

OT passage. A similar but more advanced tool is the module “Comprehensive Bible Cross References.” However, these two options are based on compilations somebody has made of possible references, while the INFER search is a tool that enables you to do the primary research yourself, independently.

One area where I see potential for improvement is in aesthetics. It might be an issue of personal taste, but in my opinion, the interface for the Windows version is a little too technical and crowded in its appearance. The Mac version here seems somewhat more tidy and aesthetically pleasing. I would also have liked the possibility of removing some functions in the workspace that I do not use on a regular basis. For example, it’s possible to remove the toolbar with Ctrl+Alt+0, but are a number of other buttons I would have preferred to remove if I could. Further, OakTree has designed its own fonts. Even though I have used the interface on a daily basis for the last several months, I still find myself enlarging the font more than I would normally need to when using other Bible software, especially for the Hebrew characters. To be comfortable reading it, I’m up to size 27 font! In my opinion, the Hebrew font in Accordance simply does not look nice in smaller sizes.

Overall, Accordance® 10 for Windows provides superior speed in searches; has an intuitive syntax search; offers unique tools, like INFER and SEARCH BACK; and offers add-on modules that provide sources for one’s specific area of interest. Though there are the few aforementioned, minor issues, Accordance can be used by the specialist, pastor, and layperson to greatly enhance the study of the Bible.

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Osborn, Ronald E. *Death Before the Fall: Biblical Literalism and the Problem of Animal Suffering*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2014. 195pp. Paperback, \$25.00.

Ronald Osborn’s recent book, *Death Before the Fall*, consists of a larger part 1, “On Literalism,” and a shorter part 2, “On Animal Suffering.” This book has been described as “intelligently argued yet pastorally sensitive” (Celia Deane-Drummond), and “sophisticated” (John F. Haught) (1). The book is also recommended by John Walton in a brief foreword (7–8). Osborn aims to make the problem of animal suffering less troublesome by arguing against “biblical literalism” in order to allow for animal suffering and death before the fall of humanity into sin. In other words, his book is an articulation of his proposal that death before the fall is a partial solution for two real problems—animal suffering and biblical literalism.

Part 1 includes nine chapters that contrast what Osborn regards as a legitimate literal interpretation of the Bible (ch. 1) against an illegitimate wooden literalism in the interpretation of the Bible (ch. 2). He also critiques the illegitimate literalism that is sometimes present in the interpretation of the results of the scientific study of nature (ch. 3). For him, a legitimate literal interpretation can support the views of “theistic evolution” or “process creation” (37). In contrast, an illegitimate literalism is present in biblicism,

fundamentalism, creationism (39), and secular scientism (49–58). Osborn acknowledges that creationism can function as a “scientific” paradigm claiming to be supported by scientific data; but he argues that creationism appears to be a degenerating science rather than a progressive science (chapter 4). He also argues that creationism is a degenerating theological paradigm that presupposes an inadequate view of God (ch. 5) and an inadequate fundamentalist view of biblical interpretation (ch. 6). In addition, Osborn views creationism and scientism as two kinds of gnosticism (ch. 7) (95). After his multi-chapter description of the illegitimate literalism of some forms of creationism, Osborn proceeds to a discussion of what he regards as a more legitimate literal reading of Genesis proposed by Barth, Calvin, Augustine, and Maimonides (ch. 8). According to Osborn, this kind of literal reading can provide a way beyond the ineffective philosophical and methodological foundationalism of creationism and scientism toward a more effective post-foundationalism in our study of Scripture and nature (ch. 9).

Part 2 of Osborn’s book includes five chapters that address what he regards as the greatest theological problem relevant to the issue of a legitimate or illegitimate literal reading of Genesis (74). He proposes that there are three literalist dilemmas in the creationist approach to the problem of animal suffering (ch. 10). First, the stasis dilemma of “a deathless—and so ultimately *birthless*—creation” (129; cf. 128–31). Second, the deceiver God dilemma that refuses to accept what the facts of nature are demonstrating about the way God creates (131–34). Third, the divine curse dilemma that seeks to explain animal suffering as the result of God’s curse when only the serpent is explicitly described in Genesis as cursed by God (35, 134–39). Osborn regards C. S. Lewis’s “highly speculative” (140) cosmic conflict theodicy as more effective than creationism (ch. 11) because Lewis indicates that the fall of the angels took place before the creation of humanity causing predation and death before the existence and fall of humanity (143). However, Osborn rejects Lewis’s approach because it gives the fallen angels too much power over creation and it ignores the fact that animal ferocity is described as part of God’s creative process as described in the book of Job (ch. 12). Accepting animal suffering as part of God’s way of creating is regarded by Osborn as harmonious with the central Christian doctrine of Christ’s kenosis (self-emptying) so that he can experience suffering and death (ch. 13). Finally, animal suffering is viewed as being in harmony with the meaning of the Sabbath as a call for ecological concern for the wellbeing of the creation (ch. 14).

I have been greatly benefited by reading Osborn’s book. Like all good books, this one not only informs me but stimulates questions that challenge me to do further study. My questions can be categorized under six points: animal suffering, biblical literalism, creationism, scientism, Seventh-day Adventism, and future dialog.

First, to what extent is animal suffering really a problem if the “central riddle” of Osborn’s book is that the “deeply mysterious, untamed, dangerous” world is “beautiful and good” (13). Does the goodness of animal suffering not explain why “a just and loving God” would “require or permit such a world

to exist?” (14). Why then is there “a deep scandal in death and suffering in nature” (157)? In addition, if the problem of animal suffering is illuminated by God’s incarnation of the suffering creation in the crucified Christ, how is the problem illuminated by the resurrection and exaltation of Christ? Osborn proposes that “God creates as he redeems and redeems as he creates” (160); and that “when Christ cries ‘It is finished’ on Easter Friday the creation of the world is at last completed” (165). These statements point to the need for further reflection on how animal suffering is illuminated by salvation through the incarnate Christ. Does God have a plan for removing animal suffering? If so, what might this mean for our reflections on the origin and function of animal suffering in a creation that is beautiful and good? (See reviews of Osborn’s book by J. Richard Middleton, *Them* 39:3 (2014): 525–27 and Daryll Ward, Feb 4, 2014, [spectrummagazine.org](http://spectrummagazine.org)).

Second, how helpful is it to use the terminology of “literal” reading to describe the wrong way to read the Bible when Osborn regards his own views as supported by a “literal” reading (25–38)? Does he not, in essence, claim for himself what creationists also claim—to be “always and only declaring what the text self-evidently means” (79)? Osborn defends his critique of literalism by an appeal to what people usually mean by this term; and he points out the limitations of its conventional definition; but some readers might conclude (contrary to what Osborn actually states) that every literal reading of the Bible is irresponsible. Osborn has sought to avoid facilitating this misunderstanding; and I agree with him that “the greatest problem with strict literalism’s ‘plain’ reading approach to Genesis, however, is that it is not nearly plain or literal enough. [Some] Creationists have treated Genesis as a story that is all surface with no depth” (52). At the same time, questions can be raised about whether Osborn is engaging in a legitimate literal reading of the Bible when he proposes that “adjectives such as *evil* and *cursed*, . . . just do not ring true” with regard to the world (13). Could it be that “simple faith’ in God’s word” (16) can be compatible with responsible reading of the Bible that avoids being “highly literalistic” (17)? The importance of this issue is highlighted by Martin Luther’s statement that the literal sense is “the highest, best, strongest, in short the whole substance nature and foundation of the Holy Scripture” (*Luther’s Works*, ed. J. Pelikan and H. Lehman, [Saint Louis: Concordia, 1970], 39:137–224).

Third, do all creationists view the Bible as “an inerrant Answer Book” for scientific questions (85)? Do they all describe creation as being in stasis and deceptive, involving absolute dichotomy between animals and humanity? Are there not many creationists who, along with Osborn, regard creation as revelation from God, and recognize the kinship of animals and humanity through a shared Creator? In fact, many creationists agree with Osborn that “the Bible is not a scientific textbook” (Leonard Brand, “The Bible and Science,” [Silver Spring, MD: Institute for Christian Teaching, 2000]) and affirm that nature involves process (not stasis)—including some evolutionary processes. These creationists agree that “we have a great deal of evidence for evolutionary processes at work in nature, although the causal mechanisms

for this evolution and their reach are far less clear” (148). Like Osborn, they deny that the Bible “must now be validated or ‘proved’ through—irony of ironies—the tools of a thoroughly rationalistic, quantifying and materialistic science” (52). Significantly, again like Osborn, they seek harmony between their interpretations of the Bible and their interpretations of nature (39–40). Osborn’s book should not be used by the careless (contrary to his intentions, I presume) to create a “straw man” caricature of creationists or scientists (see Middleton).

Fourth, is science generally destructive of faith? Do all scientists defend a literalistic scientism? Osborn answers: No. At the same time, he realizes that many influential scientists do manifest a scientism that attacks faith. “Christians of all denominational backgrounds are wrestling with the great attrition rate of their young adults as they head off to colleges and universities where they will be exposed to a bewildering array of ideas that are often openly hostile to religious faith” (18). Osborn also states that “any nonliteralistic approach to Genesis and questions of origins must, however, respond to the obvious moral hazards posed by evolutionary theory” (19). His “critique of literalism” is a “prolegomena” to his response to “the theodicy dilemma of animal suffering and mortality in both literalistic [religious] and evolutionary [scientific] paradigms” (19) which are part of the complication of “a significant theological riddle” (20). He also appropriately warns against creationist and scientific “foundationalisms” (177) which are both religious in an unhealthy way. What is needed is an accurate theological and scientific interpretation of the problem of animal suffering. (See Rahel Schafer, “You, YHWH, Save Humans and Animals: God’s Response to the Vocalized Needs of Non-Human Animals as Portrayed in the Old Testament,” [PhD diss., Wheaton College, 2015]).

Fifth, is Adventism more prone to an illegitimate and legalistic literalism than other religious movements? While Osborn critiques the “biblical literalism” and “creationism” common in many Christian communities, he also describes his book as “an open letter” to his Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) faith community that he views as “troubled” and “in a state of increasing turmoil” resulting from “turning strict biblicism or literalism on Genesis into a dogmatic litmus test of ‘true’ Adventist identity” (18). He is rightly concerned about those who are being driven away from the Bible and religious belief because legalistic literalists seem to be “without any room for honest questions, openness to the weight of empirical evidence or new interpretations of the biblical narratives” (19). He is also concerned about “honest questions about faith and science being silenced and committed Christians being branded deviationists or ‘infidels’ for not holding fast to ‘scientific’ creationism as the seal of what it means to be part of God’s true ‘remnant’” (95). According to Osborn, this results in a “senseless loss of engaged minds,” which “are not the casualties of evolutionary science” but “a result of problematic philosophical reasoning, the exclusionary logic of fundamentalism and the incoherencies of wooden literalism itself” (19).

At the same time, though critical of aspects of their work, Osborn acknowledges that:

Not a few creationists, though, do have serious credentials as research scientists. We must listen very carefully to what these individuals have to say about the empirical data they have expert knowledge of. We must also—and even more importantly—listen to what they have to say about the kinds of theological beliefs that animate their scientific endeavors. . . . For example, . . . the Geo-Science Research Institute ([SDA,] creationist ‘think-tank’ in Loma Linda, California, that employs eight highly qualified research scientists) (69).

The fact that informed Adventist creationists are well able to face hard questions honestly is evident in the words of an Adventist scientist quoted by Osborn as follows.

In the refreshingly candid words of creationist and nuclear physicist Ben Clausen, “No comprehensive, short age model is even available to rival the long age model . . . . I do not find the [current scientific] evidence for a recent creation compelling. My primary reason for accepting the scriptural account is the part it plays in the Bible’s characterization of the Creator” (66).

Sixth, what is the way forward for informed dialog on death, the fall of humanity, biblical literalism, and animal suffering? Osborn complains about “deeply unhealthy” “toxic speech habits, blatant power maneuvers,” “misrepresentation and incrimination”; and about

how quickly some are prepared to write off people of sincere faith who are at different places in their intellectual and spiritual journeys, by how little pastoral sensitivity they show in introducing unsettling ideas to others, and by how often their sense of scientific certainty and mastery of technical knowledge assumes the character of its own ersatz religion (177).

In response, Osborn appeals that “greater civility is required of us all” (178). He humbly acknowledges:

I have tried my best in this book to vigorously challenge what I take to be damaging and myopic ideas about Scripture without maligning the characters of individual people who hold them. Still, I recognize that I have much to learn and unlearn in dialog with other Christians, including literalists, creationists, and fundamentalists if they desire to be in an authentic dialog with believers who have come to different conclusions than they have about the meaning of Genesis (178).

In spite of his efforts, there are others who question how successful Osborn is in his attempt at tactful communication. Craig M. Story comments that “Osborn discusses problems with a literalist interpretation of Genesis using rather forceful prose. In fact, the tone at times is too harsh, and will likely turn off the very readers he needs to reach with his argument (e.g. some creationists are described as ‘self-taught science dilettantes’)” (May 19, 2014, [biologos.org](http://biologos.org)). Similarly, Clifford Goldstein refers to Osborn’s book as containing “venting sessions rather than serious debate” (May 15, 2015, [spectrummagazine.org](http://spectrummagazine.org)). Clearly Osborn’s reviewers use strong language to express strong convictions, just as Osborn does.

It is evident to me that Osborn has opened a dialog that is important and fascinating. Those who have an interest in hermeneutics (principles of interpretation) in relation to science and theology should read this book. Whether or not you agree with specific details of Osborn's proposal, you will be informed and challenged by the very relevant issues he has presented.

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Peckham, John C. *The Love of God: A Canonical Model*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2015. 297 pp. Paperback, \$32.00.

In *The Love of God: A Canonical Model*, John C. Peckham compares two sharply opposed concepts of divine love and offers a constructive alternative to both. Central to what he labels the "transcendent-voluntarist model" is the notion of a radical distinction between God and world. God is entirely self-sufficient, and God's love for the world is purely voluntary. God does not need this world or any creaturely world. Moreover, God's relation to the world contributes nothing to God's experience. Nothing in God is conditioned by anything outside of God. In contrast, the "immanent-experientialist model" envisions God as both intimately and essentially related to the world. For "process panentheists," like Charles Hartshorne, God's very existence requires the existence of beings other than God, and God's experience includes God's relations to all non-divine reality.

According to Peckham, these views of divine love present us with an impasse. While they offer sharply different views of God, neither does justice to the biblical portrayal of God. As an alternative to both, Peckham offers a perspective on divine love derived directly from the "canonical data." According to "the foreconditional-reciprocal model," as he calls it, God's love for the world is "voluntary," but not "exclusively volitional" (90). That is to say, while the world exists solely as the result of God's decision to create, God is not responsible for everything that happens in the world, and God is genuinely affected by it. To spell this out, Peckham describes God's love as having five important aspects—volitional, evaluative, emotional, "foreconditional" (his novel expression), and reciprocal—and he devotes a chapter to each of them.

God's love for the world is volitional in the sense that creating a world was a choice God made rather than something God was required to do by nature. It is not exclusively volitional, however, because within God's general commitment to the world and care for it, God occasionally chooses to act in specific ways. Divine election, for example, expresses specific decisions involving particular people. And while it rests on God's loving choice, it also requires a human response. Love between God and the creatures presupposes freedom on both sides.

Other aspects of God's love clarify and amplify its volitional character. God's love is evaluative in the sense that God not only bestows value on the creatures, God receives value from them. "The joy of others is integral to God's own joy" (145). It also indicates that God's response to human behavior