

# Themelios

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# Barnabas—Son of encouragement

Dick France

*With this issue of Themelios Dick France hands on his responsibility as General Editor to Robert Norris. His successor will be no stranger to TSF in Britain, having recently served on the executive committee there as the representative for Scotland (though he is really a Welshman!). He now works in central London as assistant minister at the City Temple, where he meets many visitors from other parts of the world. As well as gaining experience there of putting his theological training into practice, Dr Norris also has experience of the academic world and the needs of undergraduates, having worked for his PhD at the University of St Andrews in the field of historical theology. We therefore much look forward to his continuing the work begun by our retiring editor.*

*This, therefore, seems an appropriate place to express the thankfulness to God many Themelios readers must feel for Dick France's work over the past three years. Though he is just about to take up new responsibilities as warden of Tyndale House, Cambridge, we are grateful for his willingness to continue with our editorial team as Associate Editor with particular responsibility for the New Testament field. In place of a final editorial he has contributed what follows as the expository article that is intended to be an annual feature in Themelios.*

The Holy Spirit is the *paraklētos*, and we all know how impossible it is to find an adequate word to translate that rich idea. But among its many aspects we must certainly include that of 'encouragement', and it was probably in this sense that the nickname of the Cypriot Levite Joseph was intended—Barnabas, son of *paraklēsis*. For in the part Barnabas played in the early years of the Christian mission this ministry of the Paraclete was seen time and again, as he took the side of the misunderstood and the rejected, and proved to be for them a son of encouragement, or as we might put it, a tower of strength.

It is a gift the church still needs. A church plagued by divisions and suspicion, often more concerned with nit-picking controversy than with fellowship and outreach, needs more Barnabases. Readers of *Themelios*, who aspire to positions of responsibility in the church, would be well advised

to consider the example of Barnabas lest they turn out to be, like too many of the church's leaders past and present, effective sons of *discouragement*.

A full study of Barnabas would need to include the remarkable gift of his family estate which first brings him into the narrative of Acts (4: 36f.), and which may not be entirely unconnected with the fact that he later had to work for his living (1 Cor. 9: 6). But I want to focus on his ministry of encouragement by considering three of the objects of his *paraklēsis*.

## 1. The outsiders

It was one thing for Peter to be forced reluctantly to preach to Cornelius, but a deliberate outreach to Gentiles in Antioch, especially when conducted by non-Palestinian Jewish Christians, was quite another matter, and the Jerusalem establishment was understandably perturbed (Acts 11: 20–22). Barnabas was a good choice as investigator, a Jewish Christian of Diaspora origin (Acts 4: 36) but with Jerusalem connections (Col. 4: 10); but his supreme qualification was his character which, as we shall see, made him a natural ambassador.

'When he came and saw the grace of God, he was glad' (11: 23). I love that. Perhaps he too had his doubts back in Jerusalem, but Barnabas was not the man to let prejudice stand up against the grace of God. I suspect Barnabas was often 'glad'. He strikes me as a happy Christian, not a dour dogmatic disciplinarian. He looked at a situation from the positive side, and he saw the grace of God where many would have seen only a disturbing innovation. He was a man who put first things first, and the first thing was the grace of God. And so he encouraged the Gentile mission, and he encouraged his new Gentile brothers. He was a Levite (which had no doubt not escaped those who sent him to check up), but he was also 'a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith' (11: 24). And so 'a large company was added to the Lord', and Barnabas found himself the leader of the most prolific missionary church of the early days. I am sure he continued to be glad!

And then he was selected to lead an evangelistic tour in the neighbouring provinces (13: 1–3). I know it was the Holy Spirit who made the selection,

but I cannot say I am surprised at the choice, given Barnabas' record to date! And on that tour the same question came up, and Barnabas found himself again supporting an active mission to Gentiles, against the fierce opposition of more traditionally oriented Jews—though not in this case Jewish Christians (13: 43ff.). Back home in Antioch, the issue arose again, now as a clear theological contest among the Jewish Christians, and again Barnabas came out as an uncompromising supporter of the Gentile mission (15: 1ff.).

There is no doubt then that the acceptance of Gentile Christianity owed a lot to the vision of Barnabas, who 'saw the grace of God and was glad'. It was a major hurdle, and it took 'a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith' to clear it. That particular hurdle is long since forgotten, but there are still barriers to the progress of the gospel and to real Christian fellowship—racial barriers, cultural barriers, class barriers. Christianity still faces the threat of self-isolation in respectable traditional circles, and it may need a Barnabas to drag the rest of us over the hurdles behind which we shelter today.

## 2. The suspect

In the fight for the Gentile mission, Barnabas could rely on the support of his most famous protégé, Saul of Tarsus. For Saul knew from his own experience the difference between Barnabas' openness to the grace of God and the attitude of the Jerusalem church leaders. 'When he had come to Jerusalem he attempted to join the disciples; and they were all afraid of him, for they did not believe that he was a disciple' (Acts 9: 26).

I can't say that I blame them. Such a dramatic *volte-face* is hardly natural, and we all tend to expect things to be natural and predictable. Unfortunately, where God is at work they are not, and it can be very uncomfortable to come to terms with God's way of doing things. Unlike Barnabas later at Antioch, they saw the grace of God, and were—suspicious!

It has been the fate of those who undergo radical conversions ever since. The converted Muslim too often has to face not only the hostility of his Muslim family, but also the cold shoulder of the church which ought to be welcoming him. And it is not so very different for the converted pop star or gang leader in the West. 'But Barnabas took him, and brought him to the apostles, and declared to them' that his story was true and that his subsequent behaviour had proved it (Acts 9: 27). So Saul, who could so easily have been left out in the cold to found his own little sect, was brought into the

family. Thank God for Barnabas, who was ready to see the grace of God and to take it at its face value. We still need him in many Christian situations today.

It was Barnabas again who brought Saul in where the action was, to help him in leading the Gentile mission at Antioch (Acts 11: 25f.). Today we might call it an internship, training on the job. Together they 'met with the church, and taught a large company of people', and the foundations were laid for that pastoral and teaching ministry from which were to come in due time the Pauline letters. We owe it, under God, to the vision and encouragement of Barnabas.

I do not think Barnabas was surprised at the way his partnership with Saul eventually worked out: 'Barnabas and Saul' (Acts 13: 7) soon became 'Paul and his company' (13: 13). It was what Barnabas had in mind when he introduced Saul to the Jerusalem church, and later sent for this gifted convert to be his assistant. He had a God-given gift for spotting talent, and I am sure that as Paul forged ahead and took the lead, he 'saw the grace of God and was glad'.

The Lycaonian pagans had the situation well weighed up when they identified Barnabas with Zeus, the *éminence grise*, and Paul with Hermes 'because he was the chief speaker', the whizz-kid of the team (Acts 14: 12)!

So Christianity found its St Paul. It could so easily have been otherwise, when the abrasive young Pharisee met with the very natural suspicion of the Jerusalem worthies. Paul must often have thanked God for the gloriously unselfish *paraklēsis* of Barnabas, not just at the start but right on until he was well and truly launched into his ministry. Sons of encouragement do not leave the job half done.

## 3. The failure

Another talent spotted by Barnabas was John Mark, his relative from Jerusalem whom Barnabas took, like Saul before him, to join the team ministry in Antioch (Acts 12: 25), and a man who later proved his worth as Paul's right-hand man (Col. 4: 10; 2 Tim. 4: 11). But before that time came, Mark's prospects looked no better than did those of Saul when the Jerusalem church didn't want to know him. He dropped out of the first evangelistic tour from Antioch (Acts 13: 13; 15: 38). The many suggested reasons for his 'desertion' should be treated as what they are—guesses. But whatever the reason, it was enough to make Paul write him off as a failure, and that could have been the end of Mark's career as a Christian missionary. Predict-

ably, it was Barnabas, the son of encouragement, who took the side of the underdog, and was sufficiently convinced of the grace of God in the life of John Mark to indulge in the most un-Barnabas-like attitude of a 'sharp contention' (the Greek is *paroxysm!*) with Paul, bringing about the end of a partnership which had meant so much to them both (Acts 15: 36-40).

There is much we do not know about the background to this episode, as well as about its sequel so far as Barnabas and Mark are concerned. It is possible that there was some misunderstanding between Barnabas and Paul as to the nature of Mark's proposed involvement; if the Greek tenses are pressed, Barnabas proposed to give Mark a limited second chance (to 'take him along' in the aorist, a single action, verse 37), while Paul objected to someone with Mark's record as a permanent member of the team (to 'take him with them' in the present, a continuing state of affairs, verse 38). But the point is that Barnabas found Paul's attitude too hard; he was for encouragement rather than for rejection. And again events were to prove his faith well founded.

Failure and restoration form a common theme in the biblical history. We have the treasure of the gospel in clay pots, to show that it is God's power, not ours, that is at work (2 Cor. 4: 7). Pots get broken, and even apostles can fail. At such a time the wounded conscience needs not an unbending rigorism, but *paraklēsis*. How many potential Marks, I wonder, have been lost through a failure of the church to understand a failure, real or imagined? Many of us are too apt to break the bruised reed. Thank God that Barnabas was not so clumsy.

'A good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith.' I think we have seen plenty of grounds for that description of Barnabas. And as a man full of the Holy Spirit he displayed many gifts, but pre-eminent among them was the gift of *paraklēsis*, a gift which could well take its place beside 'helps' in 1 Corinthians 12: 28 as a gift of the Holy Spirit, the *paraklētōs*.

But Paul thought he was too soft. This is clear not only in the *paroxysm* over Barnabas' desire to give Mark a second chance, but also in an incident which happened in the early days of the multiracial church in Antioch (Gal. 2: 11-14). Barnabas, in the august company of Peter himself, gave in to pressure from the Jerusalem church to withdraw from table-fellowship with Gentile believers. No doubt, judging by Barnabas' record as a whole, it was a temporary lapse—it is so inconsistent with Bar-

nabas' 'liberal' attitude to the Gentile mission elsewhere. I wonder, though, whether it is entirely untypical of the man. Barnabas was always one to see the best in people, never one for hasty condemnations. Where Paul would take up the cudgels without delay, Barnabas would not quickly accuse Peter of denying the faith, and so he was more easily led into the compromising position, from which it took the doctrinal sensitivity and the forthright rebuke of Paul to extract him.

Was this softness? Barnabas was not soft in his campaign with Paul for the acceptance of Gentiles (Acts 13: 46, 'spoke out boldly'; 15: 2, 'no small dissension'; 15: 12; *etc.*). He was not one to knuckle under to the attitude of his superiors when he championed Paul in Jerusalem, and he was prepared to break up with Paul rather than abandon his advocacy of Mark. Barnabas could be very firm when he saw an issue clear in front of him. But at the centre of his campaigns were *people* rather than debating-points—the outsiders, the suspect, the failure. For them he would fight, even against Paul himself. He would fight for acceptance, for understanding, for a second chance. This is not softness, but generosity, a generosity which perhaps led him to go along with Peter further than he should have done, because he was too generous to question Peter's motives.

Be that as it may, it seems to me that in Barnabas, the son of encouragement, we have an important counterpart to Paul the tireless fighter for truth. If Barnabas could be over-generous, Paul, at least in the case of the dispute over Mark, could be over-rigorous, and the Christian pastor has lessons to learn from them both. We need to be as firm and as alert to doctrinal threats as Paul, but too often that Pauline firmness can degenerate into a hard, censorious attitude, which makes no allowances for *people*, and where that is the case we need to remember the 'softness' of Barnabas. If his softness (or generosity, as I would rather call it) could lead him on one occasion into an unworthy compromise, it could also rescue Mark from his record of failure. The true pastor must weigh carefully the relative claims of the rigorism of Paul and the generosity of Barnabas.

I think I would have liked to meet and work with Barnabas. I am sure he would have made me feel that I had a contribution to make. He would have brought out the best in me. But Paul? I am not so sure!

Have you noticed how often Barnabas was used as a liaison man? Sent to investigate the Gentile mission in Antioch, sent to Jerusalem with the famine relief (11: 30), sent on the first evangelistic

tour, sent to represent Antioch at the council (15: 2), sent by the council to communicate its findings (15: 22, 24, 30). I imagine his character had a lot to do with the choice. He could get on with people. Firm and forthright when occasion required it, he was also loving and understanding. People would listen to a man like Barnabas.

We owe more to Barnabas than we often realize,

Barnabas the son of encouragement. Where would Christianity have been without his marvellous gift for spotting and encouraging talent, for seeing the grace of God (and being glad!)? To him, under God, we owe the Gentile mission, and Mark, and even Paul.

Thank God for Barnabas; and let him teach us to encourage one another.

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# Is there pseudonymity in the Old Testament?

Joyce G Baldwin

*There has been an increasing tendency recently among evangelical specialists on the Old Testament to regard more favourably than has been traditional in evangelical circles the possibility that some of the books may be in part or in whole pseudonymous (see e.g. John Goldingay in Themelios 2/2, pp. 48-49; Richard Bauckham in Themelios 3/2, p. 10(42), note 4). Joyce Baldwin, who is lecturer in Old Testament at Trinity College, Bristol, and author of the Tyndale Commentaries on Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi (1972) and Daniel (forthcoming) here sets the discussion in a wider perspective.*

A pseudonymous work, by definition written under a false or assumed name, is meant to conceal the identity of the writer. No more may be involved than the choice of a fictitious name, so that when it comes to light that Helen Morgan is our old friend Rhena Taylor under a pseudonym<sup>1</sup> we dismiss the matter with a smile or a shrug, scarcely even wondering what lay behind her secrecy. If she had chosen the name Hector Morgan or had called herself H. Morgan we should have concluded that she was another George Eliot or George Sand, avoiding any prejudice on the grounds of her sex. If, however, she had taken the name Dewi Morgan or G. Campell Morgan she would have risked a court action for infringing the copyright laws.

So much for our modern presuppositions, but what bearing have they on the world of the Bible? Since the rise of historical criticism in the nine-

teenth century it has been asserted that there are pseudonymous works in the canonical Scriptures, that pseudonymity was common in the ancient world, and that we may reassure ourselves that nothing fraudulent was either intended or involved.

So far as the New Testament is concerned the subject has received considerable recent attention.<sup>2</sup> Kurt Aland, as the title of his paper implies, sees the need to examine the subject in the broad perspective of Christian literature generally in the first two centuries. Guthrie's historical approach traces the subject from the period of the Reformation. He calls in question the assumption that orthodox Christians would have used an apostolic name to authenticate their writing, and if they did that the practice would be sanctioned by the whole church. Such use of an authoritative name and not merely a fictitious one is known as pseudepigraphy and raises the question of forgery, taken up by Metzger. Collins notes that the very book which provided the term 'apocalyptic', the Apocalypse of John, did not share the pseudonymity which many allege to have been characteristic of that genre. Nevertheless he would not disqualify its inclusion as apocalyptic on that ground.

<sup>2</sup> See e.g. J. C. Fenton, 'Pseudonymity in the New Testament', *Theology* 58, 1953, pp. 51-56; K. Aland, 'The Problem of Anonymity and Pseudonymity in Christian Literature of the First Two Centuries', *JTS* 12, 1961, pp. 39-49; D. Guthrie, 'The Development of the Idea of Canonical Pseudepigrapha in New Testament Criticism', *Vox Evangelica*, 1962, pp. 43-59; Bruce M. Metzger, 'Literary Forgeries and Canonical Pseudepigrapha', *JBL* 91, 1972, pp. 3-24; John J. Collins, 'Pseudonymity, Historical Reviews and the Genre of the Revelation of John', *CBQ* 39, 1977, pp. 329-343. Metzger and Collins touch on the Old Testament also.

<sup>1</sup> As Helen Morgan, *What Price Glory?* (London: IVP, 1972); as Rhena Taylor, *Rough Edges* (Leicester: IVP, 1978).

In the Old Testament field L. H. Brockington<sup>3</sup> mapped the problem in a short article twenty-five years ago; since then, as this paper will show, more relevant material has come to light and interest in the subject has grown accordingly. There is a sense in which the subject of this paper is basic also to pseudonymity in the New Testament for, if the Old Testament Scriptures can be proved to have included pseudonymous writings, an important precedent would have been set for the New. We shall begin by assembling information from the world of the Old Testament on the subject of pseudonymity and then look more closely at three books which are alleged to be or to contain within them pseudonymous writings.

### 1. Pseudonymity in the world of the Old Testament

Hard evidence as opposed to theory is hard to come by, but relevant fragments from the library of the Assyrian King Ashurbanipal (669–c. 627 BC), who made a collection of texts from many archives and religious centres, have been published by Professor W. G. Lambert.<sup>4</sup> He tells us that these provide an insight into the question of authorship as it confronted Babylonian scholars in the early first millennium BC.

A librarian in the ancient world who came to the task of compiling a catalogue had to contend with the fact that the vast majority of texts circulated anonymously. In this royal library the scribes undertook to draw up a list of authors' names, 'a task comparable with modern discussion on the origin of Homer or the Fourth Gospel. The big difference is that modern writers on problems of authorship expose every detail of their materials and reasoning, while the Babylonian author gives results only'.<sup>5</sup> This catalogue is the earliest document of any civilization dealing with authorship, but Professor Lambert does not find this unexpected for ancient Mesopotamia, which had sign lists c. 3,000 BC, pronouncing dictionaries by 1800 BC and a mass of lexical texts, commentaries, analyses of the Sumerian verb, and other philological materials by 800 BC. This reminder that scholarship, like wisdom, goes back to ancient times is an important one.

The method in this catalogue is first to give the name of the author: 'These are by . . .' and then to quote the first line of his writings. The authors whose names are preserved fall into four classes: gods, legendary and other humans of great anti-

<sup>3</sup> 'The Problem of Pseudonymity', *JTS* 4, 1953, pp. 15-22.

<sup>4</sup> 'A Catalogue of Texts and Authors', *Journal of Cuneiform Studies* 16, 1962, pp. 59-76.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 59.

quity, men without indication of family origin and men described as 'son' of an ancestral figure. The human author was often looked on only as the intermediary while incantations, rituals and omens were attributed to a god or a number of gods. 'The incantation is not mine, it is the incantation of Ea and . . .' Such a note at the end of an incantation would hardly rank as an example of pseudonymity. Indeed Professor Lambert explains that authorship is not the point here, but rather attention is drawn to the powers which would be operative when the incantations were recited. 'The difficulty of explaining the multiple authorship does not therefore arise.'<sup>6</sup>

Now these librarians must often have been hard pressed to find an author, and the attribution of works to gods and ancient worthies may be their last resort; but what is of special interest for our subject is the evidence that scribes profess descent from ancestors, some of whom are known from other sources as authors or editors of literary texts. But they do not profess to *be* those ancestors. From the evidence of these texts, therefore, the conclusion is that, so far as can be judged, anonymity rather than pseudonymity was characteristic of early first millennium Babylonian authors, a number of whom specifically avoided opportunities for pseud-epigraphy.

This fact is important in the light of frequent assertions that in ancient literature the adoption of a pseudonym was one of the most familiar of literary expedients. The question has to be asked, what period is in mind and what evidence can be given? The word 'ancient' is used to cover millennia and needs to be defined. The earliest indisputable evidence for pseudonymity comes from the third century BC, and James S. Candlish may well have been right in his judgment that before that time book learning was not so much cultivated as to give facility and motive to literary fictions.<sup>7</sup> That century saw the foundation of the Museum of Alexandria by Ptolemy Philadelphus (283-247 BC), to be followed in the next by that of Pergamum, founded by Eumenes II (197-159).

These centres of learning created a great demand for works by famous authors so that it became a lucrative occupation to write what appeared to be ancient works and pass them off as genuine. Bruce Metzger refers to the evidence of Galen (second century AD) that 'literary forgeries were first multiplied in numbers when the kings of Egypt and of Pergamum sought to outdo each other in their efforts to increase the holdings in their respective

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 73.

<sup>7</sup> *The Expositor*, 4th series, 4, 1891, p. 94.

libraries. Monetary rewards were offered to those who would provide a copy of some ancient author, and, in consequence, many imitations of ancient works were composed and palmed off as genuine'.<sup>8</sup> The condemnation implied by Galen, who himself suffered from fraudulent imitators, is obvious.

But deliberate forgeries of this kind are not significant for our purpose. No-one claims that the Old Testament contains this kind of material. Another kind of forgery referred to by Metzger should, however, be mentioned. Two of the earliest forgeries in Greek history, 'perpetrated in the interests of securing greater credence for certain doctrines and claims', date from the sixth century BC and concern interpolations into the *Iliad* and into the *Oracles of Musaeus*. Both were detected and one of the offenders was identified and banished from Athens.<sup>9</sup> The evidence is important because it proves that to interpolate additions into an ancient text, at least with an ulterior motive, was not only not tolerated in Greece in the sixth century BC but was regarded as a serious crime.

It is significant that within the period covered by the Old Testament no example has so far come to light of a pseudepigraphon which was approved or cherished as an authoritative book, and, on the evidence just quoted, there was opposition to the interpolation of new material into a text.<sup>10</sup>

## 2. Alleged pseudonymity in the Old Testament

The earliest example of pseudonymity in the Old Testament is usually held to be the book Deuteronomy for, under the heading 'These are the words that Moses spoke . . .' (1: 1) it consists in the main of speeches in the first person. A similar Mosaic origin is claimed, however, by the introductory formula 'The Lord said to Moses' for much of the books Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers, and since the Pentateuch would require a study all its own we shall not attempt to include these books in this article.<sup>11</sup>

### a. Ecclesiastes

The book we know as Ecclesiastes has a special claim to consideration because its writer evidently wanted to remain anonymous. In the Hebrew he

<sup>8</sup> Bruce M. Metzger, 'Literary Forgeries and Canonical Pseudepigrapha', *JBL*, pp. 5, 6. He refers to Galen, *In Hipp. de nat. hominis* 1.42 (C. G. Kühn, *Medicorum graecorum opera* 15, 105).

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 11.

<sup>10</sup> *Vaticinia ex eventu* and pseudonymity will be dealt with below in connection with Daniel.

<sup>11</sup> For a recent commentary on Deuteronomy which argues for substantially Mosaic authorship see P. C. Craigie, *The Book of Deuteronomy*, New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans; London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1976).

calls himself Qoheleth, which means something like 'the preacher-philosopher', and yet he adds 'the son of David, king in Jerusalem' (1: 1). No king of that name is known in David's line. Taken literally 'son of David' suggests Solomon, though his name appears nowhere in the book and he seems to be ruled out by 'all who were before me in Jerusalem' (2: 9). The most likely explanation of this enigma is to see in his impersonation a literary device, a dramatization of his anti-secularism. The author 'pictures for us a super-Solomon (as he implies by the word "surpassing", in 1: 16) to demonstrate that the most gifted man conceivable, who could outstrip every king who ever occupied the throne of David, would still return empty-handed from the quest for self-fulfilment'.<sup>12</sup>

Martin Hengel, who speaks of the unique semi-pseudonymity of the work, points out that the pseudonymity applies only to 1: 12-2: 12b; 'later the individuality of the author breaks through the pseudonymous form'.<sup>13</sup> But it seems better to avoid the term altogether. Qoheleth is no more pretending to be Solomon than Shakespeare is pretending to be Hamlet, but he is inviting his readers to see life through the eyes of that superbly endowed king. He does not belong to the era of Solomon and he has no intention of pretending he does, but as a learned professor in the school of the wise he inherits the wisdom by which kings reign and rulers decree what is just (Pr. 8: 15). Presuming that there was no longer a king in Jerusalem, and the likely date of writing in the late fourth or early third century BC<sup>14</sup> makes this virtually certain, he claims the authority to which kings of old appealed and to which they were indebted for such wise and just administration as they achieved. There was a sense in which the Wise reigned when kings and thrones were a nostalgic memory in Israel, and Qoheleth thus claimed to be 'king'.<sup>15</sup>

### b. Prophecy: Zechariah

Composite authorship of the prophetic books is another alleged source of pseudonymity, or at least anonymous, writings in the Old Testament. The theory that the whole prophetic movement became suspect after the exile has been deduced

<sup>12</sup> Derek Kidner, *A Time to Mourn, and a Time to Dance* (Leicester: IVP, 1976), p. 22.

<sup>13</sup> *Judaism and Hellenism I* (London: SCM, 1974), pp. 129, 130; Excursus 3: Koheleth and Solomon.

<sup>14</sup> J. Muilenburg, *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 135, 1954, pp. 23, 24, on the basis of fragments of the book from Qumran Cave 4.

<sup>15</sup> Solomonic authorship has been maintained by a few scholars, one of the most recent being G. L. Archer in *Bulletin of the Evangelical Theological Society*, 12, 1969, pp. 167-181.

from Zechariah 13: 2-6. 'A generation which knew Babylonian divination and accepted the law of Moses thought that the Prophets' methods of receiving and delivering oracles was questioned. Herein lies the reason for the great output of pseudonymous literature.'<sup>18</sup> Guillaume goes on to argue that men who had a revelation from God could not speak in their own name and consequently names like Jonah, Zechariah, Daniel, Baruch and others were attached to prophecies of which these long-deceased persons could have known nothing.

Once the custom had become established, it is argued, men like Jonah and Daniel, who were known to have been prophets in ancient times, were credited with definite written prophecies, and from that grew up a recognized literary convention. In short, pseudonymity is seen as one of the results of the suppression of prophecy. Others, on the analogy of probable additions to the works of Greek philosophers from the pen of disciples, argue that schools of prophets prophesied in the name of their master and sometimes added their words to his in writing. Whatever the rationale, the idea is widely accepted that the work of more than one prophet has been included in several of the prophetic books as we know them.

The book of Zechariah may perhaps be accepted as representative of this phenomenon of composite authorship. Without question there are distinct differences between chapters 1-8 and chapters 9-14 which to some scholars indicate a change of authorship. Some redivide the second part so as to suggest that three authors have contributed. Now it is true that the text presents new headings at 9: 1 and 12: 1 and that these subdivisions must feature in any analysis of the book, but to base a theory of multiple authorship on this evidence is another matter. Moreover the number of contributors is commonly reckoned to be more than three because small sections tend to be seen as independent oracles.<sup>17</sup> In Zechariah, then, we have as good an example of alleged pseudonymity in the prophets as we should be likely to find.

In support of multiple authorship attention is drawn to the different character of chapters 9-14 as compared with 1-8: in the last six chapters no mention is made of the name Zechariah, and, moreover, it is impossible to recognize from historical allusions the period to which they belong.

<sup>18</sup> Alfred Guillaume, *Prophecy and Divination*, Bampton Lectures (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1938), p. 163.

<sup>17</sup> See e.g. O. Eissfeldt, *The Old Testament: An Introduction* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1965), pp. 438-440; G. Fohrer, *Introduction to the Old Testament* (London: SPCK, 1970), pp. 446-448.

Indeed it is alleged that on three counts—style, vocabulary and contents—multiple authorship is indicated.<sup>18</sup> When the various arguments are backed up by historical settings as diverse as the pre-exilic and Maccabean periods (for despite the difficulty of the task this has been the standard approach) the case for several contributors to the Zechariah collection may seem to have been clinched.

The fact is, however, that the multiplicity of different dates given to the same material brings the historical method under suspicion. If Zechariah 9-14 can be understood only with reference to its original setting in life then the honest course is to admit defeat and decline to attempt any exposition of it. There is, however, the possibility that when a section of a prophetic book is not specifically dated there is another more appropriate clue to its meaning. In Zechariah 1-8, where the time note is important, three dates are given (1: 1; 1: 7; 7: 1), but the headings in 9: 1 and 12: 1 include no date. May it not be that the author intends us to see that in what follows he is no longer tied to historic time but is rather expressing theological truths related to God's future purpose?

That this is indeed his intention is borne out by the literary shape of his whole book. The visions (1: 7-6: 15), the messages prompted by the questions about fasting (7: 1-8: 19) and the two sections in part two of the book can be shown from the way the material is arranged to belong together.<sup>19</sup> Moreover there is progression as the book moves from the establishment of the post-exilic community, with its rebuilt temple and recommissioned leaders and its understanding of the role of God's people among the nations (chapters 1-8) to the more eschatological perspective of chapters 9-14. Here the prophet rings the changes on the themes of jubilation, rebuke, mourning for a suffering shepherd and cataclysmic judgment, but according to the recognizable pattern which occurs in its simplest form in part one. The final note, the universal kingship of the Lord of Hosts (14: 16-21), picks up the same theme from 6: 15, 8: 22 and 14: 9, bringing it to a climax by laying stress on the removal of every obstacle to wholehearted worship of the Lord as King over all. Thus the book is a unity that progresses from historic time to end time, from the local to the universal.<sup>20</sup>

So closely knit is the fabric of the book that one mind must be responsible for its construction, and the simplest explanation is that the prophet

<sup>19</sup> A more detailed discussion of the subject may be found in the writer's *Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi* (London: IVP, 1972), pp. 60-70.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 85, 86.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 74-81.

Zechariah himself is the author of the total work that bears his name. Thus on internal evidence it can be shown that the theory of multiple authorship, together with the anonymity or pseudography that it entails, is not the only, nor even perhaps the best, explanation of the diversity within Zechariah. If this is the case here, why not in others? The fact that the prophetic books have come to us as entities provides the strongest evidence against attributing different parts to different authors, and the onus of proof lies on those who would assert that there have been pseudographic additions.

### c. Daniel

The book of Daniel, however, is in a category apart, not only because it is generally acknowledged to contain full-blown apocalyptic, but also because scholars are all but unanimous in judging that chapters 7-12, in which Daniel purports to write in the first person, are pseudographic. The ground of such certainty is in the last analysis the content of those chapters which seem to foretell future stages of world history, and in particular chapter 11. These disclosures of the future are regularly classified as examples of *vaticinium ex eventu* or history written up as if it were a prophecy, and evidence in other ancient literatures is adduced for this phenomenon. If such a 'prophecy' is to carry conviction it must of necessity be put into the mouth of someone known to have lived at an earlier stage in history, and therefore it is essentially pseudographic.<sup>21</sup> It follows that if this is the genre of Daniel 7-12 these chapters must be pseudonymous.

It may help to clarify the issue to spell out the difference the *ex eventu* theory makes to an understanding of the book of Daniel. The first two chapters claim to belong to the earliest period of Nebuchadrezzar's campaigns (Dn. 1: 1; 2: 1), before 600 BC, and the last date mentioned (10: 1) refers to 537 BC. The impression given, therefore, is that the whole book comes from the sixth century, and increasingly scholars are tending to concede that the stories of chapters 1-6 belong earlier than the rest, and stem from the period of the exile. The visions of chapters 7-12, however, with their outline of future epochs (chapter 7) and their special interest in the Greek period (chapter 8) which focuses in chapter 11 on the reign of Antiochus Epiphanes (11: 21ff.), reveal such de-

tailed knowledge of the future that to reckon the visions prophetic seems to many inconceivable. According to John Goldingay it is not so much that God could not but that he *would* not give such detailed information in advance.<sup>22</sup>

This is where the argument comes in that most of chapter 11, and by implication the other visions of future epochs, originated in the second century, and in that part of it which is dealt with in most detail in 11: 21-35, namely the reign of Antiochus IV Epiphanes. The author had lived through the events he presented as prophecies of that reign. Previous centuries he knew from history. It follows that only a very small part of the visions relate to the future as it looked from the writer's standpoint. In reality he was summing up 350 years of history in the form of a prophecy about 165 BC, and was making a genuine prophecy only in 11: 36-45 (or 40-45). In those verses he prophesied the way in which king Antiochus would meet his end.

The author proved to be a very second-rate prophet, however, because even that very short section of prophecy was proved by history to be incorrect! Antiochus did not die in the manner predicted. Moreover the author made an even bigger mistake in implying that God would intervene in the immediate future by bringing history to an end. His third weak area was his knowledge of history. Many inaccuracies are alleged, some of them serious, but especially his conviction that there was a separate Median kingdom before that of the Persians. Now the book itself does not say that this was the author's interpretation of the four eras of chapters 2 and 7; indeed 8: 20 explicitly states that the Medo-Persian empire was a joint one. Though it is true that there is a focus on the second century in chapter 11 and that this was within the Greek period, the author was looking to a further empire under which God was going to intervene in an unprecedented way, namely the Roman empire, when the proclamation went out, 'the kingdom of God is at hand' (Mk. 1: 15). In short, the mistakes may be the fault of the interpreter rather than of the text.<sup>23</sup> Otherwise how did the book ever qualify for inclusion in the Canon of Scripture? Did none of the scribes who copied the manuscripts at Qumran, for example, spot the errors?<sup>24</sup>

<sup>22</sup> *Themelios* 2/2, January 1977, p. 49.

<sup>23</sup> Robert J. M. Gurney, 'The Four Kingdoms of Daniel 2 and 7', *Themelios* 2/2, pp. 39-45, argues, however, that the four empires are indeed those of Babylon, Media, Persia, Greece, and that there is no historical mistake.

<sup>24</sup> It is clear from the fragments of the book of Daniel found at Qumran and from other related texts that the book enjoyed great popularity there. See Joyce G. Baldwin, *Daniel*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries, forth-

<sup>21</sup> A study of *vaticinium ex eventu* in relation to Daniel is to be included in the Tyndale Old Testament Lecture 1978, by the present writer, which is expected to be published in a future *Tyndale Bulletin*.

Scholars who accept the *vaticinium ex eventu* theory, and some who do not explicitly mention it, go to some lengths to repudiate the idea that the pseudonymity involved is in any way fraudulent, or at least they argue that circumstances made it inevitable. Charles thought that the supremacy of the Law made the revival of prophecy in the second century BC an impossibility and Eva Osswald blamed the closure of the canon of revelation for the borrowing of the canonical name.<sup>25</sup> She saw two extra advantages of the pseudonym: added respect for the writing and possibly a means of saving the author from political danger. H. H. Rowley was of the opinion that pseudonymity could be recognized by the reader of the time;<sup>26</sup> Oesterley envisaged a long period of oral tradition preceding the written form of the work, which was attributed to the supposed initiator of the tradition,<sup>27</sup> while Russell contended that the writer thought of himself as an extension of the personality of the historic personage under whose name he wrote.<sup>28</sup>

Recently Klaus Koch has stated his position: 'association with a tradition confers legitimacy' and 'since what is involved is not the conscious use of an inaccurate name, the designation "pseudonymous" should be used only with reservations'.<sup>29</sup> This reluctance to make use of the word 'pseudonymous' is significant. John Goldingay endeavours to show that pseudonymity is not incompatible with inspiration,<sup>30</sup> and Richard Bauckham argues that 'Pseudonymity is . . . a device expressing the apocalyptic's consciousness that the age of prophecy has passed: not in the sense that he fraudulently wishes to pass off his work as belonging to the age of prophecy, but in the sense that he thereby acknowledges his work to be mere interpretation of the revelation given in the prophetic age'.<sup>31</sup> The use of *vaticinia ex eventu* was, according to this writer, in the interests of giving his contemporaries a relevant exposition of old prophecies.

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coming from IVP, introductory sections, viii and x.

<sup>25</sup> R. H. Charles, *Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha* II, p. viii. Eva Osswald, 'Zum Problem der *Vaticinia Ex Eventu*', *ZAW* 75, 1963, pp. 27-44.

<sup>26</sup> H. H. Rowley, *The Relevance of Apocalyptic* (London: Lutterworth, 1944), p. 39.

<sup>27</sup> W. O. E. Oesterley, *The Jews and Judaism During the Greek Period* (London: SPCK, 1941), p. 74.

<sup>28</sup> D. S. Russell, *The Method and Message of Jewish Apocalyptic* (London: SCM, 1964), pp. 127-139.

<sup>29</sup> Article 'Pseudonymous Writing', *Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, Supplementary Vol. (Nashville: Abingdon, 1976), p. 713.

<sup>30</sup> *Themelios* 2/2, January, 1977, p. 49; *The Churchman* 90, January-March, 1976, pp. 6-23.

<sup>31</sup> *Themelios* 3/2, January, 1978, p. 18 (=p. 50 of volume 3).

It is true that in Daniel there is a comment on the seventy-year prophecy of Jeremiah, especially in chapter 9, but it is not possible to account for the other visions in this way, unless the dream image in chapter 2 is accepted as genuine ancient prophecy. Moreover, if the apocalypticist really was rewriting prophecies of the past to show how they had been fulfilled, why did he not write in his own name? Whatever the motivation behind his pseudonymity, he certainly succeeded in deceiving his readers, despite assertions to the contrary, as we have already shown. Jesus, according to the Gospel writers, and the early Church Fathers, accepted the book as the work of Daniel, for it was not until Porphyry in the third century AD questioned the possibility of such accurate prediction that anyone doubted the genuineness of Danielic authorship.

This fact has, of course, always been put down to a pre-critical mentality, but, on the argument that the literary device of pseudonymity and *vaticinia ex eventu* deceived no-one the Jewish expositors and the leaders of the early church should have been well aware of the true origin and intention of the 'prophecies', especially in view of the development of pseudonymous literature in the period between the Testaments. If, on the other hand, the author of Daniel did intend to deceive, he was entirely successful in doing so until the time of Porphyry. Had it been otherwise the likelihood is that his work would have been excluded from the Canon.

It will be noted that pseudepigraphy is said to fulfil functions which are mutually exclusive. On the one hand we are asked to believe that this was an accepted literary convention which deceived no-one, and on the other that the adoption of a pseudonym, which presumably went undetected, increased the acceptability and authority of a work. Those who contend that Daniel was written under a pseudonym cannot have it both ways.

While there are advantages in singling out a subject like pseudonymity for consideration in its own right, other factors, particularly date of writing, are bound up with it. If Daniel is a sixth-century work the question of pseudonymity does not arise, whereas if it is a product of the second century BC a study of Hellenism and the literature in the world of that time becomes relevant. John J. Collins in just such a study<sup>32</sup> sees the undoubted rise in the number of pseudepigrapha during the Hellenistic period as one of a number of conspicuous phenomena resulting from the demise of

<sup>32</sup> 'Jewish Apocalyptic against its Hellenistic Near Eastern Environment', *BASOR* 220, 1975, pp. 27-36.

national monarchies, loss of meaning and alienation. In a later article, however, having pointed out that the writer of Revelation eschewed pseudonymity, he gives the explanation: 'The lack of pseudonymity, then, reflects the heightened eschatological fervour of the early Christian community and its greater receptivity for apocalyptic revelations'.<sup>33</sup>

But if one era before Christ had to be selected as demonstrating the same kind of expectations, so far as the Jews were concerned the sixth century would take precedence over the second. Deprived of a king, deported, interned, they lost all hope to a degree that was never true of the later period. In their state of alienation Ezekiel's visions of the great and holy Lord, who would reinstate the nation and so reveal his glory to the world, restored hope. Haggai and Zechariah ministered to the struggling community back in Judah. In that time of unrest and upheaval apocalyptic imagery flourished, and these writers, by their skilful use of symbolic language and literary forms, brought reassurance of God's control in a chaotic world. On socio-historic grounds this is surely the period most likely to produce the book of Daniel.

As one who has endeavoured to write a commentary on Daniel I would claim that, whereas to postulate a second-century setting restricts the impact of the book's prophecies to that century because they are regarded as fulfilled in the time of the Maccabees, a sixth-century date of writing allows a more flexible interpretation based on the book's repeated claim to foretell the future. As Gordon Wenham points out, 'The idea that God

<sup>33</sup> *CBQ* 39, 1977, p. 332.

declares his future purposes to his servants is at the heart of the book's theology'.<sup>34</sup> The expositor who fails to take this seriously fails to take the book seriously. The whole of chapter 10, for example, describing the experience of Daniel as he was being prepared to receive his final vision, becomes so much local colour in support of an elaborate fiction, for almost all that was to follow in chapter 11 was a recital of history, much of it recent. Similarly the prayer of chapter 9 and descriptions such as those of 8: 15—19; 12: 7, 8 become so much padding to give the effect of reality.

Interpreted as history the predictions have no further claim on the reader. Any interest is on a purely academic level. So to rob a book of its impact invites eccentric interpretations such as have come to be associated at a popular level with this book.

In conclusion we contend that there is no clear proof of pseudonymity in the Old Testament and much evidence against it. When a writer made use of a literary convention, as in the case of Qoheleth, he made it abundantly plain that that was what he was doing. So far as the book of Daniel is concerned there is no hint of such a thing, nor did the Old or New Testament church which included the book in the Canon suspect it. If the historical setting provided by the text is accepted there is no reason for postulating pseudonymity, and the task of proving that the book is in any part pseudonymous must rest with those who confidently make the claim.

<sup>34</sup> *Themelios* 2/2, 1977, p. 51. John Goldingay, on the other hand, finds a second-century dating more glorifying to God and more pastorally helpful (p. 49).

## ***The Hermeneutical Problem of Genesis 1-11***

**Noel Weeks**

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This article, which first appeared in *Theolog Review* (the journal of the Australian. TSF) vol. 8 (1972). Dr Weeks is a lecturer in Ancient History at the University of Sydney, and holds degrees in both zoology and theology; his PhD(Brandeis) dealt with some of the Nuzi texts.

Like any discipline, hermeneutics can suffer from being used to solve problems which lie outside its

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sphere. Much of the modern discussion of hermeneutics is inconclusive because it involves an interchange between men who differ not at the level of hermeneutics but at the more fundamental level of religious presuppositions. Hence to put this paper in its proper context it must be stated that this investigation begins by assuming a certain approach to religion, namely that of evangelical Christianity and its view of Scripture.<sup>1</sup>

### **1. INTERPRETING SCRIPTURE FROM OUTSIDE**

In considering the hermeneutical problem of the early chapters of Genesis it is important that our own historical situation be clearly in view. We are not the first Christians to be troubled by the teaching of Genesis. Simply because the Bible has a different view of origins to those put forth in human philosophy there is a period of conflict whenever the church comes under the influence of a human philosophical system. Thus any defender of neo-Platonism in Augustine's day or of Aristotelianism in the late Middle Ages found himself in trouble with Genesis. It is a gross oversimplification to act as though we alone face a problem here. Nevertheless the problem for most Christians today is generated by a specific challenge, namely that of biological evolution and related theories. I believe that there are deeper problems than merely the problem of Genesis. If we take the theory of evolution as established and modify our interpretation of Genesis accordingly, then we introduce a problem for the doctrine of Scripture. It is nonsense to speak of the unique and total authority of Scripture at the same time as we change our interpretation of Scripture to accord with theories drawn from outside Scripture. Hence evangelicals have tended to seek for principles within Scripture itself which will allow them to interpret Genesis in a way that is compatible with evolution. If Scripture itself forces us to such an interpretation then we are not subjecting Scripture to evolutionary theory. It is with these attempts to find such principles within Scripture that this paper is mainly concerned.

#### ***Religion and science***

However, there is need to establish first that the basic problem can really be reduced to hermeneutics. Particularly this must be demonstrated when there has been a tendency<sup>2</sup> to

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<sup>1</sup> For the classic statement of the viewpoint that underlies this paper see B. B. Warfield, *The Inspiration and Authority of the Bible* (Philadelphia; Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1964).

<sup>2</sup> E.g. M. A. Jeeves 'Towards the Recovery of Harmony Between Science and Christian Faith', *Theolog Review*, Vol. 3, No. 2, pp. 15-23; D. M. McKay (ed.), *Christianity in a Mechanistic Universe* (IVP, 1965).

solve the problem by regarding the biblical and the evolutionary descriptions as complementary rather than conflicting. This may be expressed in many different ways but the basic idea is a distinction between religious, theological and/or naive explanations as distinct from scientific, technical ones. It is argued that there is no conflict because the two approaches are in separate spheres or on separate levels.

It must be emphasized that this in itself does not solve the basic problem. It merely shifts the point to be proven. If we interpret Genesis in terms of this religious/scientific distinction we may be just as guilty of imposing an alien authority upon the Scriptures. We must first establish that such a distinction is warranted by Scripture. The distinction itself looks suspiciously like Kant's noumena/phenomena distinction. It makes little difference in principle if the foreign authority is that of Kant rather than Darwin.

In saying that the distinction must be demanded by Scripture itself before it can validly be employed one misconception must be avoided. If someone approaches the Scripture already accustomed to seeing things in terms of the Kantian categories, then the basic question has already been decided. Is Scripture a book of religious truths or a textbook of geology? We naturally tend to say it is the former. Yet this question may pose a false dilemma. There is always the possibility that it is a book of religious truths which lays down basic principles which are relevant, even mandatory, for geology. If the question is posed so as to exclude this last alternative, and Kantian philosophy so poses the question, then the basic problem has been solved not by appeal to the explicit teachings of Scripture but by a philosophical presupposition drawn from outside the Scriptures.

### ***General revelation***

A second way in which an attempt is made to solve the problem, without having to resort to the difficult task of establishing internal guide lines for the interpretation of Genesis, is by appeal to general revelation. It is claimed that since the creation is itself revelatory of God we do not impose an outside authority when we interpret Scripture in terms of science. However, once again, the basic problem is not solved but merely camouflaged. Is our concept and use of general revelation a valid one or is 'general revelation' merely a label which allows us to ignore or destroy biblical teaching? The question can only be decided by establishing a correct view of general revelation on the basis of Scripture. One may say categorically that a biblical view, of general revelation gives no support to the common use of

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science to determine our interpretation of Genesis.

First there is no indication in the Bible that general revelation tells us about the means God used in creating the earth and life upon it. The passages which theologians appeal to in establishing a doctrine of general revelation, such as Psalm 19; Romans 1, *etc.*, tell us that creation reveals the nature of God. We may argue that the creation reveals the glory and power of its creator. We have no warrant for saying that it 'reveals' scientific theories.

Secondly Romans 1 is adamant that sinful man suppresses and distorts the revelation of the creation. Any view of the creation that commands a consensus amongst unbelievers must be suspect. The appeal to certain scientific theories as though they are to be treated as revelation is completely invalidated by the biblical teaching on general revelation.

Finally, even if one were to grant that the creation does clearly reveal the manner in which God created the heavens and the earth, we would have to maintain the distinction between what the creation reveals and what people say it reveals. This is equivalent to the distinction between infallible Scripture and fallible later theologies. Thus we would have to decide whether evolution *etc.* was actually what was revealed by creation. Discussion of this question lies beyond the realm of this paper but a few remarks may be made.

In order to conclude that a scientific theory is a correct interpretation of general revelation one must be certain that the method by which it was established was not in any way contrary to biblical teaching. We certainly cannot say this for a science which systematically excludes any supernatural factors. There is no logical alternative to evolution once the intervention of God has been excluded.<sup>3</sup> Furthermore even amongst those who metaphysically accept evolution there is no certainty that it has been proven.<sup>4</sup>

### ***'The thought forms of the day'***

Another of the attempts to solve the problem is that which claims that God expressed himself in the thought-forms of the day.<sup>5</sup> It would therefore be wrong to attempt to make these categories authoritative for our scientifically sophisticated age. The same reservation is valid here as previously. This assertion about the way in which God revealed the history of creation must itself be justified by Scripture.

Parenthetically it should be noted that this argument is formally identical with that used by Bultmann in his appeal for the demythologization of the resurrection narratives. He similarly argues that the resurrection narratives are expressed in terms of concepts held in that day which cannot be taken literally today. Here evangelicals typically maintain a great inconsistency, being ready to accept a form-critical method when it applies to the OT but not to the NT.<sup>6</sup>

To return to the main point, the argument being considered has a number of serious weaknesses. In order to apply it consistently one must first make some sort of a distinction between the cosmology implied in the terms used and the theological truth conveyed by the use of those terms. That is to say, unless one wants to remove the whole of Genesis 1-11 from the Bible, one argues that theological truths can be separated from the views of the physical universe implied. Such a distinction is just a variant on the Kantian noumena/phenomena distinction discussed above.

It would greatly help the discussion if this supposed use of concepts common to the era was more carefully specified and defined. One would like more than the bare assertion that the Bible employed the common concepts of the day. For the argument to be valid this would

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<sup>3</sup> Lest this strike the reader as fundamentalist rhetoric I would draw attention to the very important symposium, *Mathematical Challenges to the Neo-Darwinian Interpretation of Evolution*, ed. P. S. Moorhead and M. M. Kaplan (Philadelphia: Wistar Institute Press, 1967). On page 79 C. H. Waddington answers M. P. Schutzenberger's argument that evolution according to Neo-Darwinian principles is statistically impossible by arguing that it must be possible because the only alternative would be special creation.

<sup>4</sup> As well as the symposium referred to in the preceding note see G. A. Kerkut, *Implications of Evolution* (Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1960).

<sup>5</sup> E.g. J. A. Thompson, 'Genesis 1-3. Science? History? Theology?' *Theologian* 3/3, p. 16.

<sup>6</sup> This is far from being a new situation. Many techniques of literary and form criticism were used first in the OT field and later created much greater opposition when consistently applied in the NT. Gunkel himself was moved to the OT field from NT when it was realized that his methodology could be applied there and incur less opposition.

have to be carefully established. Once again this lies outside the main subject of the paper but a few remarks are necessary. One must first reckon with the fact that certain ideas or stories may be shared by the Bible and surrounding cultures because they are both based on a historical event. For example it would be rather ridiculous to argue that God chose to convey certain theological truths in terms of the flood concepts already possessed by the Mesopotamians. Obviously both Bible and Sumerian traditions mention a flood because there was a flood.

As in the case of evolutionary theory there is a problem created by the fact that much work in the

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ancient Near Eastern field specifically excludes God's activity. Hence the ideology and concepts of Israel must be considered as derived from its neighbours. As long as this view is prevalent the uniqueness of biblical thought is depreciated and denied. A more mundane problem is the fact that when the discipline was younger it was natural to use the known to illuminate the unknown. Problems were solved by the use of biblical analogies and the impression thus created of a greater degree of common ground than was warranted.<sup>7</sup> More investigation has a tendency to remove this false overlap.<sup>8</sup>

If supernatural intervention in the history of Israel is rejected, the most plausible explanation for the religion of Israel derives it by a process of ideological evolution from Israel's neighbours. It follows then that the concepts of Israelite thought must be those common at the time. However, if we do not make this assumption, and Scripture will not allow its to make it, then we must carefully investigate the thought of the ancient Near East in order to see if the same concepts are used as in the biblical text. Even this search is fraught with problems of subjectivity. Some version or other of the flood story was known in Mesopotamia. There was also a memory of the fact that at one time man had a common language though to my knowledge the confusion of tongues was not connected with the tower of Babel. One resemblance which is often referred to is that between the creation of the heaven and the earth in Genesis and the splitting of Tiamat to form the heaven and the earth in the Mesopotamian *Enuma Elish* legend.<sup>9</sup> The tree often depicted on cylinder seals has been connected with the tree of life.<sup>10</sup>

These last two examples raise another set of problems. When it is said that God employed symbols common in that day is it meant that both the symbol and what is symbolized were already known or that only the symbol was known with a completely different connotation? The distinction is an important one. For this argument to be convincing the former must be the case. Otherwise one is saying that God gave the symbol a completely new meaning. And

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<sup>7</sup> To use a trivial example, Philadelphia University Museum used to caption the well-known offering-stand from Early-Dynastic Ur which shows a billy-goat standing with its forelegs on the branches of a tree. (H. Frankfort, *The Art and Architecture of the Ancient Orient* [Harmondsworth: Pelican, 1954], p. 31 and pl. 28) as the 'ram caught in a thicket'. Saner minds seem to have prevailed and this caption has been removed.

<sup>8</sup> Similarly the tendency of research is often to emphasize the discontinuity rather than the relatedness of animal groups (Kerkut, *op. cit.*, p. 149).

<sup>9</sup> See J. B. Pritchard (ed.), *Ancient Near Eastern Texts* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1955), p. 67 for translation of this text.

<sup>10</sup> For discussion see H. Frankfort, *Cylinder Seals* (London: Macmillan, 1939), pp. 205ff. He argues that on Assyrian seals it is a symbol of the god Assur. It is hard to see any connection between this symbol and the trees of Eden.

if he did that we are no longer dealing with symbols common at the time, but with new symbols. Then the necessity of interpreting them against the Near Eastern cultural background is removed. Whether there is any ultimate relationship" between biblical and Babylonian accounts as we now have them they belong to different ideological worlds. The symbols are not the same because the ideology is different. The goddess Tiamat defeated in a war by the god Marduk, if she may be called a 'symbol'; must be seen as a symbol within the context of Babylonian polytheism whereas the creation of heaven and earth belongs within the context of biblical thought. It is meaningless to say that God used the same symbol but changed its meaning. It is then no longer the same symbol.<sup>11</sup>

Furthermore there are important elements in the early chapters of Genesis with no real counterpart in contemporary thought. Of course it is quite possible that such a counterpart existed and has been lost. However, the onus of the proof lies on those who so confidently affirm that Genesis employs the common symbols of the day. There is no real counterpart to the fall into sin in contemporary literature.<sup>12</sup>

### **'Naive cosmology'**

Sometimes it seems that those who claim that the Bible used the symbols of its day are merely trying to say that it used a naive as opposed to a scientific cosmology, or, to put it more popularly, it did not bother to correct the prevalent three-storey cosmology. If we assume for the sake of the argument that this is the case, then it should be clearly recognized that all we have established is that scientific dogma should not be made out of biblical cosmology. The argument has no relevance to other parts of the account like the creation of animals,

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man, *etc.* Unfortunately this argument is generally used without this careful delimitation. Generally it is argued that the fact that one element shows the use of non-scientific concepts proves that the whole uses naive ideas whose details may not be pressed.

Yet once more the validity of the basic premise must be questioned. Was there ever a pure 'three-storey universe' idea in antiquity? For the pagan contemporaries of the Bible writers, cosmology was theology. The heavens expressed and were controlled by the various divinities. The sort of abstract spacial/mechanical interest involved in the idea of a three-storey universe is a product of the demythologization of Greek rationalism and Euclidian spacial concepts. One should not try to project a late idea back into biblical times in order to explain the Bible. In its rejection of polytheism biblical cosmology is of necessity radically different to its surroundings. It is *not* popular cosmology.

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<sup>11</sup> It is possible that the Mesopotamian parallels are the results of distortions of the original creation narrative to fit a polytheistic system. If that is the case they would then belong to the same category as the flood account. The argument is often used that the Mesopotamian accounts must be the originals because the Mesopotamian versions are older than the biblical texts (E. A. Speiser, *Genesis* [Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1964], p. 10). That is by no means certain. The text which is generally used as the supposed original on which Genesis 1 is based is the "Babylonian Creation Account", also referred to as *Enuma Elish*. The consensus is now to date it in the late second millennium BC. (W.G. Lambert, "The Reign of Nebuchadnezzar 1: A Turning Point in the History of Ancient Mesopotamian Religion" in *The Seed of Wisdom, Essays in Honour of T.J. Meek*, Toronto, Toronto U, 1964, pp.3-13; W. Sommerfeld, *Der Aufstieg Marduks*, Kevelaer, Butzon, and Bercker, 1982 (=AOAT 213), pp.174ff.) If, as the Bible says, Moses wrote the Pentateuch, Genesis 1 may be older.

<sup>12</sup> It is significant that Speiser who is convinced that the biblical story was derived from Mesopotamian prototypes (*ibid.*, p. lv) cannot find a better parallel than the 'Civilization' of Enkidu by a prostitute (*ibid.*, pp. 26f, For translation of this supposed parallel see Pritchard, *op. cit.*, p. 75).

Secondly, what is so wrong about a 'naive cosmology'? It is probably as close to the ultimate truth as modern cosmology. If we had not deified modern science we would not be embarrassed by those points in which biblical thinking diverges from prevailing modern ideas. Certainly biblical cosmology fits into a different structure of thought from modern cosmology, but it is the validity of that very structure of thought that is at issue. We tend to assume that the assumptions underlying modern physics are unquestionable. If we assume the validity of the structure of physics from any period with its philosophical presuppositions and concomitants<sup>13</sup> we run the risk of accepting a structure which, because of its ultimate origin in a total humanistic philosophy, must clash with a biblical world view. What has generally happened is that the structure and method of modern science has been accepted as truth. When the conflict between this and a biblical view has been appreciated, an attempt has been made to give the biblical view a validity in some sort of restricted religious sphere. The basic question is whether our interpretation of the Bible is to be determined by the Bible itself or by some other authority. Once science has been set up as an autonomous authority it inevitably tends to determine the way in which we interpret the Bible. From the point of view of this discussion the outside authority may be Newton or Hoyle just as well as Darwin or Kant. The issue involved is still the same.

Somewhere in this sort of discussion poor Galileo is always dragged in. Yet if we want to learn from history we should at least begin with good history. There is nothing particularly Christian about Aristotelian cosmology. In fact there are points at which it cannot be reconciled with the Bible. How did the church find itself in the position of defending Aristotelian cosmology against the new Copernican cosmology? It found itself in that position because it accepted the argument of Aquinas that the biblical texts which contradicted Aristotle should not be pressed as the Bible was not written in technical philosophical language. Moses spoke the language of his day. This is not to say that the church should have accepted readily the new astronomy. In its neo-Pythagorean mysticism<sup>14</sup> it was no more biblical than Aristotle was. Those who want to say that the Bible is written in the popular language of its day and should not be pressed where it differs from modern philosophical-scientific structures cannot claim to have learnt from the Galileo affair. They are merely repeating the arguments that helped to put the church in that situation.

## 2. INTERPRETING SCRIPTURE BY SCRIPTURE

The point to be made in connection with the whole preceding discussion is that the positions discussed tend to introduce a rule for the exegesis of Scripture which is not drawn from Scripture itself. If this is allowed then Scripture is no longer its own interpreter.

Is there any explicit teaching within Scripture itself that its details are not to be pressed in matters of the physical creation? I know of no such teaching and in the whole discussion of this issue I have seen no attempt at specific appeal to the teaching of Scripture. When reference is made to the original creation, the creation narrative is treated as fact without any reservations. Peter's argument in 2 Peter 3: 5-7 does not shrink from reliance upon some of the details of the Genesis narrative. Other examples of biblical references back to Genesis (e.g., Ex. 20: 11; Mt. 19: 4; Rom. 5: 12-19; 1 Tim. 2:13,14), to be considered in more detail below, show a similar reference to specific details. Scripture itself gives no warrant for the

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<sup>13</sup> For discussion of the philosophical presuppositions of physics, old and new, see M. Capek, *The Philosophical Impact of Contemporary Physics* (Princeton: Van Nostrand, 1961).

<sup>14</sup> T. S. Kuhn, *The Copernican Revolution* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1957).

oft-repeated claim that the details cannot be pressed and is not embarrassed to refer to specific details such as creation in seven days (Ex. 20: 11) and creation of woman from the man (1 Tim. 2: 13, 14).

This should in itself be enough to dismiss the frequent statement that we may not press the details of the account. Yet, as argued above, the position

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being considered often rests upon a basis of Kantian philosophy. Is this philosophy itself sanctioned by Scripture? It is not, since there is no clear distinction made by the Bible between statements concerning the physical creation and theological statements. One influences and determines the other. Note that in the biblical references given above, the form which the original creation took is made the basis of theological and/or ethical teaching. The separation between physical creation and theology is one that has to be imposed upon the text by us. It is not naturally there in the Bible.

### ***The literary character of Genesis 1***

It seems a more serious attempt at exegesis when appeal is made to the literary nature of Genesis 1.<sup>15</sup> Even here care is needed that an outside standard be not imposed. One cannot simply define Genesis 1 as poetry by using a standard of poetry drawn from outside the Scripture, without assuming the very point at issue. Even if Genesis 1 were poetry, we would still be entitled to enquire what truth it conveys. Our answer to that question would have to be framed in terms of the rest of Scripture. If we take the passages referred to above we obtain enough to place us in conflict with modern evolutionary approaches. Thus the claim that Genesis 1 is poetic does not resolve the problem.

Furthermore, by what criteria do we call Genesis 1 poetic? The parallelism of days 1-3 to 4-6 is often cited. This however is merely parallelism of ideas and is not the same parallelism that makes up Hebrew poetry. Hebrew poetry consists of a series of couplets or triplets exhibiting complementary, climactic or antithetic-parallelism *e.g.* in Psalm 5: 1, 'Give ear to my words, O Lord', is complemented and paralleled by 'Consider my meditation'. This is clearly different from the fact that on days 1-3 God creates the environment and on days 4-6 the creatures who are to live and rule in the respective environments. One is a parallel of ideas in successive stichoi, the other a parallel of ideas which may be several verses apart.

Nevertheless it may be argued that the very fact that Genesis 1 exhibits such a structure proves that it is not to be taken literally. Surely, to state this argument is to refute it. Short of some sort of metaphysical presupposition that regards history as totally random and all order in historiography as being a result of arbitrary human imposition, I cannot see how one would ever prove such a proposition. The attempt to make a case by analogy from the book of Revelation is quite beside the point. If we took elements of Revelation as symbolical without explicit biblical warrant then we would be guilty of imposing an outside standard upon the Scripture. Revelation itself tells us that we are meant to see symbolism in its pictures: 'the great city, which is allegorically called Sodom and Egypt, where their Lord was crucified' (11: 8); 'And a great portent appeared in heaven' (12: 1); 'and on her forehead was written a name of mystery, 'Babylon the Great... I will tell you the mystery of the woman... This calls for a mind with wisdom. The seven heads are seven mountains... and they are also seven

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<sup>15</sup> Thompson, *op. cit.*, pp. 17ff.

kings.... The waters that you saw, where the harlot is seated, are peoples and multitudes.... And the woman that you saw is the great city which has dominion over the kings of the earth' (17: 5-18). It is the lack of a similar interpretation of the 'symbolism' of Genesis which so sharply distinguishes Genesis and Revelation.

### ***Structured history***

Even though there is no logical reason why the presence of a structure should prove that a passage is not to be taken literally, this idea seems to have great emotive appeal. The whole question of structured history needs to be examined more closely. The title of this paper limits discussion to Genesis 1-11. This is because among evangelicals anyway there is a willingness to accept the historicity of the patriarchal narratives. However, the patriarchal narratives are structured history in the same way as the earlier chapters of Genesis. They fit within a framework created by the heading 'These are the generations of...' (2: 4; 5: 1; 6: 9; 10: 1; 11: 10; 11:27; 25:12, 19, *etc.*). There are clear instances of parallel structure. Thus the experiences of Isaac parallel those of Abraham. Both have barren wives (15: 2; 16:1; 25: 21). Both lie concerning their wives (20: 2; 26: 7). Both face famine in the promised land (12: 10; 26:1). Both make a covenant with the Philistines (21: 22-34; 26: 26-33). If parallelism of structure proves that a passage is not historical then the patriarchal narratives are not historical. This of course is the conclusion of many liberal exegetes, but evangelicals once more maintain an inconsistency, being willing to apply a higher-critical principle in one area of Scripture but not in another.

If one looks carefully at these structured histories one sees that the structure is theological. Abraham and Isaac both face barrenness and famine because they both experience the trial of faith in being forced to believe the promise of God contrary to the physical situation (Rom. 4: 17,18; Heb. 11: 8-

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12).<sup>16</sup> The structure that underlies the parallelism of Genesis 1 is that of covenant vassal and suzerain. On days 1-3 the environment or vassal was created and on days 4-6 the appropriate creature or suzerain to live and rule in that environment. This notion of covenant head and vassal underlies also the story of the fall in that on the fall of the suzerain the vassal is placed in rebellion against its lord (3:17-19). Further the idea of covenant structures the whole of history into old and new covenant each under their respective heads (Rom. 5:12-21; 1 Cor. 15: 45-49). For the historian who proceeds on antitheistic assumptions such a theological history must be rejected. He must assign all such histories to the category of theological subjectivism. A theologically structured history presupposes a God who actively shapes history so that it conforms to his plan. A liberal exegete who denies the existence of such a God must dismiss as true history all biblical accounts which see theological patterns in history. The evangelical has no basis for such an *a priori* dismissal of structured history. The fact that Genesis 1 displays a structure in no way prejudices its claim to historicity.

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<sup>16</sup> The attempt to explain these parallel incidents in terms of the documentary hypothesis is shown to be ridiculous if an attempt is made to assign each parallel to a different source in every case in which a parallel exists. The cases of both Abraham and Isaac lying concerning their wives is often used as proof of the documentary hypothesis. However, inconsistently, the theory attributes both barrenness accounts and both famine accounts to J. The inconsistencies become more evident if the parallels in the life of Jacob are also considered. Basically the documentary hypothesis is able to make a plausible case by ignoring most of the incidents of 'duplicate' narratives. When all are taken into account then it is clear that the 'duplicate' narratives and the other 'criteria' for dividing documents come into conflict.

### ***Scriptural interpretations of the Genesis account***

So far the views discussed have consisted of statements about Scripture which were not themselves based on Scripture. An *a priori* statement about the Bible cannot claim biblical authority. Discussion of this area has been obscured by the number of these statements and there is a need to return to interpreting Scripture by Scripture and not by hypothesis. There are a number of passages which reflect upon the original creation. Some have been referred to in other connections above.

Exodus 20: 8-11 is significant in that it gives us a clear answer to the debated question about whether the 'days' of Genesis are to be taken literally. The commandment loses completely its cogency if they are not taken literally.<sup>17</sup>

This passage is also important in giving a proper direction to our thought. It is often said that the creation is described in seven days because this is the pattern of labour to which the Hebrews were accustomed. The text however says the very reverse. The Hebrews are to become accustomed to a seven-day week because that is the pattern that has been set by God. Rather than God being made to conform to an already established human pattern, man must conform to the pattern that has been set by God. The point is an important one as it is crucial to the distinction between true and false religion. The oft-repeated claim that human thought and custom has created the categories through which, of necessity, all God's activity must be viewed is a denial of the spirit of biblical religion. It gives to man the priority which rightly belongs to God.

Psalms 104 deserves more consideration in this question than it usually receives. The psalm follows in a general fashion the order of the creation days. The one point that is of particular interest is that the psalmist has integrated the account of Genesis 1 with that of the creation of springs in Genesis 2: 4-6. The reference to springs falls where one would logically expect it between the account of the creation of dry land (Ps. 104: 6-9) and that of vegetation (Ps. 104: 14-17). The problems of relating the accounts of Genesis 1 and 2 is outside the scope of this paper but any attempt must begin with Psalm 104. Unfortunately some evangelicals have accepted too readily the assertion of the documentary hypothesis that they are independent accounts of creation. The psalmist knew better.

A number of passages which refer to the original creation of man and woman and their relationship may be considered together (Mt. 19: 4; 1 Cor. 11: 8, 9; 1 Tim. 2: 13, 14). Note that the account is taken literally and made the basis of teaching on the relation of man and woman. Even if in only this point we take issue with evolutionary theory we find ourselves in complete antithesis to naturalistic

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<sup>17</sup> John Murray (in *Principles of Conduct* [London: IVP; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1957], p. 30) claims that Gn. 2: 2 refers to 'the seventh day in the sphere of God's action, not the seventh day in our weekly cycle' (emphasis his). Consideration of this question would involve a lengthy treatment of the meaning of God's seventh-day rest. The frequent affirmation that the seventh day of Gn. 2: 2 is still continuing needs to be proven. Murray unfortunately omits such proof. Briefly it may be argued that the text gives no indication of such a sphere distinction. The text is not concerned with God as he is in himself but with God's activity in a temporally conditioned creation. Even the seventh day refers not to God in himself but to God in relation to his creation. At this point I can agree with Murray (*ibid.*, p. 31): 'God's rest is the rest of delight in the work of creation accomplished, "And God saw all that which he made, and behold, it was very good" (Gn. 1: 31). This is expressly alluded to in Exodus 31: 17 in connection with God's sabbath rest, "On the seventh day he rested and refreshed himself" and means surely the rest of satisfaction and delight in the completed work of creation.'

evolution. If on the authority of Scripture we hold to the biblical account of the creation of man and woman then we can give up all hope of a harmony between the Bible and 'science'. The proper subject of this paper is the hermeneutical problem and these passages are adduced to show that the rest of Scripture sees the early chapters of Genesis as literal history. It may be objected as a last resort that only those details of the account mentioned as literal by the rest of Scripture may be taken literally. Even if this point be granted there is still enough contained in just these few verses to reopen the battle with evolutionary theory. However, the argument that only those passages in Genesis 1-11 referred to elsewhere as literal accounts are to be taken as such may be summarily dismissed. The early chapters of the Bible are clearly a unity and whatever hermeneutical method is valid for part is valid for all. This fact has been realized by those who have sought by various arguments to find evidence of 'poetry' in one part and to extend it to all. Yet all these attempts in so far as they were not attempts to see how the rest of Scripture treated the chapters in question must be condemned as methodologically faulty. Scripture is its own interpreter.

Against this one might argue that even though the NT treats Genesis 1-11 as literal, this should not be taken as proving that it is a literal description. One may argue that the NT writers were accommodating themselves to the beliefs of the time or that these passages are referred to only as illustrations and that their literalness is not implied by the NT usage. The first alternative must be rejected as involving a denigration of Christ and his apostles. The accommodation argument when used as a way of avoiding the implications of Christ's use of the OT for the doctrine of Scripture has been rightly rejected by evangelicals.<sup>18</sup> It is inconsistent to attempt to revive it to avoid the implications of NT teaching on another subject. Furthermore the fundamental objection against a rule of exegesis drawn from outside Scripture applies here also. If the accommodation idea is to be allowed in the discussion then it must first be demonstrated that it is itself taught by Scripture.

The second alternative will not bear examination. Clearly in 1 Corinthians 11: 8, 9 and 1 Timothy 2: 13, 14 the argument of Paul would collapse if the details of the account to which he refers did not happen as recorded. It is foolish to suggest that his point would still be valid even if woman was not created after and from the man and even if Eve was not beguiled into sin. Similarly Peter's point is without cogency if the world was not destroyed by the flood (2 Pet. 3: 5, 6).

### **3. CONCLUSION**

The thrust of this paper has been to direct discussion away from theoretical pre-exegetical arguments over the interpretation of Genesis and to concentrate on the way the rest of Scripture interprets it. We meet simple literalism in the scriptural exegesis of Genesis. Certainly not every detail of the chapters in question is referred to elsewhere but when they are literalism prevails.

If this be the case why has so much discussion been concentrated on arguments which are not only inconclusive but also diminish the right of Scripture to be its own interpreter? I suspect that the real debate is not hermeneutical at all. If it were then it would have been decided long ago by a comparison of Scripture with Scripture. The real problem is that we as Christians have in a double sense lost our historical perspective. We have forgotten that the church has

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<sup>18</sup> J. I. Packer, *'Fundamentalism' and the Word of God* (London: IVP, 1958), pp. 59-61.

always been under pressure to allegorize Genesis so that it may conform with Plotinus or Aristotle or some other human philosophy. We have treated the problem as though it were a modern one, as though we alone have had to face the onerous task of holding to a view of cosmic and human origins which is out of sympathy with the philosophical premises of our culture. The second sense in which we have lost our historical perspective is that we have forgotten that until our Lord returns we face strife and conflict in this world. We have sought to avoid that conflict in the intellectual realms. We have accepted the claim of humanistic thought that its scholarship is religiously neutral when the Bible teaches us that no man is religiously neutral. Man either seeks to suppress the truth in unrighteousness or to live all his life to the glory of God. In that total warfare scholarship is no mutually declared truce.

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# Arguing about origins

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Dr Weeks argues that on a certain hermeneutical approach to Scripture it must be concluded that Genesis 1–11 is to be understood literally. It seems to me, however, that a lot more needs doing before this general thesis ought to convince. I want to try and show the sort of thing that needs to be done by setting out as clearly as I can some of the options that are open to the would-be interpreter of Genesis. I shall not attempt to argue either that a position such as Dr Weeks' must fail, or that it may succeed, though in the final section I shall comment on certain aspects of Dr Weeks' paper that seem to me to be definitely unsatisfactory.

## 1. The Christian's twin commitment

The Christian typically has a basic commitment both to the general reliability of his reason and his senses, and to the trustworthiness of the Scriptures. Neither of these commitments depends logically upon the other in the sense that neither of them entails the other. Commitment to the trustworthiness of the Scriptures does not entail that one's senses are generally reliable, though it does entail that they are at least sometimes reliable, namely on those occasions when they have to do with the understanding of the Scriptures, for it would be incoherent to suppose that one could regard the Scriptures as trustworthy while no-one knew what they meant. On the other hand commitment to the trustworthiness of one's senses does not entail commitment to the trustworthiness of the Scriptures, as post-Enlightenment culture has shown. Of course it may be that no-one would commit himself to the reliability of his reason and senses unless some of the things stated in Scripture are true, but that is a rather different matter.

Further, it is hard to see how these commitments to the reliability of one's senses and reason, and to Scripture, could be rationally justified. They are basic commitments. Though it is perfectly possible *not* to commit oneself to the basic reliability of one's senses or reason, and instead to commit oneself to

the latest irrationalist fad, it is hard to see how anyone who did commit himself to the reliability of his reason and senses could justify that commitment rationally, either to himself, or to others, since presumably any argument used to justify the commitment, or evidence adduced, would itself presuppose the commitment that it was aiming to justify. Similarly with the Scriptures, at least if they are regarded as part of a Christian's basic commitment (and not just typical of a Christian, or desirable, or even essential, for a person's being a Christian). As is notorious, any attempt to prove the rationality of a commitment to the Scriptures is either going to fail—history is littered with such attempts—or to be question-begging, which is to fail in another way. Someone might say that he believes Scripture because of what Jesus teaches. But we know what Jesus teaches only from Scripture, and hence the reliability of what Jesus teaches presupposes the basic reliability of Scripture. But perhaps we can treat Jesus, for these purposes, as purely a 'historical figure'. But which 'Jesus of history'? Whose canons of historical enquiry are we to accept, and why? And are the probabilities of history—even if the claims about Jesus, viewed merely historically, can be shown to be more probable than not—going to be sufficient for the certainties of faith?

## 2. Options in the approach to early Genesis

So the Christian has, typically, this twin commitment. But what if there is conflict, or apparent conflict, between the deliverances of Scripture and the deliverances of the senses and the reason? What, that is, if there is the following situation?

- (1) Scripture is reliable
- (2) Scripture teaches  $p$
- (3) The senses and reason are reliable
- (4) The senses and reason teach  $q$
- (5) It is not possible that both  $p$  and  $q$  are true.

It will be worth considering some of the various possibilities open to anyone caught in this unfortunate position.

As a first alternative, someone in this position could opt for denying (1), allowing that Scripture taught a certain proposition but that that proposi-

tion is not true. A flat-earthier who believed that the Bible taught that the earth was round would be in that position so long as he was unprepared to give up his flat-earth views.

As a second alternative, instead of denying (1), (2) could be denied. (2) can be taken in a wider or a narrower sense. It might be held that whatever is learnt from the Bible is taught by the Bible. This would be an unacceptable view, I think. For instance someone could learn Hebrew and Greek from the Bible, but it would be unrealistic to suppose that the Bible teaches Hebrew and Greek. In taking (2) in the narrower sense one has to make reference to the intentions of the writer of the document. And in denying that the Bible intends to teach *p* one is presumably committed either to saying that it is not clear what the Bible intends to teach at this point, or to providing an alternative account, another proposition or set of propositions as the meaning of the sentences being considered. The first alternative is not silly. As Augustine put it, 'Rather had I answer "I know not" what I know not, than so answer as to raise a laugh at him who asketh deep things, and gain praise as one who answereth false things.'

But suppose an alternative meaning is offered. What sorts of issues are involved in this? Let us now more particularly think of early Genesis.<sup>1</sup> Suppose that someone says that early Genesis ought not to be interpreted literally, *i.e.* as journalism or history, but that it has some other meaning. Let us glance briefly at three.

(a) It might be thought that early Genesis is a scientific theory, a divinely sanctioned scientific theory about galactic and human origins. Some of the questions would then be: Does early Genesis have the form of a scientific explanation? Does it cite certain laws, for example? Is there one scientific explanation here, or many? Does it matter that the proper names of certain individuals, names such as Adam, Eve and Seth, appear in these explanations? The paradigm case of a scientific explanation is one that is purely naturalistic, that makes essential reference to naturally occurring laws and initial conditions. But in early Genesis the Lord is mentioned. Does that matter?

(b) Another alternative is to say that early Genesis is giving a timeless—in the sense of 'timelessly appealing'—pictorial account of some meta-

physical state of affairs, the creation of the universe by God. In this connection it seems to me to be worth stressing that when we are asking questions about the origin of the universe, and of God's relationship to the universe, we are in fact asking *metaphysical* questions. It often seems to me that the beginning of the universe is treated as the deists used to treat it, as we would treat the beginning of some event in time, like the start of a football match, rather than as the origin of time (and space) as such, and all that time and space contain. In his profound meditations on the creation in his *Confessions* Augustine insists that the creation took place *nowhere*, and *at no time*. Nowhere:

Verily, neither in the heaven, nor in the earth, didst Thou make heaven and earth: nor in the air, or waters, seeing these also belong to the heaven and the earth; nor in the whole world didst Thou make the whole world; because there was no place where to make it, before it was made, that it might be.

And at no time:

For whence could innumerable ages pass by, which Thou madest not, Thou the Author and Creator of all ages? or what times should there be, which were not made by Thee? Seeing, then, Thou art the Creator of all times, if any time was before Thou madest heaven and earth, why say they that Thou didst forego working? For that very time didst Thou make, nor could times pass by, before Thou madest those times.<sup>2</sup>

So if there is what appears to be a narrative of the (metaphysical) origin of the universe, that narrative is *necessarily* going to be symbolic and conventional in character. This is one reason why it is hard to make sense of the exhortation to take all the language of early Genesis literally, if what early Genesis is about is metaphysics, and this is also one important respect in which certain attitudes to early Genesis *must* differ from Bultmann's programme of demythologizing.

If we take the view that early Genesis is a pictorial account of metaphysical origins our questions are not over. There follows the problem, which perhaps only the biblical theologian can answer, of why the symbolism takes the precise form that it does, and at what point early Genesis moves from a 'symbolism of metaphysical origins' to historical narrative.

<sup>2</sup> Both quotations are from the eleventh book of the *Confessions*.

<sup>1</sup> I shall use the phrase 'early Genesis' to cover Genesis 1-11. Whether and to what extent early Genesis teaches *both* metaphysical *and* scientific *and* historical truths is, of course, part of the problem.

(c) A further alternative is to say that early Genesis is theological in intent, not concerned to teach or portray certain scientific or metaphysical truths, but to indicate certain theological truths about cosmic origins. (This might, in effect, be an answer to the question in the last paragraph, in which case we would be treating early Genesis as both metaphysical and theological in character.) J. I. Packer takes this position in a recent book.

It was to show us the Creator rather than the creation, and to teach us knowledge of God rather than physical science, that Genesis 1 and 2, along with such celebrations of creation as Psalm 104 and Job 38–41, were written.<sup>3</sup>

Rather than criticize these chapters for not feeding our secular interest, we should take from them a needed rebuke of our perverse passion for knowing Nature without regard to what matters most; namely, knowing Nature's Creator.<sup>4</sup>

But then again, if this line is taken it is necessary to ask: if this is the correct approach to Genesis 1 and 2, what about Genesis 3? What about the theological use of Genesis 3 by Paul in Romans 5 and 1 Corinthians 15? And what about the relation of early Genesis to the covenantal history of Israel in the remainder of the Old Testament? Is early Genesis the 'framework' of that history?

So far we have looked briefly at some of the alternative ways of handling (2), in the face of a possible conflict between the findings of Scripture and the findings of reason and the senses. We have by no means looked at all of them, in particular we have entirely neglected detailed exegetical theories about the 'days' of Genesis 1 and the possibility of a 'gap' between Genesis 1:1 and 1:2.

But let us turn to the other side of the question. Given the conflict we have supposed, it is theoretically possible to ease it by reconsidering (3) and (4). How might this proceed?

Doubting the general reliability of sense or of reason is not going to be very wise, since this would have implications in all sorts of areas, though one might doubt the competence of sense and reason to investigate particular matters, such as human origins. This would amount to saying that any theory whatever about human origins is untrustworthy. But why should this be, if the theory in question is a geological or cosmological or anthropological theory which the evidence available does not falsify?

<sup>3</sup> *I want to be a Christian*, p. 33.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 32.

It might be more promising to question (4). Take a theory such as the theory of evolution of species by natural selection which to many (including Dr Weeks) seems to be logically incompatible with a non-frivolous interpretation of early Genesis, and even, in some cases, logically incompatible with theism in general. (Why this should be is a complete mystery; it suggests a confusion of evolution with evolutionism, the view that any naturalistic explanation of an evolutionary kind *ipso facto* rules out a theistic account.) But suppose that one held that early Genesis taught *p*, and that the theory of evolution by natural selection taught *q*, and suppose that one was more inclined to hold *p* than *q*, how could *q* be critically assessed? There are, once again, a number of alternative possibilities.

(a) One could argue that the theory of evolution is not a well-formed scientific theory because it is, say, unfalsifiable. Any evidence seems compatible with it. This raises two further questions: *Is* the theory of evolution unfalsifiable? And does any scientific theory, to be a scientific theory, have to be falsifiable?

(b) One could argue that the form of explanation adopted by the theory of evolution is wrong-headed, and so unacceptable as an explanation. Many philosophers have wanted to distinguish between two forms of explanation—in terms of efficient causes, and in terms of purposes or final causes. What the theory of evolution attempts to do is to account for ostensibly purposive, teleological processes, e.g. animal reproduction, by providing an account in terms of efficient causality, the processes of natural selection. It is thus necessary to ask: Are there these two forms of explanation? Is the Darwinian elimination of apparently teleological processes plausible?

(c) It is possible, thirdly, to raise questions about the probability or likelihood of the Darwinian account being the correct one on the evidence available, in the face of the apparently teleological nature of many natural processes. The onus is on the Darwinian here, and the evidence to which he might appeal—the existence of random variation, the elimination of species—needs to be weighed.

(d) One could make a distinction between the language of appearances and the language of scientific theory. The sun appears to set, but scientific accounts of the movement of the heavenly bodies suggest otherwise. It might be argued that *q*, though it apparently conflicts with *p*, does not really do so.

(e) One could argue, finally, along the lines hinted at earlier. To suppose that any scientific theory about origins conflicts with early Genesis is to confuse science with metaphysics. So *q* cannot conflict with *p* however much it might appear to do so.

Even if one or other of these lines of argument about *q* can be taken up and developed convincingly, in showing that *q* is false one has not shown, of course, that no scientific account is acceptable, and the possibility that some other account is the correct one has to be allowed. And if it is allowed that there is some correct scientific account of cosmic origins (if only we knew it), and one also holds that some non-scientific account of early Genesis is correct, then one must allow that it is possible in principle to display the complementarity of the two accounts.

### 3. Interpreting Scripture by Scripture

Above I have tried to set out some—only some—of the alternative lines of response that are possible given the dilemma of (1)—(5). In this respect arguing about early Genesis is like arguing about anything else of comparable complexity. The moves open to one are formally similar to those when findings from diverse sources conflict or appear to conflict. One of the reasons why Dr Weeks' argument is not convincing is that he fails to indicate how he would meet objections from these various quarters; to show what, precisely, he means by a literal account of early Genesis; to answer such basic questions as: 'If Genesis 1 is literally true is there also a scientific theory (unknown to us at present) which is true?' 'Is Genesis 1 literally true as cosmology or metaphysics?' 'What is the relationship between science and metaphysics?' But in this final section I want to comment briefly on what seems to me to be defects in what Dr Weeks *does* say.

Throughout his paper Weeks dubs the notion of complementary descriptions 'Kantian'. 'The distinction (*viz.* religious/scientific) looks suspiciously like Kant's noumena/phenomena distinction,' he says. I am afraid that it looks like nothing of the kind. Crucial to Kant's distinction between appearances and things-in-themselves is the thought that the only things of which the human mind can be sensible are appearances. The things-in-themselves, while regulative of human thought, are unknowable. Thus while the table before me appears shaped and coloured in a particular way the table as it is in itself never appears to me. However, I *need* to think of the table as a substan-

tial thing, in that sense is made of my various sensory awarenesses only by the thought that there is something that these appearances are appearances of.

What has this to do with the distinction between two levels of description? The contrast drawn by two complementary descriptions is not that between the known and the unknowable, but between levels of knowledge, levels determined by human interests and purposes (and perhaps divine interests and purposes as well), hierarchically ordered, and complementary because (i) neither rules out the other and (ii) the available data require both descriptions.

So the connection with Kantianism is pure fiction. However, if I have got the gist of Dr Weeks' paper, such an observation would be unlikely to move him because what he really fears is not Kantianism as such, or Darwinianism as such, but the importing into the exegesis of Scripture of principles of interpretation drawn from outside Scripture itself. According to Dr Weeks our principles must be 'determined by the Bible itself'. Insofar as this position represents a warning against the importing into Scripture of *a priori* patterns of interpretation, of saying, in advance of actually looking to see, what it is that Scripture must mean, then Dr Weeks' words are wise, and to be heeded, though (once again) they are not words of advice that concern only the interpretation of Scripture, but they concern the interpretation of any document, and indeed the pursuit of any rational activity whatever. It is folly, in advance of actual investigation, to say what must be the case.

But what are these principles that must be determined by the Bible itself? Dr Weeks himself makes the important distinction between infallible Scripture and fallible later theologies. Do we not also need to distinguish between the infallible Scripture and fallible later principles of interpretation? How can we best do this? Not, clearly, by pre-empting discussion by assuming that our (perhaps temporary and local) principles are *the* principles, but by adopting a method of working that will reduce the possibility of error to a minimum. And what is that method? The best suggestion that I have seen (in J. I. Packer's 'Hermeneutics and Biblical Authority', *Themelios* 1/1, Autumn 1975) is of a method that involves checking any allegedly biblical doctrine by Scripture itself. Secular findings may be the occasion for such re-thinking, and they may even show previous errors to be errors, without actually dictating the positive principles of interpretation. Such principles

must come from Scripture itself. There is, by this method, no infallible way of blinker-removing but it does hold out the best chance of minimizing error, which is what we want.

Let me try to show, briefly and finally (and tentatively), how such a methodological principle might work in the case of some of the biblical data referred to by Dr Weeks. He raises the question of whether there is any explicit teaching in Scripture itself that its details are not to be pressed in matters of the physical creation. He claims, by reference to such texts as 2 Peter 3: 5-7, Exodus 20: 11, Matthew 19:4 *etc.* that the creation narrative is treated by the biblical authors as fact without any reservations. But granted that the texts 'press' the details, the question is, how do they press them?

Does it follow that if one biblical writer quotes another biblical writer without gloss or interpretative comment that what the quoted writer wrote is being taken by the quoter to be literally true? Perhaps such a treatment shows that the words of the quoted writer are, in the mind of the quoter, *normative*, but that is quite a different matter. It is not a question of whether the details—as opposed to the 'general teaching'—of Scripture ought to be pressed, but a question of in what way the details ought to be pressed. It is this sort of question that must constantly—though not neurotically—be asked of any alleged biblical teaching, lest we get hung up on *a priori* (*i.e.* extra-biblical) theories of interpretation, either from the liberal left or from the fundamentalist right.

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