (9–20) briefly sketches the historical, theological, and biographical setting for Bavinck's writings. Making the observation that Bavinck was willing to confront modern thought and science as a theologian, Bolt reminds the reader that "many of the specific scientific issues he addresses in this volume are dated by his own late-nineteenth-century context" (13). As a trinitarian and Calvinist, Bavinck emphasizes grace's restoration of nature (16). Bolt summarizes the significance of this volume by declaring, "Creation is . . . more than just a debate about the age of the earth and the evolutionary origins of humanity" (18). He views Bavinck's dogmatics as "biblically and confessionally faithful, pastorally sensitive, challenging, and still relevant" (19).

Excellent chapter synopses were composed and inserted by the editor. Readers will find them a helpful guide for understanding the major themes and theses of the volume. An appendix cross-references the sections of the Dutch with the pages of this volume (261–62). A bibliography (263–89) lists the sources cited by Bavinck himself. Some references remain incomplete due to unavailability of full information. Where multiple English editions are available (e.g., Calvin's *Institutes*) the most recent or most frequently cited or most accessible edition is listed. Scripture passages discussed at length by Bavinck are listed in a "Select Scripture Index" (291). To list all Scripture references cited would lengthen the volume significantly since his discussions include many proof texts (there are 62 references in the first two pages alone).

In the first of seven sections ("Creation," 23–60) an indication of Bavinck's views regarding general revelation and common grace can be found in the second sentence: "Creation is the initial act and foundation of all divine revelation and therefore the foundation of all religious and ethical life as well" (24). Employing the Hebrew of the OT and the Greek of the NT, citing Church history and historical theology, and debating Aristotle and Plato, the author defends the doctrine of creation *ex nihilo* ("out of nothing") (34–39).

"Heaven: The Spiritual World" (61–93) is a parade example of the breadth of Bavinck's reading and knowledge. Interacting with scores of theologians and philosophers from ancient times up to his own day, he develops a Scripture-based

angelology. He enters into the debates over extra-terrestrial life (67–68), the “sons of God” in Genesis 6 (75–76), and guardian angels (84–88).

Writing of the second sphere of creation (“Earth: The Material World,” 95–133), the author rejects attempts to discover mythological elements in the Genesis record. “Everything rather argues for the assumption that in Genesis 1 we have a tradition that derives from the most ancient times, was gradually adulterated in the case of the other peoples, and preserved in its purity by Israel” (100). Bavinck examines various views regarding the days of Genesis 1, the gap theory, and the universal flood in Noah’s day. Although he appears to be ambivalent on the nature of the six days of creation and comes close to soft scientism, ultimately he does insist that Christians must take their stand on divine revelation rather than science. One oddity is his claim that “Genesis calculates the day from morning to morning” (124).

Bavinck systematically critiques Darwinism in the section entitled “Human Origins” (137–57). He states, “From the Christian position there is not the least objection to the notion of evolution or development as conceived by Aristotle; on the contrary, it is creation alone which makes such evolution possible” (139). However, he confines such “evolution” to variations within species (144). Darwinian evolution is discredited by its ties to naturalism and materialism (145–47). Interestingly, although Bavinck had established that the earth’s present form was the result of immense changes brought about by the universal flood (131), he does not mention that as a factor affecting attempts to identify the location of Eden (155–57).

In “Human Nature” (159–95) Bavinck provides the reader with a detailed examination of the meaning of “the image of God” in historical theology. It is a superb presentation of the differences between Roman Catholic, Protestant, and Reformed theologies. He argues against trichotomy (187–88), includes dominion as an element of the image of God (193), and holds that any definition of God’s image must take into account the incarnation of Christ (192–93). Continuing the discussion of God’s image (“Human Destiny,” [197–225]), the author develops his views of the covenant of works (apparently limited to the pre-fall relationship of Adam and Eve to God, 199–216) and creationism (as opposed to traducianism in regard to the origin of the soul, 216–25). Within those discussions he proclaims that federal headship (as opposed to seminal headship) is the only viable view of the relationship of humanity to Adam.

The final section deals with the matter of divine providence (229–60). Bavinck defines providence as “that act of God by which from moment to moment he preserves and governs all things” (234). Rebutting the errors of deism, he posits, “A Deist is a person who in his short life has not found the time to become an atheist” (243). Providence includes the continuing actions of God (“God is never idle,” 245) after creation and distinct from creation (246–48). Under the heading of “Concurrence: Secondary Causes” (248) Bavinck concludes that “a miracle is not a violation of natural law and no intervention in the natural order. From God’s side it is an act that does not more immediately and directly have God as its cause than any ordinary event” (250). Under “Providence as Government” (256) he discusses God’s relationship to the origin of sin (257–59).

In the Beginning is a brilliantly researched and developed contribution to the disciplines of systematic and historical theology. We all owe a debt of thanks to the Dutch Reformed Translation Society for making Bavinck’s work available in English.

C. John Collins. *Genesis 1–4: A Linguistic, Literary, and Theological Commentary*. Philippsburg, N.J.: P & R Publishing, 2006. xiv, 318 pp. \$17.99 (paper). Reviewed by William D. Barrick, Professor of Old Testament.

C. John Collins is professor of Old Testament and department chairman at Covenant Theological Seminary in St. Louis, Mo. He also authored *The God of Miracles: An Exegetical Examination of God’s Action in the World* (Crossway, 2000) and *Science and Faith: Friends or Foes?* (Crossway, 2003). As a Bible translator he served as chairman of the Old Testament Committee for the English Standard Version and contributed “What the Reader Wants and What the Translator Can Give: First John as a Test Case” in *Translating Truth: The Case for Essentially Literal Bible Translation* (Crossway, 2005).

Genesis 1–4 is an exegetical commentary that “includes a literary-theological method informed by contemporary discourse analysis” (1). Collins describes this method as seeking “to read the text the way a competent reader in the original audience would have done, to the best that we can reconstruct that competence” (5). Collins penned a portion of his second chapter (5-32) as a response (9 n. 6) to Robert L. Thomas, “Modern Linguistics versus Traditional Hermeneutics,” *TMSJ* 14/1 (2003): 23-45. Using 1 Samuel 3 and Matthew 4:1-11, Collins illustrates his methodology based upon a series of nine questions (18-30).

In Chapter 3 the author places Genesis 1–4 in its literary context (33-37) before embarking on four chapters exegeting the text’s four pericopes: 1:1–2:3 (39-100), 2:4–25 (101-47), 3:1–24 (149-88), and 4:1–26 (189-220). In each chapter Collins identifies the boundary of each pericope, its structure, and its genre. Then he provides an essentially literal translation richly footnoted for syntactical and exegetical details before commencing the main treatment of the text. The remainder of each chapter deals with “Extra Notes,” which are expanded discussions of key interpretative elements of the text. For example, these “extra” notes for 1:1–2:3 display the following headings: “Genesis 1:1 and creation from nothing” (50-55), “The proper rendering of the refrain” (55-56), “The fourth day” (56-58), “The meaning of kind” (58-59), “Genesis 1 and the Trinity” (59-61), “The image of God” (61-67), “The use of the words *create* and *make*” (67-68), “Genesis 1:28 and environmental ethics” (68-69), “The goodness of creation” (69-70), and “The unusual seventh day” (70-71). Next comes a literary-theological exposition (71-83, for 1:1–2:3), followed by what the author terms “Other Reverberations” (83-100, for 1:1–2:3) dealing with references to the text in other OT and NT texts.

After presenting the characteristics of 1:1–2:3, Collins concludes that the genre is “exalted prose narrative” (44). He understands “created” in 1:1 to refer to an event preceding the storyline that follows (43, 54). Interestingly, he seems to impose the western concept of “day and night” on “And there was evening and there was morning, the *n*th day” by making the “evening” refer to the end of the day and the “morning” refer to the end of the night—resulting in day followed by night rather than the traditional night followed by day (56). In what may have been an oversight, no reference to 1 Corinthians 11:7 occurs anywhere in Collins’ discussion of the image of God (61-67) and his treatment of 1 Corinthians 11:7-12 with regard to Genesis 2:4-25 (141-42) does not provide an explanation. Making certain to distinguish his view from that of Meredith Kline, Collins opts for a literary framework interpretation of the days of Genesis 1 (73-

74). In his opinion the framework theme does not require the reader to do away with the sequential nature of the days (74, 111). However, he takes a “broadly sequential” view that allows for the creation week to be “some years long” (129). For the seventh day he opts for an ongoing creation Sabbath that did not end like the previous six days (74-75, 92-93, 125).

In Genesis 2:15-17 Collins identifies an Adamic covenant, but not a covenant of works (112-14). As for the location of the Garden of Eden, he believes that “the flood could not have obliterated” (120-21 n. 65) the clues for identifying its location. On the issue of the length of the days of Genesis 1, he associates himself with the analogical days view that holds that the days’ “length is neither specified nor important, and not everything in the account needs to be taken as historically sequential” (124). In a disarmingly transparent statement regarding harmonization of the Bible and science, he declares, “my sympathies are with the harmonizers. But I hope that I am honest enough to change my mind if the evidence leads elsewhere” (124).

In Collins’ opinion, God has not revoked the creation mandate for man to fill the earth and subdue it (130). In fact, he bases his system of biblical ethics upon this mandate. Thus, the Ten Commandments cannot be done away with, since they are rooted in the creation ordinances (131-32) and keeping those commandments is restorative and evangelistic (132). According to Collins, Genesis 3:15 is messianic in the sense that it envisions a champion who engages the dark power that uses the serpent. Therefore, “we may say that Genesis fosters a messianic expectation, of which this verse is the headwaters” (157, 176). Due to the syntactical specificity of the text for an individual as the offspring of the woman, he sees no need to resort to some sort of *sensus plenior* (158).

In his eighth chapter Collins takes up the matter of the sources, unity, and authorship of the Pentateuch and Genesis 1–4 in particular (221-35). He warns that writing an obituary for the Documentary Hypothesis probably might prove premature (224). He concludes that “Moses is the primary author of the Pentateuch as we have it” (235). Chapter 9 discusses the communicative purpose of Genesis 1–4, taking into consideration the ANE background, the Pentateuch as a whole, and life in Israel (237-47). Reluctant to describe Genesis 1–4 as a polemic, Collins takes it as an alternative to the ANE stories—an alternative that corrects the pagan versions of events and provides the true interpretation (242-43). Chapter 10 tackles questions of history and science (249-67). It is in this chapter that the author most clearly identifies himself as an adversary of a literalistic reading of Genesis 1–4, of young earth creationism, and of creation science. The final chapter (269-78) considers “how Genesis 1–4 can shape our view of the world today” (269).

This book concludes with a fairly extensive bibliography (279-98) that lacks adequate reference to key creation science and young earth creationist sources (e.g., those written by Henry M. Morris and John C. Whitcomb). Two indexes round out the volume (biblical and extrabiblical references, 299-308; subjects and names, 309-18).

Collins’ volume ought to be read by anyone seeking an exegetical treatment of Genesis 1–4. The detail with which he pursues its text and its implications theologically is unmatched in the usual commentaries. As the title claims, this is a linguistic, literary, and theological commentary. This reviewer teaches a seminary course on Genesis 1–11

in which he takes issue with a number of Collins' interpretations. However, this volume will be required reading for all future course offerings.

Paul Copan and William Lane Craig. *Creation out of Nothing: A Biblical, Philosophical, and Scientific Exploration*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2004. 280 pp. \$19.99 (paper). Reviewed by William D. Barrick, Professor of Old Testament.

Creation out of Nothing systematically examines the doctrine of creation *ex nihilo* from the biblical, philosophical, and scientific perspectives. The authors develop a strong cumulative case for the doctrine while taking care to respond to the critics of that viewpoint. Dealing with the biblical witness, Copan and Craig declare that “there simply is no other plausible and consistent way to read the biblical text” (29). In their chapter on the OT’s witness (29–70) they discuss the relationship of Genesis 1 to the Ancient Near Eastern (ANE) cosmogonies, the relationship of Genesis 1:1 to the rest of the passage, the meaning of the Hebrew verb בָּרָא, the issue of “double creation,” and the testimony of OT texts outside Genesis 1:1–2:3. This reviewer seldom found himself in disagreement. However, when Copan and Craig discuss בָּרָא, they emphasize “*the utter absence of preexisting material in connection with it*” (51, emphasis theirs) ignoring the contextual information provided by 2:7, 21, and 22 to the meaning of בָּרָא in 1:27. Later, however, they mention that man was not created *ex nihilo* (98). In their attempt to explain the grammatical construction of Genesis 1:2, they fail to identify it as a disjunctive clause (42) and erroneously classify the conjunction *waw* at the start of that verse as a “*w^{*}w-consecutive*” (64). These two weaknesses, however, do not diminish the effect of their overall argumentation from the OT.

The discussion of the NT’s witness (71–91) covers John 1:3, Romans 4:17, Hebrews 11:3, miscellaneous passages supporting creation *ex nihilo*, and the apparent problem text in 2 Peter 3:5. For each text the Copan and Craig mention the various viewpoints or interpretations and present the evidence for the view they believe to be the most consistent with sound hermeneutics.

Extrabiblical witnesses (93–145) includes brief surveys of pertinent citations in Jewish sources (2 Maccabees, Jubilees, 2 Enoch, Joseph and Asenath, 2 Baruch, Josephus, Dead Sea Scrolls, 3 Maccabees, Philo of Alexandria, Rabban Gamaliel II, Hellenistic synagogal prayers, and Medieval Jewish exegetes) as well as Christian sources among the Church fathers (Odes of Solomon, Clement of Rome, *The Shepherd of Hermes*, the *Didache*, Polycarp, Aristides, Justin Martyr, Athenagoras, Tatian, Theophilus of Antioch, Irenaeus, Hippolytus, Pseudo-Justin, Athanasius, and Augustine). Unfortunately, they make no mention of the significant contributions of Origen or Ephrem the Syrian.

The fourth chapter (“Understanding the Notion of *Creatio ex Nihilo*,” 147–65) enters the realm of logical and philosophical discussion of *creation originans* and *creation continuans* as they relate to a proper understanding of both creation and conservation (preservation). Chapter 5 (“*Creatio ex Nihilo* and Abstract Objects,” 167–95) pursues a topic derived from Platonism. This philosophical discussion compares absolute creationism with modified Platonism, nominalism, fictionalism, and conceptualism. Chapter 6 (“Philosophical Arguments for *Creatio ex Nihilo*,” 197–217) continue the philosophical treatment of creation from nothing.

Copan and Craig present the scientific evidence (219–48) as empirical confirmation of the philosophical argument. Topics include the expansion of the universe and the thermodynamics of the universe. After the examination of the various

cosmogonic theories and their models (big bang, steady state, oscillating, vacuum fluctuation, chaotic inflationary, quantum gravity, and ekpyrotic), the authors conclude that all of them failed to avoid the absolute beginning of the universe (240). No matter which model one might adopt, both expansion and thermodynamics imply a beginning for the universe (248).

Lastly, the authors discuss “Naturalistic Alternatives to *Creatio ex Nihilo*” (249–66). They compare naturalistic with the supernaturalistic alternatives, concluding that the only plausible view is a personal, divine cause. The biggest problem with the entire presentation within this volume is that Copan and Craig totally ignore the issue of millions and billions of years in contrast to thousands of years for the age of the universe. Indeed, the implication of their discussion is that the age of the universe does not matter, just its beginning. While providing excellent information in support of the biblical doctrine of creation *ex nihilo*, they offer no solution to the question “When?”

Paul Copan is the Pledger Family Chair of Philosophy and Ethics at Palm Beach Atlantic University (2005–present) and was a writer and researcher with Ravi Zacharias International Ministries from 1998 until 2003. His many published writings include *When God Goes to Starbucks: A Guide to Everyday Apologetics* (Baker 2008), *True for You, But Not for Me: Overcoming Objections to Christian Faith* (Bethany House 1998), *Loving Wisdom: Christian Philosophy of Religion* (Chalice Press 2007), and *The Rationality of Theism* (Routledge 2003; co-authored with Paul K. Moser). William Lane Craig is research professor of philosophy at Talbot School of Theology (1994–present) and has published over 50 books for which he was either author, co-author, contributor, or editor. Among his works are *Hard Questions, Real Answers* (Crossway 2003), *Time and Eternity: Exploring God’s Relationship to Time* (Crossway 2001), *The Only Wise God: The Compatibility of Divine Foreknowledge and Human Freedom* (Wipf & Stock 2000), *The Son Rises* (Wipf & Stock 2001), and *Cosmological Argument from Plato to Leibnitz* (Wipf & Stock 2001).

R. Kent Hughes. *Genesis: Beginning and Blessing*. Preaching the Word. Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2004. 702 pp. \$34.99 (hardback). Reviewed by William D. Barrick, Professor of Old Testament.

Genesis: Beginning and Blessing presents readers with a pleasantly readable expository commentary on the Book of Genesis. As the senior pastor of The College Church in Wheaton IL and a popular Bible conference speaker, Kent Hughes is a skillful biblical expositor. Comparing this volume with two sources Hughes frequently cites helps to classify this commentary. On the one hand, the two volumes by Kenneth A. Mathews in the New American Commentary series (*Genesis 1–11:26* and *Genesis 12–50*; Broadman & Holman, 1996, 2002; see review in *MSJ* 8, no. 2 [Fall 1997]: 244–47) are more exegetical in nature. On the other hand, *Creation and Blessing* by Allen P. Ross (Baker, 1998; see review in *MSJ* 11, no. 2 [Fall 2000]: 269–70), instructs preachers how to expound the text of Genesis. Hughes' commentary is a great example of building upon the foundation Ross laid.

Endnotes (625–70) provide readers with pertinent quotations from a wide range of key resources for interpreting Genesis. Five excurses (perhaps representing individual topical sermons) summarize key theological topics: “Man and Sin in Genesis” (579–87), “Faith and Righteousness in Genesis” (589–97), “Grace in Genesis” (599–606), “Messiah in Genesis” (607–14), and “God in Genesis” (615–24). Indexes (Scripture, 671–85; General, 686–97; and Sermon Illustrations, 698–702) round out the volume of seventy-five sermons—approximately one and a half years of Sundays.

Hughes' expositions deal forthrightly with the text of Genesis. He chooses his illustrations with care and employs them to heighten the focus of the text itself. Applications are judicious, contextual, and often tied to equivalent New Testament truths. Expositions through Genesis 12–50 provide rich character studies of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, and Judah. One of the most memorable of his expositions, “Guilt and Grace” (493–99; regarding Gen 42:1–38), hammers home the truth that “True guilt is a grace because it brings the guilty to seek forgiveness and to repent” (496). Hughes' presentation of Judah's transition to a godly leader superbly balances Judah's spiritual development and Messianic prophecy about his ultimate descendant (451–57 and 549–54).

Normally, sermons dealing with the theological intricacies related to the fall of mankind propel the expositor headlong into matters many in the pew find difficult to understand. Hughes, however, succeeds in simplifying without sacrificing theological depth (57–99). His success is partly due to carefully dividing Genesis 3 into four sermons, enabling him to serve the information in digestible bites without losing continuity.

The series of nineteen sermons on Abraham (181–329) are especially masterful and passionate examples of sound exposition based upon accurate exegesis. However, although the series of eighteen sermons on Joseph (435–577) are superbly presented, their exegetical accuracy is uneven. To his credit, Hughes correctly reminds the reader that Joseph's coat was most likely “a sleeved coat that reached to the wrists and ankles” (438), rather than a multi-colored garment. On the other side of the exegetical ledger, however, dating Joseph's imprisonment to 1500 B.C. (465) is inaccurate. It is possible

that the date might be a typo rather than an intentional late-dating since Hughes gives 1720–1570 B.C. as the dates for the Hyksos rulers (460).

At some points factuality appears to suffer from a lack of accurate information. For example, domesticated camels were not a “rarity” (193) in the time of Abraham (see John J. Davis, “The Camel in Biblical Narratives,” in *A Tribute to Gleason Archer*, ed. Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., and Ronald F. Youngblood, 141–52 [Moody, 1986]). Likewise, it is inconsistent with biblical usage to claim that “the superior always blesses the inferior” (219)—see 14:19–20, where Melchizedek employs the same word for the blessing of Abraham and God in the same statement (cp. Pss 16:7 and 72:15, too often translated “praise”; cf. Michael L. Brown, *NIDOTTE*, 1:764 [#9]). Whether Hughes adopts a late date for the exodus from Egypt is difficult to ascertain. He identifies Goshen with “the land of Rameses” (520) and his endnote cites Kidner favorably regarding a Ramesside context for Moses (666) and at 47:11 he ignores the problem the text presents regarding the early date (533).

In a few places Hughes implies that some textual details in the pre-patriarchal period are nothing more than Moses’ own inserted ideas or concepts. For example, he declares that “The designation ‘in Eden, in the east’ is from the perspective of Moses, in the Sinai” (53). In addition, with a touch of anachronistic reasoning, he proposes that Moses’ account of the building of the tower of Babel is colored by a Palestinian perspective (170).

This reviewer’s greatest disagreements with Hughes reside in his exposition of 1:1–2:17 (15–56). Reference to “the primeval chaos” (21) at the earth’s creation unnecessarily assumes a chaotic rather than orderly condition of the earth in 1:2. A chaos viewpoint leads to the depiction of the darkness as evil (cp. 30, “Christ the Creator, who brings order out of the dark chaos of our lives”), rather than as God’s good creation. Interestingly (amusingly?) disagreement over the length of the “days” of creation evokes an appeal “to employ good will and magnanimity” (24), but later Hughes implies that some interpreters exhibit “ignorant arrogance” (26) in their attempts to deal with this problem. Arguing that the seventh day had no end (26, 43, 45, 46) seems to go beyond the natural reading of the text and produces a conflict with the clear implications of the Fourth Commandment in Exodus 20:10–11. Forcing this unending day interpretation on the preceding six days (27) seems equally precarious and unnatural.

At other times Hughes takes a certain degree of artistic license—such as his description of Abraham’s and the heavenly guests’ faces as “leathered” (262). Who among us, however, has not waxed eloquently in the same fashion without supporting evidence? Occasional lapses in archeological, cultural, or historical details might briefly distract those who know better, but no one can read these expositions without God impacting heart and mind with His Word. Every preacher of Genesis should read this volume.

Andrew Louth, ed. *Genesis 1–11*. Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, Old Testament 1. Edited by Thomas C. Oden. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001. lii, 204 pp. \$39.99 (hardback). Reviewed by William D. Barrick, Professor of Old Testament.

Ultimately, the Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture (ACCS) will comprise 28 volumes covering both the OT and the NT. It targets the patristic period of church history (approximately A.D. 95–749). Computer digital research and storage techniques were employed in an innovative fashion to identify the Greek and Latin texts composed by early Christian writers who made reference to specific biblical passages. The search went beyond the patristic commentaries on biblical books so that as comprehensive a selection of texts as possible would result. Obviously, only a miniscule amount of the total data could be employed in ACCS. The general editor for the series is Thomas C. Oden, Henry Anson Buttz Professor of Theology at Drew University. ACCS was conceived in the same room where *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible* was produced by Drew professor James Strong in the 1880s (xxxiii).

Three goals characterize ACCS: (1) to renew preaching in the classical tradition of Christian exegesis, (2) to encourage lay study of Scripture with input from the early history of the Church, and (3) to increase scholarly investigation of patristic biblical interpretation (xi). The intent, therefore, is to provide a valuable resource for laity, pastors, and academics. As a carefully selected collection of the interpretive thinking of early Christian preachers, commentators, and theologians, ACCS “seeks to offer to Christian laity what the Talmud and Midrashim have long offered to Jewish readers” (xvi).

Since only a select number of patristic citations can be published in such a limited series, principles of selection guide the editors in the process. Those principles regulate preferences for “passages that have enduring relevance, penetrating significance, crosscultural applicability and practical applicability” (xxii) as well as for passages that exhibit the power to persuade and needing no secondary explanation, avoid idiosyncratic interpretations. Preference is also given to passages from sources previously disregarded. A balanced representation of geographical regions is sought as well as the inclusion of “the voices of women such as Macrina, Eudoxia, Egeria, Faltonia Betitia Proba, the Sayings of the Desert Mothers and others who report the biblical interpretation of women of the ancient Christian traditions” (xxiii). Selections are also chosen that will contribute to effective preaching today.

In addition to a general introduction for the series, each volume includes an introduction for that particular volume. The special introductions present patristic views regarding authorship of that portion of Scripture, the significance that portion had for the early Church Fathers, and the challenges involved in editing the patristic materials in preparing that volume. In this volume that included a detailed explanation of problems involved in the Greek Septuagint translation of Genesis 1–11 (xl–xlvi). Each volume of ACCS includes cumulative chronological lists and biographical sketches of the Church fathers cited in all volumes released to the date of the volume being consulted. Judicious footnotes provide clarification and additional references for research. Although the original searches were conducted in the Latin and Greek sources, dynamic equivalent

English translations of the selected texts have been produced for inclusion in ACCS (xxxii).

Each Scripture pericope is provided with a heading followed by the RSV translation of that section of verses. However, because the Septuagint was the OT of choice in the early Church, patristic citations represent that ancient version. Thus, in the production of this volume on Genesis 1–11, it was necessary to note the variations of RSV (based upon the Hebrew text) from the Greek Septuagint. Following the annotated translation, a brief overview is provided to summarize the comments that follow from the patristic sources. The overview is a very handy means of locating specific citations.

This volume takes readers on an informative journey back into the time of the early Church to sit at the feet of the church Fathers as they wax eloquent on the early chapters of Genesis. The significance of these chapters for biblical theology is reinforced by exposure to the patristic comments. Either due to editorial choices or due to absence of any patristic contributions, certain questions commonly asked about Genesis 1–11 fail to be mentioned: When did Satan fall? From where did Cain obtain a wife? Did sacrifice originate when God slew in order to provide skin tunics for Adam and Eve?

From the patristic selections in this volume, the reader will find many gems of ancient Christian interpretation. Ephrem the Syrian (fl. A.D. 363–373) discussed the involvement in creation of all three persons of the Trinity (6), indicated that the grasses and trees when they were created had the appearance of age (15), declared that the tunics of skin reminded Adam and Eve of their own mortality (98), and believed that the Flood destroyed all the earth except paradise (141). Chrysostom (fl. A.D. 386–407) argued that Moses had received the revelation concerning creation directly from God (3), insisted that the rivers of Eden were literal rivers (58), and recorded that believers were baptized naked in his day (72). According to Clement of Alexandria (fl. A.D. 190–215) Adam was the first prophet (69). Irenaeus (fl. A.D. 180–199) identified the “seed of the woman” in Genesis 3:15 with Christ (90–91). Origen (fl. A.D. 200–254) taught that Christian martyrs would be shown by Jesus how to “pass through the cherubim and the flaming sword” into paradise (102). Both Jerome (fl. A.D. 375–420) and Augustine (fl. A.D. 387–430) recognized the discrepancies between the Hebrew and the Septuagint in the genealogies of Genesis 5 and sought to resolve them text critically and theologically (121–22).

Andrew Louth, editor of this first OT volume, is one of two Eastern Orthodox contributors to the series. He is professor of patristic and Byzantine studies at Durham University in England. Readers of *MSJ* will be interested in knowing that John Sailhamer and Steven McKinion (brother of TMS graduate Randy McKinion) are among the evangelical participants in ACCS (xviii). Every student of Genesis 1–11 will benefit greatly from time spent mining the patristic sources so readily available in this important volume of ACCS. This reviewer awaits the remaining 13 volumes of the OT with eager anticipation.

Kenneth A. Mathews. *Genesis 1–11:26*. New American Commentary 1A, edited by E. Ray Clendenen. Nashville TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1996. xvi, 528 pp. \$36.99 (hardback). Reviewed by William D. Barrick, Associate Professor of Old Testament.

Kenneth A. Mathews is professor of Old Testament at Beeson Divinity School of Samford University. He is an acknowledged expert on the Dead Sea Scrolls, textual criticism, biblical Hebrew, and the literary study of the Old Testament. Professor Mathews is co-author of *The Paleo-Hebrew Leviticus Scroll* and also the Associate General Editor for the Old Testament commentaries in The New American Commentary series. The New American Commentary is the continuation of the tradition established by the older An American Commentary series under the editorship of Alvah Hovey at the end of the nineteenth century. In keeping with that tradition, the current series affirms “the divine inspiration, inerrancy, complete truthfulness, and full authority of the Bible” (from the Editors’ Preface). Although the commentary is based upon the NIV, the commentators, are free to develop their own translations when necessary.

Charts include tabulations of the chronologies of Genesis 5 (300) and 11:10–26 (495) according to the MT, LXX, and Samaritan Pentateuch. Another chart modifies Richard Longacre’s structural analysis of the Flood narrative based on discourse type and linguistic features (354).

Five topics are presented by excursus in the commentary. They include the translation of 1:1–2 (136–44), the image of God (164–72), the human soul (197–99), the origin of civilization in ANE mythology (283–84), and the revelation of the divine name (293–94). Mathews favors a view of the image of God that includes the aspects of rulership and sonship.

Mathews accepts Mosaic authorship. He shows a healthy respect for the contributions of historical and literary criticism but refuses to allow them to be forced upon the text. He presents the *tôledôt* formula in Genesis as evidence of pre-Genesis sources (31–32). The genealogical formula gives the book unity and progressively narrows the focus of the book (34).

Under the topic of the “Theology of Genesis” (54–63), Mathews discusses patriarchal promises (blessing, seed, and land), God and His world, human life, sin, civilization, and covenant. “Interpreting Genesis” (63–85) includes innerbiblical interpretation, Jewish interpretation, Christian interpretation, and Pentateuchal criticism. The last section covers source criticism, form and tradition history, revisionist trends, and traditional criticism as well as literary readings and canon. The author accepts a second-millennium date for the composition of the Pentateuch (79–80).

In his treatment of parallel ancient literature and Genesis (86–101), the commentator exhibits caution. Nothing has been discovered which compares directly with Genesis 1–11. The biblical pericope differs substantially from contemporary myths. The topics in the parallel literature discussed by Mathews include creation and mankind, Eden, long-lived patriarchs, and flood.

The final section of the introductory materials deals with creation and contemporary interpretation (101–11). Mathews accepts the biblical creationist viewpoint and refers to a number of recent scientific treatises espousing a designed universe and an ultimate Designer, God. The commentary was published before the author could include

a reference to the most recent treatise in support of this view: Michael J. Behe, *Darwin's Black Box: The Biochemical Challenge to Evolution* (Free Press, 1996). Mathews concludes that Genesis 1–11 is a theological account grounded in history. He affirms its historicity, accuracy, and authority.

Mathews defends the view that Genesis 1:1–2 are to be included in the first day of creation without any “gap” or divine judgment (136–44). He waffles on the meaning of “day” in the creation narrative, ultimately deciding a nonliteral sense is favored even though a definite answer remains elusive (149). The following are conclusions regarding some of the exegetical cruxes in Genesis 1–11:

2:6 — *'ed* refers to underground streams (195–96)

2:9 — The “tree of knowledge” was probably intended as one means by which God would have dispensed His wisdom to the man and the woman by permitting them to eat its fruit at His discretion (203–6).

2:23 — Before the fall of man, the paradigm of leadership-followship in the man-woman relationship had been established as a creation ordinance. This paradigm is especially applied to the family (218–22).

3:15 — The woman’s “seed” is a reference to Christ, but it also includes the dimension involving the believing community (247–48).

3:16 — This verse is best understood by comparing it with 4:7b regarding the juxtaposition of “desire” and “rule.” The woman will attempt to control her husband, but she will not succeed since God has ordained his leadership (248–52).

4:3–4 — God’s response to the offering of Cain was due to his attitude and integrity rather than to the identity or nature of the gift itself (268).

4:7 — Cain had to make a choice between repentance and obstinacy. Choosing repentance would give him the opportunity to master his sin. If he made the wrong choice, his sin would be stirred up to consume him (269–71).

4:26 — The last part of the verse announces a new and decisive direction in worship for the descendants of Seth (291–93).

5:1–32 — The MT text is preferable to the LXX. The genealogy is open, but, at maximum, only a few millennia are telescoped into the selective format (299–305).

6:1–4 — Sethites (“sons of God”) married any women (“daughters of men”) they chose including Cainite women. Their licentious lifestyle produced a time of unprecedented wickedness (320–39).

6:3 — The reference to 120 years was the shortening of the average human life span from what it had been (335).

In the discussion about the four rivers watering the garden of Eden (2:10–14; 207–8) the commentator discourages any identification with contemporary geography. However, he does not indicate that the primary reason would be the geographical and geological alterations resulting from a universal flood in the days of Noah. Mathews’

failure to discuss this possibility is probably related to his ambivalence on the universality of the deluge. In one of the most disappointing sections of the commentary, the author first admits that “there can be no dispute that the narrative depicts the flood in the language of a universal deluge.” Then he leaves the door open for the opposite conclusion: “Yet if the report is a phenomenological depiction, permitting the possibility of a local flood, the meaning is not substantially altered: all that Noah and his generation know is swallowed up by the waters so that none survives” (380).

Except for a footnote on page 107 listing a few references to the view of recent creationism, the author ignores the substantial body of literature regarding a universal flood. In 76 pages of commentary regarding Noah, only one source is recommended to the readers (380) that deals with the current debate: S. Austin and D. Boardman, “Did Noah’s Flood Cover the Entire World?” in *The Genesis Debate*, edited by R. Youngblood (Nelson, 1986), 210–29.

This reviewer looks forward to the publication of the remainder of Mathews’ treatment of Genesis. If the other volumes of The New American Commentary are as well done, the series will have accomplished its goal of being the worthy successor of An American Commentary.

James McKeown. *Genesis*. Two Horizons Old Testament Commentary. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2008. ix, 398 pp. \$25.00 (paper). Reviewed by William D. Barrick, Professor of Old Testament.

This volume represents the first book published by James McKeown who serves as Vice Principal of Belfast Bible College and lecturer in Old Testament in the Institute of Theology at Queen’s College, Belfast. His doctoral dissertation presented at Queen’s University of Belfast (1991) was “A Study of the Main Unifying Themes in the Hebrew Text of the Book of Genesis.” With T. C. Mitchell, McKeown co-authored the “Altar” entry in *The New Bible Dictionary*, 3rd ed. (IVP, 1996), 26–27. He also contributed an essay (“A Theological Approach,” 48–60) to *Make the Old Testament Live: From Curriculum to Classroom*, eds. Richard S. Hess and Gordon J. Wenham (Eerdmans, 1998). More recently, he wrote two entries in *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Pentateuch*, eds. T. Desmond Alexander and David W. Baker (IVP, 2003): “Blessings and Curses,” 83–87 and “Land, Fertility, Famine,” 487–91.

The Two Horizons Old Testament Commentary series (J. Gordon McConville and Craig Bartholomew, eds.) combines theological exegesis and theological reflection in a paragraph-by-paragraph commentary on the biblical text. This commentary apportions its materials as follows: “Introduction” (1–17), “Commentary” (10–193), “Theological Horizons of Genesis” (195–375), “Bibliography” (376–84), “Index of Names” (385–86), and “Index of Scripture and Other Ancient Writings” (387–98). Commentators contributing to this series represent a variety of theological traditions and perceptions regarding the work of theology and theological hermeneutics. The series focuses primarily on students, pastors, and other Christian leaders who are engaged in theological interpretation of Scripture.

McKeown begins his “Introduction” with an agnostic approach to Genesis—“We are not told anywhere in the Bible who wrote it, nor are we given any clues about the date when it was completed” (1). He also denies any single plot for the book, since it contains a number of stories with their own plots (1). He adopts a two-part structure with chapters 1–11 and 12–50 (2), as compared to the three-part structure strongly supported by Tremper Longman III in *How to Read Genesis* (IVP, 2005; 99–100). When it comes to rhetorical characteristics of Genesis, McKeown identifies repetition as the most widely used device (3–4). In the section discussing “Reader Expectations” (4–7), he deals briefly and incompletely with the tension between science and Scripture regarding creation and the Noahic flood. However, he does return for a little more detailed examination of these topics in the theological section of the volume (see below).

Noting the demise of the Documentary Hypothesis (7), McKeown summarizes five of its arguments against Mosaic authorship and concludes that the authorship of Genesis is still an open question (8). Interestingly, he chooses to focus on the exilic and post-exilic readers (“because this avoids most objections about the date of authorship,” 10) in a consideration of how the ancient readers approached Genesis and how the book would have affected them. This exilic standpoint comes out again and again throughout the commentary (e.g., 38, 52, 63).

Comparison of Genesis with other ancient near eastern literature reveals that the book “leaves not a vestige of mythical language or thought” (14). McKeown suggests that Genesis was written with the intent of refuting the Babylonian creation account (14).

However, he also observes that the OT account “has little in common with these myths” (17)—including the chaos monster (Tehom) myth.

The commentary section of this volume treats the text concisely and paragraph-by-paragraph. McKeown cites the Hebrew when it contributes significantly to the discussion of meaning, as with *רִוַח אֱלֹהִים*, *rûah ’ēlōhîm*, in 1:2 (21) and *לֶךְ-לֶכָּא*, *lek-lēkā*, in 12:1 (75). A number of interpretative observations will enlighten readers. For example, the issue of light in 1:3–5 must take into account that “God is the real source of light” (21) and a study of the person of Noah should recognize his depiction as the forerunner of Moses (65). Readers will learn much from the commentary section, but must read it with care. McKeown’s primary contextualization involves showing “how Genesis would have encouraged exilic and postexilic readers” (10). Such an approach not only neglects a more thorough examination of the issues of authorship and date, but also ignores the impact of Genesis intertextually even within the Pentateuch itself and within the historical setting of both the wilderness wanderings and the conquest of Canaan.

The commentary often lacks substance. For example, the author identifies a variety of translation problems by citing representative English versions, but fails to specify the problem, offer the best solution, or to present evidence supporting the best solution (see 97, 125–26, 143–44). McKeown appears to avoid mention of homosexuality in both the polemic of 2:18–25 (34) and the description of the sins of Sodom and Gomorrah in 19:1–11 (106–7). A lack of adequate discussion hampers his discussion of the extent of the Noahic flood (58). In one particularly misleading statement (“no personal names are found in the pre-Mosaic period compounded with Yahweh or with the abbreviated form Yah,” 359), he ignores the names Abijah (1 Chron 2:16; cp. Gen 38:29–30; 46:12), Ahijah (1 Chron 2:25), and Azariah (1 Chron 2:8) occurring as much as 400 years before Moses. One must keep in mind that those names occur only in the genealogy of Judah, because it is the only tribal line of interest to the Chronicler’s focus on the Davidic dynasty and Davidic covenant. Many more names might have existed with the theophoric element of *-jah* or *-iah* in other tribal lines.

The primary contribution of *Genesis* comes in the theological portion of the volume. McKeown begins with the “Theological Message of the Book” (195–294), continues with “Genesis and Theology Today” (294–349), and concludes with “Genesis and Biblical Theology” (349–75). The first of these three sections covers the main themes of Genesis (descendants, blessing, and land). In an extensive discussion of “seed,” the author indicates that the use of contrasting descendants in Genesis leads to a highlighting of Judah, so that there “can be little doubt that one of the goals of the book of Genesis is to anticipate the Davidic kingdom” (216). McKeown apparently rejects the messianic interpretation of Genesis 3:15 (38–39, 204–5) in favor of a “chosen line” interpretation with a minimum of exegetical analysis. However, he also indicates that the line of descent from the promised seed will restore “peaceful relations with God” (254)—which most theologians would identify with Messiah’s accomplishments.

In his discussion of creationism and science (263–69, 294–317), the author concludes, “It is hoped that the above discussion is fair to all sides in this debate and that the material will help the reader to understand the main issues and make an informed decision for themselves” (317). He does discuss a variety of viewpoints in this subject area and mentions a number of pros and cons for each one. The claim of fairness, however, might be questioned due to the fact that he sometimes utilizes outdated and

abandoned arguments as though they still represent current viewpoints (e.g., the appearance of age theory and canopy theory for creationists, 298, 300). The smorgasbord type of approach leaves readers without any direction. Pastors, students, and laymen seeking a Genesis commentary that presents carefully reasoned argumentation guiding them to a recommended solution will not find this volume helpful—it might even prove frustrating. On the other hand, the volume will aid those who wish to gain a grasp of the content and flow of Genesis, together with its major theological themes.

John N. Oswalt. *The Bible Among the Myths: Unique Revelation or Just Ancient Literature?* Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 2009. 204 pp. \$17.99 (paper).
Reviewed by William D. Barrick, Professor of Old Testament.

John Oswalt also authored *Isaiah* (NIVAC, Zondervan 2003), *Called to Be Holy: A Biblical Perspective* (Evangel Publishing House 1999), *The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 1–39* (NICOT, Eerdmans 1986) and *The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 40–66* (NICOT, Eerdmans 1998). At the present he serves as research professor of OT at Wesley Biblical Seminary in Jackson, Miss. Oswalt’s two-volume work on Isaiah in NICOT takes a clear stand in defense of the unity of the Book of Isaiah and *The Bible Among the Myths* stands unashamedly on the side of divine inspiration of the OT and its distinct character as compared to ancient Near Eastern literature.

In his “Introduction” (11–18) Oswalt calls for the acceptance and defense of the historical and theological veracity of the OT (16–17). The Bible claims to be divine revelation. He defends that biblical claim and argues that it ought to be given the attention it deserves, instead of allowing disbelief in the Bible to occupy a privileged position in the discussion (18). Part 1 (“The Bible and Myth,” 19–107) consists of five chapters establishing the differences between Scripture and myth. Part 2 (“The Bible and History,” 109–94) presents five chapters dealing with the issues involved in the Bible’s relationship to history and historiography.

Oswalt declares that changes in scholarly opinion resulting in the classification of the Bible as *myth* have come about through a shift in theological assumptions and worldview, not by means of any discovery of new data in the recovery of ANE literature (31). The first step one must take to respond to this shift involves establishing a definition for *myth* (31–46). After dealing carefully and exhaustively with the potential definitions of *myth* and identifying the best definition, he proceeds to demonstrate that, “Whatever the Bible is, whether true or false, symbol or literal, it is not myth” (46).

In reality, Oswalt concludes, “similarities between the Bible and the rest of the literatures of the ancient Near East are superficial, while the differences are essential” (47). The very features common to myths (especially in the ANE) prove the distinct nature of biblical revelation (57–62). The biblical worldview differs diametrically from the views of extrabiblical cultures and their myths (63). The characteristics of biblical thought (e.g., monotheism, iconoclasm, the Spirit as first principle, absence of conflict in creation, a high view of humanity, God’s reliability and supra-sexuality, etc.) prove the distinction (64–81).

Scholars repeatedly appeal to correspondences between ANE literature and the Bible. For example, the *Enuma Elish* (a Babylonian creation account) supposedly proves that the writer(s) of the biblical creation account in Genesis aligned it with the Babylonian account. However, a basic comparison of the elements and characteristics of both accounts reveals that the similarities are artificial. Oswalt reminds his readers that, “In fact it is important to point out that the *Enuma Elish* is not about ‘creation’ at all” (101). Genesis speaks of God creating something that did not exist before; *Enuma Elish* recounts the emergence of the world from pre-existent chaotic matter. Some scholars associate *tehom* (“the deep”) in Genesis 1 with the Canaanite chaos monster Tiamat because of similarity due to lexical origin. However, the potential association only demonstrates that Hebrew is a Semitic language, not that the writer conscientiously made

either direct or indirect reference to Tiamat (102). Overdrawn similarities often continue outside Genesis in other OT literature like the Psalter. No matter how many claims some scholars make regarding Canaanite influence on the literature, imagery, and concepts of the biblical psalmists, evidence in the Ugaritic literature consistently manifests a clear distinction from anything in the biblical text or a total absence of any analogue (104–7). As Oswalt puts it, “the undoubted similarities . . . do not indicate a common way of thinking” (107).

This reviewer admits to a certain frustration with *The Bible Among the Myths*. With each passing page I kept expecting a treatment of the matter of the Bible’s borrowing or employing ANE myth, mythical characters, and mythical imagery. A quick check of the “Author Index” (203–4) found that Oswalt makes no reference to the work of Elmer Smick on mythology in the Book of Job. Smick’s work must be considered foundational to such a discussion, so why its conspicuous absence? With the transition from the superb treatment of the topic of myth in the first half of the book to the topic of history, the direction of investigation continues down a separate path. Having established that the Bible is not myth, Oswalt does not resolve how biblical writers might have employed ANE myths. The second half of the volume presents a contrast between a conservative and biblical historiography as opposed to a non-conservative or postmodern historiography. The discussion is valuable, but leaves the reader hanging with unanswered questions about whether the Bible utilizes ANE myths.

One of the most helpful aspects of Oswalt’s comparative analysis of the Bible’s approach to history vs. the ANE’s approach to history (146–47) replicates differences identified by John Walton in *Ancient Israelite Literature in Its Cultural Context* (Zondervan 1989). The tenth chapter of *The Bible Among the Myths* concludes by describing the views of four scholars with regard to biblical history: John Van Seters (172–75), Frank Cross (175–77), William Dever (177–81), and Mark Smith (181–84). Oswalt concludes that these scholars (and others) have not presented “a convincing explanation for the unique features of the biblical worldview and the ways in which that worldview affects the understanding of reality in the Bible” (184). The only satisfactory viewpoint regarding the nature of biblical revelation resides in its uniqueness in the world, not its apparent similarities to ANE literature and worldviews (192, 194).

This volume represents a distinct and high view of Scripture, its inspiration and veracity. Oswalt exposes the evolutionary, humanistic, and antisupernatural characteristics of opposition to the Bible’s uniqueness as divine revelation. He makes a significant contribution to the discussion of myth and history as they relate to the Bible.

R. R. Reno. *Genesis*. Brazos Theological Commentary on the Bible. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Brazos Press, 2010. 304 pp. \$32.99 (hardback). Reviewed by William D. Barrick, Professor of Old Testament.

Russell R. Reno is professor of theological ethics at Creighton University in Omaha, Nebraska. He authored *In the Ruins of the Church: Sustaining Faith in an Age of Diminished Christianity* (Brazos Press, 2002) and co-authored *Heroism and the Christian Life: Reclaiming Excellence* with Brian S. Hook (Westminster John Knox, 2000) and *Sanctified Vision: An Introduction to Early Christian Interpretation of the Bible* with John J. O’Keefe (Johns Hopkins, 2005). He also serves as the features editor for the magazine *First Things* (online at <http://www.firstthings.com>), and the general editor for the Brazos Theological Commentary on the Bible (BTCB) to which this volume belongs.

BTCB enlists systematic, historical, and moral theologians to provide guidance for pastors and academics in reading the Bible doctrinally. Authors for the volumes adhere to the presupposition that “dogma clarifies rather than obscures” (11). According to Reno, “the Nicene tradition, in all its diversity and controversy provides the proper basis for the interpretation of the Bible as Christian Scripture” (11–12). In an attempt to provide a more balanced perspective, Reno asks that readers not gain an erroneous impression, since the “Nicene tradition does not provide a set formula for the solution of exegetical problems” (12). The editors do not hold commentators for BTCB “to any particular hermeneutical theory that specifies how to define the plain sense of Scripture—or the role this plain sense should play in interpretation” (13). Reno decries the current state of affairs in seminaries and churches providing “theology without exegesis and exegesis without theology” (13). The series employs a range of Bible translations, because “Philological precision and stability is a consequence of, not a basis for, exegesis. Judgments about the meaning of a text fix its literal sense, not the other way around” (14).

With the purpose, nature, and assumptions of BTCB in mind, Reno proceeds to explain his approach in this commentary on Genesis. His method identifies “some of the telling verses in Genesis” and then focuses his comments on those verses (21). He divides his comments into five main portions that demonstrate the promise-driven nature of the text: (1) Creation: Genesis 1–2 (29–76), (2) Fall: Genesis 3–4 (77–110), (3) Dead ends: Genesis 5–11 (111–35), (4) Scandal of particularity: Genesis 12–33 (137–251), and (5) Need for atonement: Genesis 34–50 (253–91). Within the first of these divisions, Reno comments on 1:1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 10, 11, 26a, 26b, 28, 31; 2:2, 5, 7, 15, 17, 18, 20, 22, and 24. In the second he selects 3:1a, 1b, 2, 4, 6a, 6b, 7, 14, 21, 24; 4:3, 7, 8, 10, 12, 15, and 23. In the third he speaks to 5:1, 24; 6:2, 6, 8, 13, 14; 7:5, 9, 12; 8:16; 9:1, 9, 20, 22; 10:1; 11:4, 5, 10, and 31. Then, in the fourth he identifies and comments on 99 verses, portions of verses, or groups of verses.¹ In the fifth portion Reno comments on only 35 verses.² Comments vary in length. For example, the comment on 1:1 extends for about ten pages (29–39), whereas the note on 11:31 comprises a mere four lines (135).

¹ 12:1a, 1b, 1–2, 3, 4, 7, 10, 13; 13:7, 10, 14, 16, 17; 14:2, 14a, 14b, 18, 24; 15:1, 4, 6, 8, 18; 16:1, 2a, 2b, 4, 6, 11; 17:2, 4, 5, 7, 11a, 11b, 13, 15; 18:1, 2, 4, 8, 12, 17–19, 23, 32; 19:2, 16, 24, 26, 31, 36; 20:2; 21:2, 10, 14, 27; 22:1, 2, 8, 9–10, 12, 14, 17; 23:2, 3, 6, 9; 24:1, 2, 6, 58, 67; 25:1, 9, 22, 23, 34; 26:5, 18; 27:5, 27, 38; 28:2, 12; 29:1, 11, 26; 30:1, 14, 25, 32; 31:13, 19; 32:7, 20, 24, 28, 32; and 33:4.

² 34:1; 35:2; 36:1; 37:1, 2, 9, 23, 27; 38:6; 39:2; 40:8; 41:14, 57; 42:3, 8, 9, 28; 43:1, 14, 18, 30; 44:2, 33; 45:2, 7, 13; 46:4, 8, 34; 47:21; 48:5; 49:2, 8; 50:15, and 25.

Reno not only recognizes the fundamental significance of biblical teaching concerning creation (32–33), but indicates that the tension between science and theology has existed since the time of Augustine, who feared that scientists would laugh at his biblical view of creation (33). One cannot help but think that science in Augustine’s day would be laughed at by modern scientists and, meanwhile, the Bible has not changed—indicating the fallacy of adapting biblical interpretation to current science. In 1:3 and 4, Reno adopts an allegorical interpretive approach to the text (46–48) and at 1:5 he denies any temporal meaning for either “the beginning” or “day” (48). His treatment of 2:15 moves too quickly to spiritualization (68–69). Providing a concise summary of the various approaches to the translation of the divine title YHWH, the commentator discusses the theological pluses and minuses to modern translations of the title (64–67). He warns that “changes in traditions of translations, changes supposedly made to achieve greater clarity, can actually generate new forms of obscurity” (66). At 2:18 Reno departs from the chronological flow of the creation account to declare that “the scriptural witness is structured by a movement from *very good* to *better still*” (73). However, the error of his approach resides in his drawing an excessive dichotomy between “very good” and “not good.” In point of fact, the “very good” actually follows the “not good” chronologically. Interestingly, although the chosen texts and discussions provide plenty of opportunity to discuss the issue of homosexuality (cf. 56 and 74–76), Reno ignores the implications of the text and fails to offer even a mention of the issue.

Within this theological commentary, readers will find a number of worthy discussions. For example, in his development of 3:1a Reno’s discussion of free will proves thought-provoking and insightful (77–85). From time to time, the commentator notes parallelisms or repetitions in regard to significant themes—e.g., Abraham hearkening to the voice of Sarah just as Adam had listened to Eve (165). Readers will find an engaging discourse on fearing God in the treatment of 22:12 (200–5). On the other hand, many comments tend to be shallow, or at least incomplete, theologically. Commenting that the fall of mankind allows God to begin formulating a redemptive strategy (97), Reno ignores the biblical witness that indicates the existence of a redemptive strategy in God’s mind and purpose even before He created the world (Eph 1:4; 1 Pet 1:17–20). The commentator also omits any potential for divine revelation to Abel about sacrifice, assuming that “the impulse to sacrifice seems to follow from the sheer humanity of Cain and Abel” (97).

This reviewer read this commentary with interest and with benefit. It fails, however, to provide anything like an evangelical stance theologically, being heavily influenced by more liberal theologians. The volume presents a less than biblical theology approach due to its emphasis on philosophizing and human rationale. In addition, numerous typos and misspellings distract the reader—especially the nearly omnipresent “descendent” instead of “descendant.” Hopefully, future volumes will present a cleaner text in this regard.

Allen P. Ross. *Creation and Blessing: A Guide to the Study and Exposition of Genesis*. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1996. 744 pp. \$34.99 (paperback). Reviewed by William D. Barrick, Professor of Old Testament.

Creation and Blessing was first published in 1988. This 1996 edition is the first time in paperback. Allen P. Ross is professor of biblical studies at Trinity Episcopal School for Ministry in Ambridge, Pennsylvania. He served as a translator and editor of the New King James Version and wrote the commentaries on Genesis and Psalms in the *Bible Knowledge Commentary* (Chariot Victor Books, 1987). Before the publication of *Creation and Blessing*, Ross published two series of articles on Genesis in *Bibliotheca Sacra* (“Studies in the Book of Genesis” in 1980–81 and “Studies in the Life of Jacob” in 1985).

At the very outset, Ross informs his readers that the volume is not a commentary (13). It is but a guide to the study and exposition of Genesis, as its title announces (14). Indeed, it is the author’s intent that his readers pursue a detailed exegesis of the text of Genesis on their own.

The volume is divided into five parts: “The Study of Genesis” (21–97), “The Primeval Events” (99–252), “The Patriarchal Narratives About Abraham” (253–427), “The Patriarchal Narratives About the Descendants of Abraham” (429–588), and “The Story of Joseph” (589–717). Four appendixes are provided covering the interpretation of 1:1–3 (718–23), the Hebrew word for *create* (724–28), Abraham’s faith (729–35), and the Hebrew word for *visit* (736–40). Lastly, a brief bibliography of commentaries and monographs closes the volume (741–44). The brevity of the closing bibliography should not mislead the reader of this review, however. Each chapter of Parts 2–5 in the volume concludes with a bibliography tailored for that particular area of study. The entries include books, essays, and journal articles. Ross has provided a wealth of bibliographic data for further research. The volume also includes 34 carefully crafted and strategically placed charts that enhance the study of Genesis. The most lamentable aspect of the book is the absence of indexes.

Part 1 contains an examination of the various interpretive approaches to Genesis, an outline of Ross’s own method for studying Genesis, and detailed discussions of both the nature and the composition of Genesis. The author is a strong adherent to Mosaic authorship. He believes that the Book of Genesis was presented to Israel prior to their entry into Canaan, providing them with instruction under the Sinaitic covenant and a historical prologue to the Law (64). The foundation for the Ten Commandments appears in the historical events of the Book of Genesis (96–97). Ross states that the expositor must “ask why the new nation of Israel needed to have this material and to have it written as it is” (102).

Each chapter of Parts 2–5 deals with the exposition of the text of Genesis. Ross provides a brief introduction, a discussion of theological ideas stemming from the passage, an analysis of its structure, a summary of its message, an exegetical outline (employing complete sentences for each point), and the development of the exposition organized along the lines of the exegetical outline.

Ross maintains a staunchly evangelical stance. He is irrevocably dedicated to the exegetical exposition of the text itself and uncompromisingly opposed to the creative embellishment of the text that is too often characteristic of modern preaching in Biblical

narrative. His overall purpose is the wedding of sound exegesis with effective expository communication.

Creation and Blessing should be considered an indispensable guide for expositors and students alike. After reading the text of Genesis itself, turn to this volume and a good exegetical commentary to fill in the details. For the latter, this reviewer recommends Victor P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis*, 2 volumes, NICOT (Eerdmans, 1990, 1994).

Allen Ross and John N. Oswalt. *Genesis, Exodus*. Cornerstone Biblical Commentary. Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2008. xiv, 560 pp. \$34.99 (hardback).

Allen Ross is Professor of Divinity, Old Testament, at Beeson Divinity School in Birmingham, AL. He served as a translator and editor for the New King James Version and wrote the commentaries on Genesis and Psalms in the *Bible Knowledge Commentary* (Chariot Victor Books, 1987), as well as *Creation and Blessing: A Guide to the Study and Exposition of Genesis* (Baker 1988, 1996), *Introducing Biblical Hebrew* (Baker 2001), *Holiness to the Lord: A Guide to the Exposition of the Book of Leviticus* (Baker 2002), and *Recalling the Hope of Glory: Biblical Worship from the Garden to the New Creation* (Kregel 2006). His first volume for *A Commentary on the Psalms* (Kregel Exegetical Library) is scheduled for release in 2012. Although associated in his early background with Baptist and Presbyterian churches, since 1979 he has been active in the Episcopal Church.

John N. Oswalt authored *The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 1–39* (NICOT, Eerdmans 1986) and *The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 40–66* (NICOT, Eerdmans 1998), *Called to Be Holy: A Biblical Perspective* (Evangel Publishing House 1999), *Isaiah* (NIVAC, Zondervan 2003), and *The Bible Among the Myths: Unique Revelation or Just Ancient Literature?* (Zondervan 2009). He was a member of the New International Version translation team and the Senior Translator, Prophets, for the New Living Translation. At the present he serves as Visiting Distinguished Professor of Old Testament at Asbury Theological Seminary, Wilmore, KY.

The Cornerstone Biblical Commentary (gen. ed. Philip W. Comfort) is based upon and contains the full translation of the second edition of the New Living Translation (NLT). The series represents the work of nearly one hundred biblical scholars of various evangelical church backgrounds from the United States, Canada, England, and Australia. Each commentary commences with an “Introduction” (“Genesis,” 3–29; “Exodus,” 261–83). Ross’ “Introduction” follows nearly the same arrangement and content as in his *Creation and Blessing*. The main body of each commentary is then presented by giving the full NLT text of the text unit, followed by “Notes” (dealing with the Hebrew text) and “Commentary” interpreting that text unit. In some cases, the treatment of an interpretive issue appears somewhat repetitive. For example, Ross’ discussion of Genesis 1:1–2 in the “Commentary” (32–33) repeats much of what he already presented in the “Notes” (31–32). At the end of each commentary, the volume includes a brief “Bibliography” (“Genesis,” 255–58; “Exodus,” 559–60).

In this commentary Ross does not come to a clear identification regarding the age of the earth or of the universe. His discussion implies that he only sees life on this planet as recent (32). For him, the “formless and empty” condition of the created earth and its darkness (Gen 1:2) indicates something that requires correction (33). This leads him to the conclusion that the creation account reveals that the Creator is “a redeeming God” (35). In another interpretive matter, Ross identifies the different ways to account for the origin of light on the first day as compared to the events of the fourth day, but does not take a position himself (38). Overall, the commentary does not provide a full interpretive analysis of the biblical text. The author by-passes a number of interpretive issues in order to give the reader an over-view that touches upon what the author has determined to be the more significant theological issues. For example, the reader finds no help with regard

to whether it was a “spring” or a “mist” that watered the garden in 2:6. Nor does Ross explain the emphatic clause, “you are sure to die” (2:17) or identify the interpretive problem in 3:5 (“like God” or “like gods”?) or discuss the potential anachronism of “Chaldeans” in 11:28, 31 or the debate over the mention of “Rameses” in 47:11. On the other hand, he does explain what “helper” means in 2:18 (48), the meaning of “call on the name of the LORD” in 4:26 (63), and offer one potential solution for the use of “Dan” in 14:14 (105). When it comes to the flood, Ross understands 8:1–2 to say that both rain and “subterranean water upheavals” continued another 110 days following the initial torrential rain of forty days (76).

In his commentary on Exodus, Oswalt argues for a fifteenth century B.C. dating of the exodus from Egypt (265–66), but offers no mention or explanation of the debate over “Rameses” in 1:11 (286–89). However, he does examine briefly the variety of names applied to Moses’ father-in-law (293, 305), provide a fairly in-depth analysis of “I AM” in 3:14 (303–4, 311–12), and offer insightful comments regarding the incident with Moses and circumcision in 4:24–26 (306, 316).

Overall, this volume delivers what the commentary series promises. It is solidly evangelical in its theology and in its handling of the matters of authorship, date, and authenticity. Readers will need to resort to the more extensive exegetical commentaries on Genesis and Exodus to delve more deeply into the many interpretive issues not touched upon by Ross and Oswalt. No one will walk away from this commentary, however, without gaining a very good foundation in the individual messages of Genesis and Exodus, as well as a very useful examination of the theological significance of these two biblical books. The two commentaries in this volume are very readable, presenting the reader with many delightful and thought-provoking statements. A few will suffice for illustration: “Thus, the Old Testament in general and the book of Genesis in particular are a cemetery for lifeless myths and dead gods” (16, Ross); “Although not many scholars are satisfied with the obvious, in this case it seems obvious that the text means what it says” (81, Ross); “If God did not act in the ways recorded, then the unique theology of the Bible becomes both inexplicable and suspect” (263, Oswalt); “Once again, as with the midwives, Jochebed, Miriam, and the pharaoh’s daughter, it is a woman who took courageous action to further the cause of Yahweh’s redemptive purposes” (316, Oswalt).

John H. Sailhamer. *The Meaning of the Pentateuch: Revelation, Composition and Interpretation*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2009. 632 pp. \$40.00 (paper).

Sailhamer has authored a number of Old Testament studies, most focusing on the Pentateuch: *The Pentateuch as Narrative: A Biblical-Theological Commentary* (Zondervan 1992), *Introduction to Old Testament Theology: A Canonical Approach* (Zondervan 1995), and “Genesis” in the *Expositor’s Bible Commentary* (Zondervan 1990). He also has published works in other areas of OT studies: *The Translational Technique of the Greek Septuagint for the Hebrew Verbs and Participles in Psalms 3–41* (Peter Lang 1991) along with a number of periodical articles and essays in collected works on a variety of OT topics. As professor of OT at Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary in Brea, CA, he has a reputation for immersing his students in the Hebrew Bible.

The Meaning of the Pentateuch comprises a compendium of conclusions Sailhamer has reached as the result of years of study, writing, and teaching. The volume focuses on “the compositional strategy of the biblical author of the Pentateuch” (11). Its goal is to identify the meaning of the Pentateuch for today’s readers (13). As Sailhamer unfolds his approach to the Pentateuch, he reveals that he holds to two editions of the Pentateuch (23) with the second coming after Malachi, the last of the prophets (24) and comprising the only edition to which the modern reader has access (24–25). He believes that the second edition has been retrofitted with “new ‘prophetic extras’” (51). Nowhere does the author explain why he would consider it impossible for the prophetic elements of the Pentateuch to be part of the first edition. In fact, he actually admits that the prophetic sources for the second edition were themselves “a product of the Mosaic Pentateuch” (52). This reviewer finds this two-way composition (Pentateuch > Prophets > Pentateuch) without adequate foundation. Sailhamer fails to present adequate evidence contrary to a view holding that the prophets only expounded the Pentateuch—a one-way relationship (Pentateuch > Prophets). In other words, the prophets did not inform a supposed final edition of the Pentateuch at all. Their revelation *expounded on* the Pentateuch’s message, but they did not *expand* the written Pentateuch itself. It was already in its final form long before they proclaimed their supplementary revelation.

As far as the content and meaning of the Pentateuch is concerned, Sailhamer believes it to present a message quite “close in meaning to [the] NT book of Galatians” (27). He observes that Paul’s view of the law in Galatians approximates that of the Pentateuch’s view of the law (28). Just as in *The Pentateuch as Narrative*, the poems of the Pentateuch not only fill the seams of the Pentateuchal structure, they direct the readers to “the promise of a coming messianic king” (36)—a major and quite significant contribution of the Pentateuch.

The author divides his volume into three parts: “Approaching the Text as Revelation” (57–218), “Rediscovering the Composition of the Pentateuch within the Tanak” (219–415), and “Interpreting the Theology of the Pentateuch” (417–601). Much of the first part involves an extended discussion of hermeneutics in which Sailhamer regales the reader with the historical development of grammatical-historical hermeneutics. He calls evangelicals back to a focus “on the meaning of the Scriptures themselves (*sola Scriptura*)” (87). The question he asks concerns the “historical meaning”

of Scripture and the apparent movement to separate history from the text itself (100–48). In this somewhat lengthy and seemingly esoteric discussion, Sailhamer examines the contributions of Ernesti, Keil, Schleiermacher, Wellhausen, Geiger, and others to the relationship of history and the text. In addition to the role of history to the text, Sailhamer seeks to define and identify authorial intent (the big picture) in the biblical text (150–56). He associates authorial intent with the interpreter’s goal (153). The results of his analysis point to both “obedience to the law” and “living by faith” as the main emphasis of the Pentateuch as a whole (156).

Part Two explores “an evangelical alternative to the approaches of both von Hofmann and Hengstenberg” (233) with regard to the messianic strategy of the Pentateuch and of the entire Hebrew Bible. Three propositions express Sailhamer’s approach: (1) prediction and identification are both part of the messianic prophecy of the Hebrew Bible, (2) in the final stages of composition the messianic vision’s fragments gain an increasing cohesiveness, and (3) the Hebrew Bible displays commentary as much as it does text (235). Again and again, Sailhamer declares that the true focus of the Hebrew Bible, even in the Pentateuch, resides in the new covenant (205, 243, 342, 556). Basically, no substantial difference exists between what the Hebrew Bible conveys and what the apostle Paul taught (243). Accordingly, the author concludes that “the Pentateuch and its compositional strategy are strongly messianic” and that later stages of the Hebrew Bible “treat the earlier stages much like the NT treats the OT” (246).

As Sailhamer points out, no interpreter need go to the NT in order to properly interpret Genesis 3:15 as messianic. In his words,

One might be applauded for being careful not to see Christ too quickly in the words of the poem in Genesis 3:15, but in the end, one might also prove shortsighted in failing to find the author’s delayed identity of that “seed” within the further compositional strategy of the Pentateuch and its poems.

The Pentateuch highlights the rising of a future king and the establishment of his kingdom (335, 582). The relationship of the part (e.g., Gen 3:15) to the whole inheres in the principle that “It is the whole that gives meaning to the parts” (491). The Pentateuch’s compositor employs even the exodus event itself “as a key messianic metaphor or image” (518).

If the focus of the Pentateuch directs readers to the new covenant, how do its legal contents relate to that strategy? The author suggests that it is part and parcel of the propensity of mankind to seek gods other than the true God. That propensity necessitated the giving of laws to govern behavior and to turn people from idolatry (363). It is within the context of this discussion that Sailhamer’s narrative tends to be overly repetitious (cf. 388–98). Although the reader appreciates the author’s care to insure proper understanding, the length of some discussions can cause the reader to lose sight of the logical order of overall argumentation.

Part Three of the volume examines the theological message of the Pentateuch, touching upon the themes of promise and blessing (419–59), as well as Messiah (460–536). One chapter approaches the topic of Mosaic law by asking what the Christian’s relationship to that law might be (537). Sailhamer’s answer comes by first making a distinction between the law and the Pentateuch (e.g., 552), in order to counter the commonly held opinion that the Mosaic law and the Pentateuch are virtually identical.

Secondly, God intends the Pentateuch (with the law as only one part of the whole) “to be the object of meditation and reflection” that results in the imprinting of justice on the heart (562). The law supplements the new covenant focus by providing both “concrete and qualified situations” (562) for instructing believers in obedience to a holy and righteous God.

The final chapter deals with the theme of salvation within the Pentateuch (563–601). Although Sailhamer has touched upon unwritten (or primeval) revelation a number of times throughout the volume (e.g., 137, 184–97), he returns to it in discussing salvation, because God cannot have failed to communicate with fallen mankind concerning the solution to sin’s problem (566–70). Setting the matter of unwritten revelation to the side, the author narrows the question to what the Pentateuch tells its readers about salvation (570). Sailhamer argues that the Pentateuch identifies the power of sacrifice to break the curse resulting from the fall (596–97). In so doing, the sacrifice opens a way for a new life that might receive God’s blessing (601).

Whether or not the reader agrees with everything within this volume, Sailhamer’s detailed study of the Pentateuch has much to commend it. Anyone interested in identifying the content of messianic revelation in the OT should not ignore this volume and its significant contribution to the topic. The reader will come away with a larger view of the Pentateuch, even if he cannot accept its two-Pentateuch model. No study of the Pentateuch should omit this volume from its sources.

Erich A. von Fange. *In Search of the Genesis World: Debunking the Evolution Myth*. Saint Louis, Mo.: Concordia Publishing House, 2006. 392 pp. \$20.99 (paper).
Reviewed by William D. Barrick, Professor of Old Testament.

Erich von Fange is professor emeritus of Concordia University, Ann Arbor, Mich. He earned his Ph.D. as a Kellogg Fellow at the University of Alberta. He enjoyed teaching in Lutheran schools and colleges for 44 years, retiring in 1988, but continues to write on creation/evolution issues. This volume demonstrates his wide-ranging knowledge, intense research skills, and voluminous reading. For those truly interested in the debate between creation and evolution, this book will prove to be a rewarding excursion into the multitude of topics addressed within its covers.

The author verbalizes his purpose clearly: “First, how does the Bible fare as a framework for the ancient world in the light of scientific discoveries. . . . Second, is evolution ‘fact’ as many claim, or is it a type of mantra smothering all efforts to discover real truth?” (20). A sense of the breadth of the volume comes from a listing of its topics: archaeology, metallurgy, paleontology, agriculture, chronology, miracles, anthropology, the scientific method, evolution hoaxes, animal domestication, extinctions, natural history of horses, paleo-botany, the influence of Darwinism, astronomy, and ancient mysteries and riddles together with the theories they spawn. von Fange provides sources for most of the evidence he presents (via endnotes arranged by chapters, 363–92).

As von Fange puts it, he wrote this book “to inform and assure the reader that science was never the problem. There is a vast difference between science and speculation posing as science” (21). Details gathered over more than forty years of teaching flow from the author as well-known and familiar facts, yet their massive quantity does not slow the flow of the text. Reading is a pleasure, not a burden. One detracting aspect appears repeatedly, however—many details lack proper references and some details find support in either questionable news media accounts or very outdated material. Improved, more exact, and up-to-date documentation would increase the length of the volume significantly, but would generate a greater willingness on the part of the reader to accept the factuality of the evidence. For example, the claim that Darwin looked forward to the elimination of lower human races and the potential influence this view had on the Nazi slaughter of Jews (130) possesses no direct reference to Darwin’s own words. Instead, the endnote merely cites a secondary source by Stanley Jaki (374n46). Another glaring absence of documentation comes in the listing of the statistics for extinctions by geological era (165). von Fange refers to a specific United Nations report, but fails to cite it directly—relying instead, upon a news article in the *Ann Arbor News* (166, 376n6). I wish these were rare occurrences, but, unfortunately, they occur so frequently that a careful reader will begin to feel a degree of discomfort with the dependability some evidence thus presented.

Each chapter concludes with questions for reflection and discussion (22–23, 47–48, 60–61). The following is an example of these questions: “We can also see remarkable variation occurring when we sit down at a mall and watch the people go by. Is it possible that we are gradually changing into some other species if we give this process enough time? Why or why not?” (134, #8). The reader knows by these questions that the author desires interaction with the reader and interaction between readers—it is a volume that

enlists the reader in research, discovery, and reasoning. Great teaching and successful learning consist of just such personal involvement in the subject matter.

Each reader will discover his or her own favorite chapter. The chapter about Joshua's long day (93–100), revealing the misinformation that swirled around biblical circles some years ago, admits to hoaxes on the creationist side of the debate. On the other hand, "The Incredible Piltdown Hoax" (137–60) exposes hoaxes on the evolutionist side. The story of the Piltdown hoax reads like a masterful whodunit (the title, in fact, of one of the chapter's sections, 152)—a very engaging and fascinating read alone worth the price of the book. "The Art of Misquoting Archbishop Ussher" (101–14) provides even more fodder for thought.

The penultimate chapter ("Science and Deception," 333–53) commences von Fange's critique of what too often poses as science (cf. 21). He identifies evolution's three disastrous failings as "the science that consists of an unshakable faith in what this science is going to prove some day," evolution's "borrowed concepts from nineteenth century physics that physicists discarded long ago as useless," and evolution's failure to "invite us into the laboratory as with other sciences" (334–35).

Regardless of the shortcomings of *In Search of the Genesis World*, the volume provides an invaluable compendium of a wide range of topics in the creation/evolution debate. The author writes well and incites his readers to think deeply, carefully, and consistently (which might be the very reason why its shortcomings might become evident). The volume makes a valuable contribution and deserves a place alongside other good creationist materials.

David Wilkinson. *God, Time and Stephen Hawking*. Grand Rapids: Monarch Books, 2001. 224 pp. \$12.99 (paperback). Reviewed by William D. Barrick, Professor of Old Testament.

In 1989 I read Stephen Hawking's *A Brief History of Time* (Bantam, 1988). It was a very informative and enjoyable adventure into the realm of physical science. As a result, I also read Craig Penrose's *The Emperor's New Mind* (Oxford University Press, 1990). I came away from the two books with an increased wonder at God's creation and the delicate balance and intricate symmetry of the universe, the earth, and life. Therefore, I read Wilkinson's volume with the anticipation that my awe of the Creator would be increased. I was not disappointed.

David Wilkinson is both minister and scientist. He has a Ph.D. in Theoretical Astrophysics, is a Fellow of the Royal Astronomical Society, and is a Methodist minister and Fellow in Apologetics at St. John's College, Durham, UK. The current volume is an expansion and revision of *God, the Big Bang and Stephen Hawking* (Monarch, 1993). In it Wilkinson interacts with many of the scientific and theological responses to Hawking since the publication of *A Brief History of Time*.

Beginning with a brief biographical sketch of Stephen Hawking, Wilkinson breaches the subject of God's role in the origin of the universe. Even Carl Sagan had to admit that *A Brief History of Time* demonstrated that Hawking himself viewed the "God question" as a significant issue (26). *God, Time and Stephen Hawking* is divided into two parts: a history of scientific thinking concerning the universe's origin (Chapters 2–6) and the contribution and interaction of the Christian concept of God with scientific thinking (Chapters 7–12). Occasional illustrations visualize significant concepts.

With the launching of the Hubble Space Telescope (HST) in 1991, astrophysical research gained a powerful tool. Wilkinson provides the reader with an engaging description of HST's influence upon the scientific world's search for the origin of the universe (29–44). He follows that with a brief history of the "Big Bang" theory that superseded the steady state model of the universe (45–59). Of course, the heart of the discussion of origins focuses on the nature of the proofs that science can offer in support of the Big Bang. So the author gives the reader a guided tour of quantum theory, the uncertainty principle, and chaos theory (63–71). In addition, the nature and methods of scientific investigation are evaluated. Several views of science are defined and discussed, including naïve realism, positivism, instrumentalism, idealism, and critical realism (73–76). Although he does not specifically mention neotheism, Wilkinson does relate the concepts of quantum theory and uncertainty to theological considerations. He writes that man's free will is related to the area of the uncertainty principle (67). As for God, "Some will say that this unpredictable nature of certain chaotic systems gives an 'openness' to the world and this is where free will and the actions of God are located" (70).

"A Singular Problem or Two with the Big Bang?" (79–98) is a fascinating discussion of various problems and challenges to the Big Bang theory. The biggest problem is the matter of equilibrium or a balanced result that would be conducive to the existence of carbon-based life. This would require a balance that is so delicate that it must be within "1 part in 1060 (1 followed by sixty zeros!). In Paul Davies' words, that is the same accuracy as shooting at a target 1 centimetre square on the other side of the universe – and hitting it!" (90–92). Such subtle balances permeate the forces of the universe and

account for the increasing attention to design and the God question in the last two decades of the twentieth century (135).

Hawking's goal is to discover a unification theory for all the laws of physics. However, as Wilkinson points out, such a theory of everything still fails to provide viable answers for all the questions. Hawking's book does not answer all the questions. "If this is true in the area of science, it is even more important in the area of God" (108). Once such question has to do with the nature of time (109–21). Once more, Wilkinson moves into the realm of "openness" in regard to the inherent unknown involved in the future (119). In spite of this brief excursion into openness, he decides that the biblical concept of time is basically linear and that God transcends time.

How do we know that God exists? One of the arguments often posed is the cosmological argument for God's existence. Hawking's unification theory accomplishes two things: (1) it makes the cosmological argument irrelevant in any attempt to convince a physicist of God's existence and (2) it does not prove that God does not exist (123–33). Wilkinson seems to favor a complementarian relationship between science and theology. Science handles the "How?" questions, while theology takes care of the "Why?" questions (130–32).

The argument from design is equally unsatisfactory since it does not prove the existence of a singular Christian God of goodness, love, and grace (141). The anthropic balances in the universe, however, do demonstrate that science is pressed to give an adequate explanation (143). Wilkinson also stresses the role of wonder and awe that the anthropic balances and the inherent symmetry and beauty of nature produce in the minds of scientists and theologians alike.

Observation of supernovae in 1998 led to the announcement that the post-Big Bang universe is not slowing down its expansion, it is speeding up (153). Although the scientific consequences are yet unclear and the evidence far from proven, Wilkinson claims that "the theological consequences are clear" (155). A rapidly expanding universe directs our attention naturally to a future of futility and death. We might very well be living in an increasingly hostile universe. If the state of the universe is less anthropic-oriented than previously thought, could it be that extra-terrestrial intelligence of an imperfect nature were the creators of our universe (160–63, 166–67). "The evidence for the existence of God is much stronger than that for superior beings in another universe" (167), Wilkinson concludes.

The final chapter of the volume (169–89) is a refreshing focus on divine revelation as the means of true knowledge about the universe. Human intelligence cannot comprehend the mind of God, so God has initiated the contact and revealed his sovereign will. From Scripture the Christian can be certain that "God is the sole creator of the universe" (175–77), "God is the source of the order in the universe" (177–82), "God puts relationship at the heart of the universe" (182–85), and "God is meant to be worshipped" (185–86). All four of these biblical truths come to full fruition in the person of Jesus Christ (186–89). Jesus Himself is the supreme evidence for the existence of God and His creation of the universe.

Wilkinson takes the position that there should not be a conflict between true science and true Christian faith. He explains that the ultimate questions raised in scientific investigation are often of a nature answerable by biblical faith. Without apology he stands firmly against deism and staunchly defends Christian theism. The only apparent

failure is his apparent acquiescence to an ancient universe requiring some 12 billion years to reach its current state. In an appendix (“A ‘Brief History’ of Genesis,” 195–205) he lays out in greater detail the reasons why he believes that a literary analysis of Genesis 1 results in a rejection of 7-day creationism, the gap theory, the day-age theory, and the revelatory days theory. The book closes with a helpful annotated bibliography (207–13), end notes (214–18), and an index (219–24).