2006

A Comparative Investigation of the Concept of Nature in the Writings of Henry M. Morris and Bernard L. Ramm

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A COMPARATIVE INVESTIGATION OF THE CONCEPT OF NATURE IN THE WRITINGS OF HENRY M. MORRIS AND BERNARD L. RAMM

A Dissertation
Presented in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Philosophy

by
Andrew M. Mutero
February 2006
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Andrew M. Mutero

APPROVAL BY THE COMMITTEE:

Faculty Adviser, John T. Baldwin
Professor of Theology

Miroslav M. Kiš
Professor of Ethics

Fernando L. Canale
Professor of Theology and Philosophy

Peter M. vanBemmelen
Professor of Theology, Emeritus

Ariel A. Roth
Retired Director, Geo-science Research Institute

Roy E. Gane
Director, Ph.D./Th.D. Program

Roy E. Gane
Dean, SDA Theological Seminary

John K. McVay

July 20, 2006
Date approved

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ABSTRACT

A COMPARATIVE INVESTIGATION OF THE CONCEPT OF NATURE IN THE WRITINGS OF HENRY M. MORRIS AND BERNARD L. RAMM

by

Andrew M. Mutero

Adviser: John T. Baldwin
Title: A COMPARATIVE INVESTIGATION OF THE CONCEPT OF NATURE IN THE WRITINGS OF HENRY M. MORRIS AND BERNARD L. RAMM

Name of researcher: Andrew M. Mutero

Name and degree of faculty adviser: John T. Baldwin, Ph.D.

Dated completed: February 2006

The study examines two major contrasting theological accounts of nature within the contemporary North American Evangelical community as articulated by Henry Morris and Bernard Ramm. In doing so, the dissertation analyzes nature considered diachronically in three epochs namely: (1) *Natura Originalis* (the origin of nature); (2) *Natura Continua* (the contemporary status of nature); and (3) *Natura Nova* (the future of nature).

The purpose of this research is to discover, describe, analyze, and compare the shape of the two contrasting concepts of nature articulated respectively by Morris, a strict concordist and a special creationist and Ramm, a broad concordist and a progressive
creationist as a first step in a systematic, theological, and comparative study of the contemporary North American evangelical understanding of nature.

The core of the dissertation is a critical comparison and evaluation of the three epochs of nature according to Morris and Ramm. Their different views on nature and hermeneutics are analyzed and evaluated, and strengths and weaknesses are highlighted.

The evangelical discussion of nature as represented by Morris and Ramm is framed synchronically and diachronically. In doing so, the study reaches four critical conclusions namely:

1. Whereas Ramm requires reinterpretation of Scripture when Scripture appears to make statements that counter current scientific beliefs regarding nature, the dissertation concludes that such a methodology may, however, result in giving unintended meaning to Scriptural statements about nature.

2. The synchronic and diachronic framing by the dissertation of the evangelical discussion of nature by Morris and Ramm is a useful way of illuminating their views of nature. For example, the close diachronic framing reveals that Morris’s claim that future nature mirrors original nature is not fully consistent due to the presence of hell in future nature.

3. The strict and broad concordists’ approaches to nature, as articulated by Morris and Ramm, are inadequate and insufficient for the task of developing a fully coherent evangelical concept of nature.

4. While Morris’s emphasis on a literal interpretation of Scripture is a positive development, Ramm’s call to evangelicals to be open to science and to develop a healthy attitude toward science is also commendable. However, both thinkers tend to appeal to...
the extremes of the evangelical spectrum. The dissertation suggests that there is a need for a more centrist approach to nature in evangelical discussions.

The dissertation ends by making some recommendations for further study.
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This dissertation compares the contrasting theological views of nature of two contemporary North American evangelicals, Henry M. Morris and Bernard L. Ramm. The chapter begins by defining the concept of nature and continues with a broad introduction of the problem, which includes an exploration of strict and broad concordism. The final section of this chapter presents the formal statement of the problem and the purpose of the dissertation, and the other elements of the work.

The Definition of Nature

The *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* defines nature as “the whole visible creation, especially the precious ecosystem of earth and humankind.”¹ *Webster’s Dictionary* defines nature as “the Universe and its phenomena.”² Ramm uses the word nature to describe “the universe,” “creation,” and “the material dimension of reality.”³


²*Webster’s Third New International Dictionary of the English Language, Unabridged* (Springfield, MA: Merriam-Webster, 1993), s.v. “nature.”

³Bernard Ramm, *The Christian View of Science and Scripture* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1954), 17. The dissertation exclusively quotes this first edition of Ramm’s book which has 368 pages. The nineteenth printing of this work (August 1974), has 256
this study, nature includes the whole visible universe including all living and material things.

Introduction to the Problem

Three Diachronic Epochs of Nature

As an introduction to the scope of the problem addressed in this dissertation, all of nature is encompassed in three diachronic epochs designated as: (1) *Natura Originalis* (original nature), (2) *Natura Continua* (contemporary nature), and (3) *Natura Nova* (future nature). These epochs form the basic structure for the comparative analysis of the views of Morris and Ramm on nature.

In a discussion entitled "Evolution or Creation? False Confrontations—Genuine Problems," Moltmann discusses these three epochs and wonders whether it is “possible to link the concept of evolution with the concept of creation?” He concludes that the difficulty for many evangelical Christians with evolutionary theory is the descent of man in relation to the Christian doctrine of Creation. The three epochs have come to be understood as the doctrines of Creation in the beginning (*Creatio Originalis*), continuous creation (*Creatio Continua*), and the new creation still to be consummated (*Creatio Nova*).

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2. Ibid., 190.

3. Ibid.
Moltmann indicates that evolution, unlike Creation, is “the continued building up of matter and systems of life. This means that the theory of evolution has its place where theology talks about continuous creation (Creatio Continua).”¹ He discusses the beginning of life as described in evolutionary theory and the doctrine of Creation.

In this dissertation, the term Natura Originalis is used to refer to the origin of nature in the context of the doctrine of Creation.

Commenting on the idea of Creatio Continua, John Polkinghorne, a colleague of Moltmann, points out that Barbour and Peacocke have discussed the idea that God could be present in the evolutionary process but not as its sole determinant. An evolving world is a Creation allowed by the Creator to “make itself,” with God as the source and guide of the fruitfulness.² They claim that “the idea of continuous creation reinforces the understanding that the divine role of creation is not tied to any particular instant but, on the contrary, it is an enduring relationship.”³ In this study, the term Natura Continua is used to refer to the present or contemporary state of nature rather than Creatio Continua which denotes a continuous creation or on-going creation (Theistic evolution).

Moltmann’s Creatio Nova refers to the new creation still to be consummated. In this dissertation the phrase Natura Nova is used, but is more inclusive and deals with the scientific and theological evaluation of the relationship between the concepts of nature

¹Ibid., 196.


³Ibid., 81.
and eschatology.

Scientists predict that the end of nature will come either as a decay or as a catastrophe, while theologians see the end as a passage to something more meaningful.\(^1\) William Stoeger gives a careful and detailed scientific account of catastrophic events that will be destructive to life on earth sometime in the future. He makes it clear that the universe itself will eventually end in cosmic futility. He further states that “if civilization and life on earth survive periodic impacts of large asteroids and comets, or other possible global catastrophes, they will certainly not survive the eventual catastrophic changes in the sun.”\(^2\) He concludes, “Just as surely as the sun has given us life and continues to do so, it will eventually ensure our demise—unless we succeed in colonizing other planets and sun systems.”\(^3\)

Three Contrasting Ways of Viewing Nature

While three ways to view nature are discussed in some detail in chapter 2, here a brief description of these views is presented as an introduction to the problem of this dissertation. What do contemporary evangelical Christian theologians make of these three diachronic epochs of the contemporary scientific description of nature? Three ways of


\(^2\)Stoeger, 20.

\(^3\)Ibid.
viewing nature continue to influence evangelical theologians and their accounts of the three diachronic epochs of nature: the classical or Miltonian tradition, which posits that the present conditions of the world do not represent the best of possible worlds, but are due to the Fall; the Leibnizian view, which states that this world with a mixture of good and evil represents the best of all possible worlds; and the Darwinian/neo-Darwinian view in which the origin of nature is explained in purely naturalistic terms.

I will briefly describe these three approaches to nature as follows.

The Classical View of Nature

A prominent proponent of this view of nature is John Milton (1608-1674).¹ Milton’s *Paradise Lost* is considered one of the greatest works of literature. It was immensely popular in Darwin’s day, and Milton remains a hero of the faith for many today. Milton’s stated objective is to “justify the ways of God to man.”² For example “his ambitious tale traces the cosmic plot of Satan’s disobedience, the fall of humanity, and

¹Milton is the author of three major poems in the English language. The epic of *Paradise Lost* (1667), a twelve-book poem, narrates the literal biblical story of the six-day Creation of a perfect world and the Fall of Adam and Eve against the backdrop of Satan’s rebellion against God and his expulsion from heaven. The other poems are the epic *Paradise Regained* and the tragedy *Samson Agonistes*. In *Paradise Regained*, an account of Christ’s temptation and triumph in the wilderness is given. Christ, the second Adam regains what was lost by the first Adam. In *Samson Agonistes*, Samson, again, is victorious through triumph, suffering, and sacrifice. For these three epic see, John Milton, *English Minor Poems, Paradise Lost, Samson Agonistes, Areopagitica* (Chicago: Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1952).

God’s offer of salvation.”1 For Milton, a perfect world created in six days was ruined and destroyed after a tragic, literal Fall of man occurred in an actual Paradise. His dilemma was, if God is loving and all-powerful, why did He allow evil to exist at all in a perfect world? Apparently, Milton, in his theodicy and in dealing with moral evil, “found solutions by distancing God from the evil.”2 In a prelapsarian world, Adam lived in perfect harmony, but when he sinned and fell, in the postlapsarian world which followed, he became subject to pain and death. Nature is, in turn, reflected by the disintegration of the cosmic order.

The Leibnizian View of Nature

The Leibnizian position can be briefly characterized as follows. The present world with its decay and perishability represents the intended condition from the beginning. God created the best of all the possible worlds. The good and the evil are a part of a perfect world. In other words, death and suffering are essential components of a perfect world.

Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz (1646-1716),3 a German philosopher, coined the word

1Ibid.

2Ibid., 12. For Milton, the “solution was that God needed to let humans choose between good and evil so he could separate the good from the bad. Although this solution maintained God’s purity, it made him somewhat passive, distanced from the events of history” (ibid.).

3Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz is a well-known German rationalistic philosopher of the seventeenth century. He coined the term “theodicy” and structured it on a rationalistic theological system. According to Leibniz, there are not only reasons for what God does in nature, but such reasons are necessary laws. Leibniz contributed not only to natural philosophy, but to mathematics, physics, geology, linguistics, and historiography.
"theodicy" and was interested with the problem of evil. He is known for formulating the doctrine of the best of all possible worlds. Leibniz “argued that a world containing moral and physical evil is better, because it is metaphysically richer, than one containing good only, and that God must have created the best of all possible worlds.” Thus, for Leibniz, the present world with its decay and disintegration represents the best of all possible worlds. In other words, the present world represents a perfect world from the beginning including its being subject to the consequences of sin and death. Leibniz asserts that “if God was to create anything at all, it would have to be imperfect. Imperfection—or evil—is simply a natural part of creation.”

Hunter further explains:

It may be true that Creation must be less than perfect, but how much less? It seems that our world is terribly evil—much more so than is required by Leibniz’s logic. Surely God could have created a world with fewer earthquakes, fires, and floods. For this objection, Leibniz pictured the world as a complex machine. Yes, a world with less evil was certainly possible, but there would be much less good as well. The objective was not to minimize evil, but to create a world with much more good than evil. It was a design tradeoff, and God used the best design possible. We might say God maximalized the good-to-evil ratio.

1Feinberg explains the meaning of “theodicy”: “From theos, ‘God,’ and dike, ‘justice’; a term used to refer to attempts to justify the ways of God to man. A successful theodicy resolves the problem of evil for a theological system and demonstrates that God is all-powerful, all-loving, and just despite evil’s existence” (J. S. Feinberg, “Theodicy,” Evangelical Dictionary of Theology [2001], 1184).


3Hunter, 124.

4Ibid.
If God is essentially good, then the world that He created must be the best of those alternatives available to Him. There are an infinite number of possible worlds God could actualize, but there is only one that is the best possible world. According to Leibniz, God is obligated to create the best. Moral goodness in God consists, therefore, in willing the best. Leibniz’s system demands that the present world be the best possible world. Since God is all-powerful and all-good, this best world must contain moral and physical evil to be metaphysically the richest world. For Leibniz, a perfect world from the beginning contains both moral and physical evil. Death, suffering, and decay are essential aspects of the best and perfect world. God chose the world which has the greatest maximum of perfection, where evil is a part of a good Creation.\(^1\)

**The Darwinian View of Nature**

Charles Darwin’s *Origin of Species*\(^2\) (1859) stands as a classic assessment of nature as the product of blind evolution and not as the result of intelligent design.\(^3\) Earlier,\(^4\) Feinberg, 1185. Theodicy, as introduced by Leibniz, also characterizes the topic of God’s government of the world in relation to the nature of man. The problem is the justification of God’s goodness and justice in view of the evil in the world. Hunter poses the dilemma of theodicy: “The problem of evil states that if God is all-powerful and all-good, then he should not allow evil to exist” (14).

\(^2\)While Darwin’s classic was originally published in 1859, this dissertation uses the following edition. Charles Darwin, *The Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection, or the Preservation of Favored Races in the Struggle for Life*, 2 vols., authorized ed. from the 6th London ed. (New York: Appleton, 1897).

William Paley argued eloquently in *Natural Theology*\(^1\) that nature is the effect of the activity of a divine designer. Broadly speaking, these contrasting interpretations of nature provide the general *Sitz im Leben* for this dissertation.

Darwin’s evolutionary theory is concerned with the beginning of life in the cosmos, and nature in particular, in a naturalistic fashion. Cedric Davern explains that “by using the term origin in the title of a scientific treatise, Darwin was signaling that the species need not, or perhaps should not, be considered direct creations of God.”\(^2\) This was a radical departure from the traditional Christian doctrine of nature as Creation, built around a God who is Creator and Designer. Thus Darwin’s book ushered in a new era of serious dialogue between adherents of the concepts of classic Creation, on the one hand, and those advocating the general theory of evolution, on the other.\(^3\) Evolution theory presupposes that all life has come from a common ancestor and developed into the forms we see today by a process of natural change or modification through deep time.

The Darwinian nature model explains a naturalistic origin of all things by a

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\(^3\) Ibid. Davern further argues that “one does not have to go beyond the title of Darwin’s book, *The Origin of Species* (1859), before getting into deep philosophical and theological waters” (ibid.). For relevant discussion on the issues underlying the general controversy of Darwin’s theories of evolution, see David Hull, *Darwin and His Critics: The Reception of Darwin’s Theories of Evolution by the Scientific Community* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1973); James R. Moore, *The Post-Darwinian Controversies: A Study of the Protestant Struggle to Come to Terms with Darwin in Great Britain and America, 1870-1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979).
mechanism guided by chance, random variation, and natural selection. Apparently, the process is totally independent of any divine action, unlike the Creation model, which is based on the Genesis account of a fiat Creation of living forms by God in six literal, twenty-four-hour days. The main points of Darwin’s theory claim that “the species are not immutable” and that all life has come from a common ancestor, perhaps a single microscopic ancestor, and developed into the forms we see today by a natural process he calls “descent with modification” over a very long period of deep time.¹ This vast process of evolution is guided by natural selection or “survival of the fittest,” a guiding force so effective that it could accomplish prodigies of biological craftsmanship that people in previous times had thought required the guiding hand of a Creator.²

Neo-Darwinian theory³ offers a new assessment of the three epochs of nature. For example, Natura Originalis presupposes that, after the Big Bang, all life evolved from a common ancestor and developed into the forms seen today by a process of gradual change or modification over a very long period of time.⁴

Turning to Natura Continua, neo-Darwinian theory suggests that the present condition, or the contemporary status of nature, with its famine, struggle, suffering, and death, represents essential aspects in an ever-increasing order of life. The evolution

¹Darwin, 2:202-218.
²Johnson, 15; and Darwin, 1:32-98.
³The neo-Darwinian theory of evolution is the modern overview and understanding of Darwin’s theory of the nineteenth century. It attempts to restate the theory in the context of subsequent and recent biological discoveries (Johnson, 15-16.).
paradigm presupposes earthly struggle and death prior to the appearance of Homo Sapiens, and before the Fall or sin of Adam. The process of evolution cannot function without death and struggle. For example, in many cases only a few live to produce offspring, while most others die.\(^1\) Darwin has this to say about the "struggle for existence":

A struggle for existence inevitably follows from the high rate at which all organic beings tend to increase. Every being, which during its natural lifetime produces several eggs or seeds, must suffer destruction. . . . otherwise, on the principle of geometrical increase, its numbers would quickly become so inordinately great that no country could support the product. Hence, as more individuals are produced than can possibly survive, there must in every case be a struggle for existence.\(^2\)

In Origin, Darwin concludes: "Thus, from the war of nature, from famine and death, the most exalted object which we are capable of conceiving, namely, the production of the higher animals, directly follows."\(^3\) Therefore, nature in its present condition is indeed the way nature intends the present world to be. This claim regarding the present status of nature can be characterized theologically by the Leibnizian idea that the present world, with its tendency to decay, is indeed the best of all possible worlds.\(^4\) However, what about the future of nature?

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\(^2\) Darwin, 1:79.

\(^3\) Ibid., 2:305.

Finally, neo-Darwinian science addresses this concern through the concept *Natura Nova*. According to Ted Peters, Professor of Theology at Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary, the contemporary scientific eschatology of nature dictates that in five billion years our sun will die, meaning the death of life on earth. In 65 billion years the whole universe “will either freeze, due to entropy, or fry, due to re-collapsing into a singularity.”

**Strict and Broad Evangelical Concordism in Relation to Morris and Ramm on Nature**

In spite of having a good track record in defending the inerrancy of the Bible, evangelicals have yet to come to a consensus on how to interpret the scriptural texts dealing with nature, in particular those biblical passages referring to the Creation and deluge. Pinnock comments:

> The problem . . . is the proclivity of evangelicals to treat the creation texts of early Genesis as a source of usable scientific concepts and accurate historical information which can be employed in dialogue with modern science. This tendency is well known and has been dramatized for the public by the recent Arkansas court case, the resurgence of creationists fervor in its many forms, and by an acquaintance with popular fundamentalism, one of whose prominent traits in recent years is its stubbornly anti-evolutionary streak.

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2Ibid.

Contemporary evangelicals are roughly divided into two basic camps: those who advocate a literal interpretation of texts referring to Creation and the deluge, thus allowing Scripture to interpret nature, and those who insist that the discoveries of science must control the interpretation of Scripture. For the purposes of this dissertation, evangelicals who attempt different methods to harmonize the interpretations of the doctrine of Creation or nature with science will be classified under the general term "concordists."\(^1\)

Concordance refers to a hermeneutical methodology of harmonization of science and biblical exegesis, or any other two disciplines, in order to establish a peaceful and amicable relationship.\(^2\) Evangelical concordism is further subdivided into strict and broad (or moderate) concordism.\(^3\) Strict concordism refers to a narrow and limited harmonization of science and biblical exegesis, done by modern creationists and evangelical fundamentalists based on literal biblical interpretation and the infallibility of Scripture. Broad concordism refers to a more liberal approach to the harmonization of biblical exegesis and science. This methodology gives room to acceptance of much of the evolutionary matrix and to reinterpreting Scripture in order to harmonize it with

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\(^1\) Pinnock, 145-155.

\(^2\) Ibid., 144.

\(^3\) Ibid.
This dissertation uses the following additional definitions. First, "evolution" is defined as the view proposed by Darwin that the universe, in general, and biological life, in particular, is in the process of developing from lower, or less complex, to higher, or more complex, forms. However, the concept is broad enough to encompass just about any alternative to instantaneous Creation. Thus, "evolution" is the view that everything which exists came about through the process of evolving. Second, "Darwinism" is defined as Darwin’s particular view of evolution which holds that the mechanism for evolution is natural selection which does not rely on the activity of divine being. "Creationism" refers in a more general sense to a belief that God created the universe and life, while "creation science" refers to a recent and historic six-day special Creation. "Creationist" is defined as a person who believes that a supernatural Creator not only initiated this process, but in some meaningful sense controls it in furtherance of a purpose.

The Evangelical Community's Struggle with the Three Views of Nature

The evangelical community continues to struggle with the account of nature. Clark Pinnock observes that “[Davis Young] an esteemed evangelical geologist and son of the late conservative Old Testament scholar E. J. Young, has written: ‘The evangelical community is still mired in a swamp in its attempt to understand the proper relationship

\[1\] Ibid.

\[2\] Johnson, 3-4.
between biblical interpretation and the scientific endeavor.”¹ Pinnock adds: “There seems to be more effort being put into name calling than into finding higher and firmer ground to stand upon.”² He identifies the problem of evangelicals in trying “different ways to harmonize the results of exegesis and science. They understand early Genesis to be giving a more or less historical chronicle of what happened in the past and try to demonstrate a concordance or correspondence between Genesis and the actual events of Creation. One of their difficulties is that there is little agreement among concordists on how to achieve this.”³ Evangelical concordance seeks to harmonize modern science with the Genesis exegesis.⁴

As noted above, two major methods of concordance in contemporary evangelical scholarship are considered in this study, namely strict and broad concordism. Representative evangelical scholars including Morris and Ramm who practice these two methods will be discussed below.

¹Pinnock, 143.

²Ibid. See also Davis A. Young, who traces the effort to harmonize the Bible and modern science—a venture that has failed (“Scripture in the Hands of a Geologist,” Westminster Theological Journal 49 [1987]: 1).

³Pinnock, 144. For further background discussion, see Davis A. Young, “How It All Began,” Christianity Today, August 12, 1988, 31-41.

⁴The evangelical interpretation of Creation texts is in substantial agreement with the modern agenda, which also prefers the factual and scientific over the symbolic and figurative. By placing the Bible and modern science in an adversarial relationship, evangelicals have also created a problem regarding the place of reason in their theological method. See Thomas Oden, Systematic Theology, Vol.1, The Living God:(San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987), 330-44; Langdon Gilkey, Naming the Whirlwind: The Renewal of God-Language (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1969), 76-7.
Many strict concordists are evangelical scholars with solid academic credentials, interested in somehow harmonizing the claims of the biblical Creation account of Gen 1 with the challenges presented by naturalistic evolution. However, in harmonizing science and religion, they are unwilling to give the biblical text a "loose reading."\(^1\) They agree that a meaning of a text must rest on the internal criterion of language and its usage according to the commonly accepted standards of linguistics.\(^2\)

For instance, Duane Gish, an associate of Morris, is an example of a leading strict concordist. He is an author and a sharp debater who has faced evolutionists in more than 300 debates.\(^3\) He defends the idea of a special Creation and argues for the usage of creation science. He advocates a literal interpretation of Scriptures, especially the Creation account in Genesis. Nevertheless, he eloquently presents a view of nature and a belief in a special Creation which is said to have occurred approximately 6,000 years ago.

Norman Geisler, a systematic theologian, and J. Kerby Anderson, a scientist, write from a strict concordist perspective. They develop the distinction between operation science and origin science, then discuss the principles that must govern the latter. They argue that if both evolution and Creation honor these principles, then proponents of each

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\(^2\) Ibid.

can engage in meaningful discussion. They ignore the technical details as they outline the fundamental issues at stake in the creationist’s worldview of nature.

Donald Pattern also writes about the biblical Flood from a strict concordist perspective, defending a sudden and special Creation in six literal, twenty-four-hour days, 6,000 years ago, ruined by the Fall and destroyed by a cataclysmic Flood. Pattern focuses on the origin of nature and how the Flood affected the present conditions of nature. He ignores the discussion of the future of nature.

These fundamentalist evangelical scholars, led by Henry M. Morris, president emeritus and founder of the Institute for Creation Research, follow strict concordism and what might be characterized as some form of a classical Christian tradition regarding the theological interpretation of nature.

By contrast, broad concordists represent those evangelical theologians who

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3 Ibid.


advocate some form of the progressive creation model of nature, and who interpret nature in its present form with death and suffering as integral to a good creation. The “groaning of creation” in Rom 8:21 implies the subjection of Creation to corruption from the beginning.

Further, broad concordists advocate that

geology and Genesis tell in broad outline the same story. Both agree that the earth was once in what may be called a chaotic condition. Both agree that certain cosmical conditions had to be realized before life could begin, e.g., the need for light, dry land, separation of waters and atmosphere. Both agree that the simple is first and the complex later. Both agree that the higher animals and man were the last to appear. The time element is not stated in the Genesis record and must be learned from the geological record. Both agree that man is the latest and highest of all forms of life.1

Moderate or broad concordism differs from strict concordism in several ways: whether the word yom refers to a period of time or a literal twenty-four-hour day;2 whether the order of the days in the Genesis Creation accounts is, at least in part, topical or logical or completely chronological;3 and “the degree to which the Genesis account is to be harmonized with the geological record.”4 Under the auspices of broad or moderate

1 Ramm, The Christian View of Science and Scripture, 226.
2 Ibid., 213. He also proposes “there is only one sure approach to evolution and biology and that is through a well-defined Christian philosophy of biology” (ibid., 254-255). Ramm further suggests that “our philosophy of nature is directly related to our philosophy of biology” (ibid., 256).
3 Ibid., 226.
4 Ibid., 213.
concordism, "the Christian geologist, and the geologically minded theologian alone, can put together the Who of theology and what of geology, and can show the connectedness between primary causation and secondary causation."

Because broad or moderate concordists adhere to a more liberal scientific methodology and interpret the Scriptures through this methodology, they are interpretationally susceptible to modifications in the scientific method. Changes in the scientific method of interpretation can markedly change the way that the scriptural data are interpreted. Clark Pinnock describes the hermeneutical consequences of such an approach: "Even if its fortunes decline in one particular expression, liberal theology does not pass out of existence, but merely changes its shape to altered cultural conditions. Liberalism is superflexible, always ready to move into neoliberalisms." Thus, broad or moderate concordism is distinct from strict concordism in its willingness to be less dogmatic over the time issue. Below, three background figures illustrating broad concordism will be considered, in preparation for a consideration of Ramm.

In *Evolution: Nature and Scripture in Conflict?* Pattle Pun examines the historical development, the philosophical and biblical implications, and the scientific bases of the theory of evolution from a broad concordist's perspective even though he evaluates all forms of the contemporary dialogue among evangelical scholars on these issues of Creation and evolution. Pun contends "that progressive creationism is the best..."

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1Ibid., 226-7. As will be noted in chapter 4, Ramm suggests that the results of such an attempt would result in "progressive creationism" (ibid.).

available model that maintains the scriptural integrity of the Genesis account and at the same time does no injustice to known scientific facts."¹ He argues further that "progressive creationists seem to be able to keep an open mind scientifically and yet maintain the integrity of the Genesis account."²

Robert C. Newman, a broad concordist, in an article entitled "Progressive Creationism" admits that he is "an old earth creationist."³ He argues that the earth and the universe were created far more than just a few thousand years ago as espoused by strict concordists and traditional orthodoxy. Newman explains that the earth is some four or five billion years old and the universe some ten to twenty billion years old.⁴ On God’s methodology, he claims that "God’s activity in creation occurred in a progression—a number of steps over a long period of time in which God established and perfected each level of the environment before he added a higher level that rests (so to speak) upon the preceding levels."⁵

Lastly, Hugh Ross, an astronomer and a broad concordist, in his work The

¹Pun, 247.

²Ibid., 254. Pun further explains: "The progressive creationists’ view fits nicely with the well-documented estimate of the age of the earth and the universe as being more than four billion years. They maintain the infallibility of the Bible but find ample room for the reinterpretation of the length of the creation days of Genesis 1 and the genealogies of the Bible" (ibid.).


⁴Ibid., 105-6.

⁵Ibid., 106.
Fingerprint of God,¹ tells the fascinating story of how in man’s earliest attempts to explain the origins lies the rudimentary tenants and controversies of modern studies in cosmology. He argues that “many of the early church fathers and other biblical scholars interpreted the creation days of Genesis 1 as long periods of time.”² Ross explains that a long period of time is clearly acceptable with the definition of the Hebrew term yom, the word for “day.”³ He further claims that “evil, suffering, and death are merely a consequence of evolution processes, in particular, of survival of the fittest, that the creator set in motion.”⁴ In other words, the evil, suffering, and death in nature are not a result of the historic Fall in Gen 3 as espoused by the strict concordist. But rather they have existed in nature from the beginning.

Ramm, a leading broad concordist, is of course a principal figure to be studied in this dissertation. For purposes of this study, he is considered as a leading figure among those who hold to a broad or moderate concordist position which he calls “progressive creationism.”⁵

These reflections serve as an introduction to the problem addressed by this dissertation in the next section.

²Ibid., 1.
³Ibid.
⁴Ibid., 172.
⁵Ramm, 180.
The Statement of the Problem

The introductory material presented above illustrates the diverse theological problems and differences within the Christian community regarding the concept of nature. This diversity has received little attention in recent scholarship. To date, no comprehensive study has focused on the contrasting interpretations of nature found in the evangelical community. The shape of the discussion has yet to be framed in depth.

The Purpose of the Dissertation

In light of the problem stated above the purpose of this dissertation is to describe, analyze and assess two contrasting evangelical interpretations of nature found in the writings of Henry M. Morris and Bernard L. Ramm. This is a first step in a systematic theological study of the contemporary North American evangelical understanding of nature. This research goal does not attempt to resolve the contrasting positions, but seeks to identify and clarify the underlying assumptions used by these thinkers in their understanding and interpretation of nature and to outline the shape of their contrasting positions regarding nature. The dissertation will describe how science influences Morris’ and Ramm’s respective accounts of nature. Finally, by means of this comparative research, the study will frame the theological discussion of nature, and articulate the relationship between biblical interpretation and science in the evangelical community.

Justification for the Research

Several dissertations have been written on Henry M. Morris and Bernard L. Ramm.

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1For additional details, see Young, “Scripture in the Hands of a Geologist,” 1.
Ramm, but none have been written to date that focus on contrasts found in their respective understandings of nature. No comprehensive, comparative study has yet focused on Morris’ and Ramm’s understanding of the three epochs of nature in its entirety (Originalis, Continua, and Nova).

In the past several years, there have been various dissertations written on scientific and progressive creationism in general, but none have examined Morris’s or Ramm’s understandings of the concept of nature, and none use the kind of organization employed in this dissertation. This study will allude to a number of these works. Several recent dissertations have been devoted to scientific creationism and a few to progressive creationism, but none of them focus specifically on Morris and Ramm or their use of biblical materials as this study does.


varying approaches in the debate over the creation-evolution issue within American evangelicalism in the last century by the American Scientific Affiliation, an influential professional organization of evangelical scientists with appeal to broad concordists; and the Creation Research Society, which appeals to fundamentalists. Duke’s work does not deal at length with the biblical materials or the philosophical and theological presuppositions of strict or broad concordists’ views on nature. Neither does he discuss the views of nature of Morris and Ramm. A third dissertation related to this study is that of Michael Arthur Cavanaugh, which was completed in 1983 and entitled “A Sociological Account of Scientific Creationism: Science, True Science, Pseudoscience.” Cavanaugh’s work is concerned with the sociological aspects of the rise of the modern creationist movement and does not deal directly with the biblical materials on nature or the views of its main architect and founder Henry Morris.

In 1985, another dissertation was written by Robert William Prince III entitled “An Examination of Henry M. Morris’s Interpretation of Biblical Creation.” This work examines the way in which Henry Morris interprets the biblical materials concerning Creation. The author, however, does not examine his concept of nature and how Morris harmonizes the Bible with modern science.

In 1980, Ronald W. Leigh wrote a dissertation entitled “Incongruities Within the

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Literature Adopted for Teaching Apologetics at Schools Which Are Members of the American Association of Bible Colleges.\(^1\) Leigh’s work analyzes incongruities in the apologetic textbooks used at schools which are members of the American Association of Bible Colleges (AABC). He claims, “The AABC represents the evangelical portion of Protestant Christianity which claims that its beliefs are intellectually sound and free of incongruities.”\(^2\) Leigh compares various evangelical authors, including Bernard Ramm and Henry Morris, and concludes that they “exhibit complete congruity in regard to the fundamental evangelical doctrines, the law of contradiction, the historicity of Christianity, and the importance of presuppositions.”\(^3\) He does not deal directly with their use of biblical materials on nature.

The major dissertation written about Ramm is by David W. Miller entitled, “The Theological System of Bernard L. Ramm.”\(^4\) Miller’s work presents and evaluates the theological system of Ramm. It discusses very briefly his view of nature, but only in the context of his theological system. In another dissertation, by Marcos T. Terreros, entitled “Death Before the Sin of Adam: A Fundamental Concept in Theistic Evolution and Its

\(^1\) Ronald W. Leigh, “Incongruities within the Literature Adopted for Teaching Apologetics at Schools Which Are Members of the American Association of Bible Colleges” (Ph.D. dissertation, New York University, 1980).

\(^2\) Ibid., 2.

\(^3\) Ibid., 3.

Implications for Evangelical Theology,” Terreros discusses the concept of death before the sin of Adam and its implications for evangelical theology. He does not focus specifically on Ramm and his view of nature, but limits his discussion to the subject of death. Recently, Mark A. Kalthoff wrote a dissertation entitled “The New Evangelical Engagement with Science: The American Scientific Affiliation, Origin to 1963.” Kalthoff’s work discusses the American Scientific Affiliation’s engagement with science in light of Ramm’s appeal to evangelicals to create harmony between modern science and the Bible. However, he does not discuss Ramm’s hermeneutics or his theology of nature.

Richard Alan Day, in a dissertation entitled “The Concept of Revelation in the Theology of Bernard Ramm,” discusses Ramm’s views of revelation and not his views of nature. David Mueller’s dissertation on Ramm’s mentor Karl Barth, entitled “Evangelical Theology and Karl Barth: Representative Models of Response,” discusses Ramm’s encounter with and response to the theology of Karl Barth. Mueller’s work analyzes the theological dynamic in the encounter between several evangelicals and the theology of Karl Barth. However, there is no discussion on the concept of nature in its


A study comparing the concept of nature in contemporary evangelical scholarship is needed to help advance the discussion of God’s relation to the world and to begin the much needed process of a systematic, theological, and comparative study of the North American evangelical understanding of nature.

**Delimitations**

While this study addresses the concepts of nature found in the writings of Morris and Ramm, it focuses specifically on how the authors deal with the three diachronic epochs of nature, namely the past, the present, and future status of nature. The dissertation deals only with evangelical strict and progressive creationist views and not with the theistic evolutionist understanding of nature. Other aspects of a theological understanding of nature are dealt with only as required.

**Methodology**

After setting the general context of the concept of nature within the evangelical community, the dissertation analyzes and compares the writings of Henry M. Morris and Bernard L. Ramm, primarily through an investigation of their published works and secondary sources related to them.

Chapter 2 sets the historical background of the dissertation. The contemporary context of the evangelical discussion of nature is considered in light of three historic and philosophical roots of the concept of nature developed between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries. These views of nature are classical, Leibnizian, and Darwinian.
Consideration will also be given to the proximal roots of the evangelical discussion of nature represented by various associations in North America since 1935.

Chapter 3 examines Henry Morris's concept of nature. It begins with a biographical sketch of Morris's life, revealing how his concepts have evolved and become more focused in his long career. Morris began his career as a theistic evolutionist but became the foremost defender of strict creationism in contemporary evangelical scholarship. His concept of nature is considered in light of the three diachronic epochs noted previously.

Chapter 4 examines Bernard Ramm's concept of nature as a representative of broad concordism. Biographical information gives insight into his life and work, showing how Ramm began his career as an evangelical fundamentalist. He later became one of the most famous American evangelical theologians of the twentieth century. Finally, Ramm's concept of nature is considered according to the three diachronic epochs or approaches.

Chapter 5 presents a critical comparison and analysis of Morris's and Ramm's views of nature, hermeneutics, and the authority of science in relation to Scripture. The chapter highlights the strengths and weaknesses of their views.

Chapter 6 summarizes the findings of the dissertation regarding the assessment of the authority of science in relation to Scripture as presented by Morris and Ramm, then frames the evangelical discussion of nature, identifies four conclusions of the dissertation in critical perspective, and makes recommendations for further study.
CHAPTER II

THE CONTEMPORARY CONTEXT OF THE EVANGELICAL DISCUSSION OF NATURE

Introduction

Three basic views of nature\(^1\) are employed within the contemporary evangelical\(^2\) discussion of nature, namely: the classical view, the Leibnizian orientation and

\(^1\)For discussion of these three positions among evangelicals, see J. P. Moreland, *Christianity and the Nature of Science: A Philosophical Investigation* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1989), 219; and John Sailhamer, *Genesis Unbound: A Provocative New Look at the Creation Account* (Sisters, OR: Multnomah, 1996).

\(^2\)The term “evangelical” is used primarily to describe the religious views of various theologically conservative Protestants in Europe and North America who stress salvation through faith in Jesus Christ, the authority of the Bible, and the equality of all believers before God. The contemporary movement is closely linked with Billy Graham. Ronald W. Leigh identifies Bernard Ramm and Henry Morris as being among those evangelical authors who “exhibit complete congruity in regard to the fundamental evangelical doctrine, the law of contradiction, the historicity of Christianity, and the importance of presuppositions” (3). Leigh further lists the key evangelical beliefs, namely, the authority of the Bible, the personhood of God, the sinfulness of all men, the deity of Jesus Christ, the sinless life of Jesus Christ, the death of Christ as a substitutionary sacrifice for man’s sin, the necessity and sufficiency of faith in the person and work of Jesus Christ for an individual’s salvation, and the return of Jesus Christ to the earth, etc. (ibid., 9-10). “Evangelicalism” is further defined in *Contemporary Evangelical Thought*, ed. Carl F. H. Henry (New York: Channel, 1957), and in *Christian Faith and Modern Theology*, ed. Carl F. H. Henry (New York: Channel, 1964). The first volume consists of ten essays by evangelical writers focusing on fundamental and background issues, which provide an excellent orientation to the evangelical mind-set. The second volume consists of twenty essays by evangelical writers and discusses the basic tenets of evangelical theology as they relate to trends in modern theology.
Darwinian position. This chapter outlines these views of nature and their underlying philosophical presuppositions and background as preparation for a study of the views of Morris and Ramm regarding nature. Second, the chapter summarizes the contemporary North American evangelical discussion of the meaning of nature in the context of scriptural belief.

A few evangelical theologians hold to the classical Christian view of nature associated with a Miltonian tradition of thought—that nature is the effect of special Creation. This view holds that while nature is sustained voluntarily by God, the present condition of nature does not represent nature as it was created. Natural conditions are, instead, a result of the historical Fall of man and his subsequent expulsion from the Garden of Eden. Morris, a leading strict evangelical concordist, is perhaps the best contemporary evangelical representing this philosophical school of thought.

1Langdon Gilkey, Blue Twilight: Nature, Creationism, and American Religion (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2001). Gilkey observes: “If I were asked what are the biggest changes in theology since the first half of the twentieth century, since the great neo-orthodox days, I would mention, first, the concern for the issue of the pluralism of religions, and second, the deep, and very new, theological concern with nature” (3). Further, “many of us, therefore, have begun to speak of nature not only as the creation of God but also as made in the divine image, that is: as a mirror, a sign, or a symbol of God as are we” (115). For further discussion of the term “nature,” see Millard J. Erickson, Christian Theology, 2d ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1988), 397, 420-421, 660-664. Erickson observes that “God is described as controlling nature, so much so that its elements are personified as obeying his voice. In the Psalms the praise of God often takes the form of extolling His power over nature... ‘The Lord does whatever pleases Him, in the heavens and on the earth, in the seas and all their depths [Ps 135:5-7]’” (420). See also Herman Sasse, “Kosmos,” Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, ed. Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965), 3:868.

Other evangelical theologians although concurring with the voluntary analysis regarding nature accept aspects of the Leibnizian view of nature. Those who hold this position argue in effect that the present world with its decay and death represents the intended condition from the beginning, because God chose to create a world that is the "best of all possible worlds." Ramm shows affinities to this philosophical school of thought.

Finally, the Darwinian or the naturalistic evolutionary view of nature is a more liberal approach that influences how some evangelicals view some aspects of nature, and provides some basic matrix for a theistic Darwinian evolutionary understanding of nature which teaches that God uses the process of evolution to create the world. In broad perspective, the deep time of the Darwinian view forms the basic framework for both the progressive and theistic evolution positions. The atheistic Darwinian view of nature suggests that the present condition of nature is not a product of intelligent design or divine activity. Rather, nature is without purpose and, fortuitously, is simply there. These three contrasting approaches to nature will be considered later in greater detail.

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1See in chapter 1 a list of broad evangelical concordists.


3Pun, 246-47.

4Darwin, The Origin, 1:79; 2:305.
The Distinction Between God's Absolute and Ordained Power as Assumed Context for Contemporary Evangelical Discussion of Nature

The historical origins and biblical roots of the traditional Western distinction between God's ordained and absolute power in relation to the laws of nature form the context particularly of Milton's understanding of nature. Alan G. Padgett provides a helpful discussion of these concepts in which he "lay[s] out the historical developments of the idea of 'laws of nature' in Western culture, from the earliest sources to the early modern period." He indicates that "the laws of nature, in this view, are regularities built and sustained by God into the natural world. They are secondary causes, sustained by the ordained power of God." As a background to Milton's philosophy of nature, Padgett makes a distinction between God's ordained and absolute power, and "demonstrates that in the midst of diversity, there was a common Western concept of 'laws of nature' based upon belief in the ordained power of God." He claims that this notion of the "Laws of Nature" has its root in Western culture and has been held by Christian philosophers before and during Milton's time, and "is still important for today's religion and science.

1Alan G. Padgett, "The Roots of the Western Concept of the 'Laws of Nature': From the Greeks to Newton," Perspectives on Science and Christian Faith 55 (2003): 212-21. He "is a Methodist theologian and pastor, a professor of systematic theology at Luther Seminary in Saint Paul, MN, where he teaches courses in theology and science. A member of ASA, holds advanced academic degrees from Drew University (M.Div.) and the University of Oxford (D.Phil.) After studying natural science, he converted to Christianity and entered the ministry" (ibid., 212).

2Ibid., 212.

3Ibid.

4Ibid., 220.
dialogue."¹

Padgett writes that the traditional Western "notion of the laws of nature has been understood and developed in diverse ways by particular thinkers from the past."² Apparently, "laws of nature" is based on God's ordained power to sustain nature or the natural world that He created. However, he suggests that "there is a unity of general understanding, and a diversity in the details of how this is worked out."³

In the next sections, the history of the "laws of nature" in Western culture is traced and discussed according to Padgett from the Greeks in the classical period, to Newton in the early modern period.⁴

The "Laws of Nature" in Greco-Roman Culture

Padgett claims: "The notion of a law of nature has two sources in the classical period: Hellenistic natural philosophy, especially stoicism; and the Christian patristic tradition."⁵ The non-Christian and pagan sources for stoic philosophy contend "God or Zeus is universal Reason (logos), the principle of order or law that is immanent in all things and gives structure to both the cosmos and human societies."⁶ Padgett explains:

¹Ibid., 212.
²Ibid.
³Ibid.
⁴Ibid.
⁵Ibid.
⁶Ibid., 213.
“To the classical mind, the heavens seemed particularly good examples of natural bodies obeying the laws of nature. Indeed, the very word ‘astronomy’ indicates this: the law (nomos) of the stars (astros).”

Turning from the pagan sources to Christian in the classical period, Padgett suggests: “In the Christian case, the God of the Bible is understood as Lawgiver (among other things), but also as Creator.” He explains: “Patristic authors such as Augustine and Basil of Caesarea used the term ‘laws of nature,’ and understood these as coming from God the Creator.” Padgett adds: “For both Augustine and Basil, the natural world operated according to regularities ordained by the divine Creator and Lawgiver.”

The “Laws of Nature” in the Middle Ages

Padgett points out that “in the Middle Ages, the notion of the law of nature, especially the relationship between God and the world, was given further philosophical development by Christian thinkers.” He gives an example of Peter Damian of eleventh century who discusses the laws of nature in the context of divine omnipotence. Padgett claims that “Damian argued that the Almighty Creator was not limited by them [laws of

\[1\text{Ibid.}\]
\[2\text{Ibid., 212.}\]
\[3\text{Ibid.}\]
\[4\text{Ibid.}\]
\[5\text{Ibid.}\]
\[6\text{Ibid., 213.}\]
\[7\text{Ibid.}\]
nature], but rather was their author and sustainer.”¹ He explains that Damian

“specifically taught that God’s absolute power rules over the laws of nature, and that the
divine will conserves the laws of nature in being.”² Padgett concludes that

this philosophical position was later developed into medieval voluntarism, which
has a long history. As opposed to both Aristotelian and Platonic natural
philosophy, voluntarism insisted that the structures of Nature were not deduced by
logical necessity from first principles, nor were they fixed and eternal. For
voluntarist natural philosophers, the author of nature stems from the will of
almighty God, who is free to do things differently. God chose to create the laws of
nature in this way, and he could have chosen differently. The laws of nature are
not logically necessary, according to voluntarism, nor are they eternal. This belief
meant that the structures of Nature was contingent. Logic alone would not
discover them; we would have to look and see.³

Voluntarist natural philosophy insists upon the full freedom of God’s will over all
creation, including the law of nature.⁴ It implies that because of God’s absolute power,
He is free and able to do things that are contrary to the laws of nature.

The development of the Medieval natural philosophy was a powerful combination
of voluntarism, empiricism, and a mathematical approach.⁵ Padgett gives the example of

Robert Grosseteste (1170-1253) “who was a natural philosopher, theologian, Bishop of

¹Ibid.
²Ibid.
³Ibid.
⁴Ibid.
⁵Ibid., 214. For Padgett, “history of medieval natural philosophy reaches a high
watermark with the re-introduction of Aristotle, and of Arabic learning based upon
Greco-Roman and Hindu cultures” (ibid., 213).
Lincoln and the one of the first chancellors of the University of Oxford.\textsuperscript{1} He claims "he represents the very early combination of interest in mathematics with natural philosophy, typical of Platonic-pythagorean influence."\textsuperscript{2} Padgett adds, "With his mathematical interests and his theistic and voluntarist worldview, Grosseteste was an important contributor to medieval science."\textsuperscript{3} Padgett indicates that "Grosseteste developed an experimental, scientific method for the investigation of contingent, physical truths, which for him was part of the divine order and natural law."\textsuperscript{4} Grosseteste's new method of combining metaphysics with epistemology, or the mathematical and empirical approach to natural philosophy, lay the groundwork for further scientific inquiry.

According to Padgett, there was a consensus among the medieval thinkers who "had a more unified understanding of God, nature, and humanity than we do today. Both nature and Scripture alike were filled with spiritual lessons."\textsuperscript{5} He suggests that "like others of his day Grosseteste used the term ‘laws of nature’ to refer to the spiritual and moral laws of God. But he also saw the term ‘laws of nature’ as referring to physical regularities."\textsuperscript{6}

\textsuperscript{1}Ibid., 214.
\textsuperscript{2}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{3}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{4}Ibid., 215.
\textsuperscript{5}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{6}Ibid.
The "Laws of Nature" in the Early Modern Period

Aristotle’s natural philosophy was the basis of the early modern science of the seventeenth century. Padgett gives Isaac Newton (1642-1727) as the best example of this era. He suggests: “Newton used the word ‘principle’ for gravity or for law of nature. ‘They [material particles] are moved by certain active Principles, such as is that of Gravity. . . . These Principles I consider . . . general Laws of Nature’.” Padgett further indicates that for Newton: “God is the source of the laws of nature. Newton’s God is the absolute Lord of the Universe. ‘He rules all things, not as the world soul but as the lord of all, the Pantokrator’.”

Padgett observes that “in his work on optics, Newton notes that ‘God is able to vary the Laws of Nature and make Worlds of several sorts in several Parts of the Universe’.” Padgett explains: “Against Descartes, Newton returns to the traditional theory of God’s absolute power, which is able to alter the laws of nature at will.” He concludes: “The basic theological concepts in Newton’s natural philosophy were already part of his scientific inheritance from the past.”

According to Padgett, this period of early modern science is important in

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1 Ibid., 219.
2 Ibid.
3 Ibid.
4 Ibid.
5 Ibid.
6 Ibid.
"utilizing the distinction between God’s ordained and absolute power."¹ In the process the natural philosophy was transformed by overturning “the larger Aristotelian paradigm in which these concepts were developed”² in the medieval period. For Padgett, the laws of nature originate from the ordained power of God, and are “built by God into the very fabric of the universe by means of which (along with other things) he conserves the physical universe in existence throughout time.”³ He concludes: “The Christian tradition of natural philosophy handed on a distinctively theistic notion of the laws of nature, that is, as stemming from the ordained power of God by which he concurs with the normal course of nature. This view is so common throughout the history of Western science before 1700 that we should call it the traditional Western view.”⁴ In other words, before 1700 or the modern science era, the notion of the laws of nature was understood in purely theistic terms and the role of God in natural philosophy was fully acknowledged. That ceases to be the case “after Newton, the decisive break with the past is too great, and this tradition gradually becomes less marked in the writings of natural scientists.”⁵

The ground is laid for atheistic Darwinian evolutionary theory a century later. Padgett suggests “a return to this traditional concept of a law of nature, grounded in the ordained power of God, could help solve several contemporary issues and confusions in

¹Ibid.
²Ibid.
³Ibid.
⁴Ibid.
⁵Ibid.
the philosophy of science and in the ongoing dialogue between religion and science.\(^1\) God’s role in nature, and His ordained power to sustain it are a crucial dimension in the dialogue. In other words, nature does not act on its own without the ordained power of God.

Having discussed the background of the understanding of nature before and during the early modern period, the three contrasting views of nature will now be considered.

**Three Views of Nature**

**The Classical View of Nature as Illustrated by John Milton**

**Introduction**

English author John Milton (1608-1674)\(^2\) is sometimes ranked next to Shakespeare in English poetic hierarchy.\(^3\) Born in London on December 9, 1608, Milton attended St. Paul’s School and then Christ’s College at Cambridge University. Although his early training prepared him for a religious career, he came to believe that tyranny had invaded the church and so he chose instead to dedicate himself to God’s service as a poet. Upon graduating from Cambridge in 1632, he went to Horton, his father’s country home,

\(^1\)Ibid., 220.

\(^2\)John Milton’s *Paradise Lost*, the greatest epic poem in the English language, retells the biblical story of Creation and the Fall of Adam and Eve against the backdrop of Satan’s rebellion against God and his expulsion from heaven (*Milton’s Paradise Lost*, illustr. Gustave Dore, intro. Robert Baughan (New York: Cassell, [1866])).

study and write. The deepest influences in shaping Milton’s life and personality are to be found in his family traditions and domestic environment which reflected the larger setting of the times.

Milton had a thorough knowledge of classical Greek and Latin authors and was greatly influenced by them. His father, John Milton, Senior, was a self-made man of good but not aristocratic background. Milton’s mother, Sarah Jaffrey, was the daughter of a merchant tailor. Milton left Horton in 1638 for a fifteen-month European tour. He cut short his tour to return to England to support the Puritans in their conflict with the bishops of the church of England. He married 16-year-old Mary Powell in 1643. But their marriage was unhappy. She left Milton after a month or two and did not return for two years. Milton’s work and constant study strained his weak eyes, and he was completely blind by 1652. He wrote *Paradise Lost, Paradise Regained*, and probably *Samson Agonistes*, his masterpieces, during his final years. These works are in part a response to his own blindness and the collapse of the Puritan’s hope for the establishment of Christ’s kingdom on earth.¹

Milton’s famous major epic *Paradise Lost*,² which tells the story of Satan’s


²Other major poems by Milton include the epic *Paradise Regained* and the tragedy *Samson Agonistes*. In the sequel to *Paradise Lost, Paradise Regained*, Milton gives an account of Christ’s temptation in the wilderness, in which Satan offers to help Christ assume His ministry by granting Him wealth, power, and knowledge. Christ, the Second Adam, refuses and thereby wins back for man what the first Adam lost. In *Samson Agonistes*, Samson also achieves victory through suffering and discovers that freedom is enjoyed only in the service of God. For further discussion, see John S. Diekhoff, “*Paradise Lost*: A Commentary on the Argument” (New York: Columbia University Press, 1946); Arthur E. Barker, “Calm Regained through Passion Spent: The
rebellion against God, his expulsion from heaven, the subsequent temptation of Adam and Eve, and their resultant expulsion from the Garden of Eden. Satan is regarded as a real, literal, created, spiritual being. The prime factor resulting in the Fall was disobedience. Before the Fall, man was in a state of innocence, but after the Fall, disease and death became part of human experience. Man became subjected to physical and moral degeneration which followed the entrance of sin into the world.¹

When Milton began the composition of Paradise Lost circa 1658, the need to admonish his fellow countrymen of their high calling and to impress upon them their covenant responsibility was a matter of immediate and pressing concern. He cautions his countrymen that irresponsibility and the disobedience of the first parents had led to sin and the Fall of man, and ultimately to the loss of Paradise.²

Milton and the Origin of Nature

As noted earlier, during the seventeenth century and Milton’s day, nature was


perceived in theistic terms and the role of God was not questioned.\(^1\) For most of its
history, the Western world has taken its concept of nature, particularly the creation story,
from the book of Genesis. "In the beginning," we are told, "God created the heavens and
the Earth." This initial act of creation was followed by an amazing, busy week in which
God created everything else, including the first man and woman—Adam and Eve—after
which He rested. As fanciful as this story now sounds to some modern ears, it was
accepted, universally and seemingly without question, by the thinkers that shaped
Western intellectual history, from the Greeks in the classical period, patristic authors in
the middle ages such as Augustine and Basil of Caesarea, and Isaac Newton in early
modern period.\(^2\)

Milton's view of nature is best understood in the context of the traditional
Western concept of nature which is grounded in the ordained power of God to sustain and
conserve the physical universe.\(^3\) God was understood to be indeed the source of the laws
of nature, and was not Himself bound by them.\(^4\) In other words, by God's absolute
power and divine voluntarism, He conserves nature and maintains full freedom to act
according and contrary to the laws of nature. For Milton, in his classical work on natural
philosophy he explores the role of God in nature. In a nutshell, Milton appears to work in
the context of a worldview where nature is voluntarily sustained by God's ordained

\(^{1}\text{Ibid.}, 219.\)

\(^{2}\text{Ibid.}, 212.\)

\(^{3}\text{Ibid.}, 220.\)

\(^{4}\text{Ibid.}, 217.\)
power. The subject of *Paradise Lost* (1667), “Man’s first disobedience” and “loss of Eden,” provides the basis for Milton’s understanding of nature. Milton eloquently introduces the subject of *Paradise Lost* in the first four lines of the poem:

Of Man’s first disobedience, and the fruit  
Of that forbidden tree, whose mortal taste  
Brought death into the world, and all our woe,  
With loss of Eden

By Milton’s time, the Fall of man had already received innumerable literary treatments in narratives and dramatic analysis. However, Milton presents a view of nature that is cosmological in scope, encompassing an epic of creation and the wonders of the universe, as well as of the Fall and the regeneration of humanity.

In regard to *Natura Originalis*, Milton claims that the Genesis account of the six days of creation presents a perfect world. The picture of the Garden of Eden is a symbolic rendering of Milton’s vision of perfection. Idyllic innocence and happiness are lost when Adam and Eve fall into sin and are expelled from the Garden. These two frail human beings begin life anew in a world of sin, sorrow, and death.

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1Milton, *Paradise Lost*, bk. 1, lines 1-4, 9. All direct quotations by Milton are from *Paradise Lost*, and are cited by book, line, and page.


3Kenneth Muir observes that “the fall of man had become not one possible subject among many; it was not the one theme which was perfectly suited to Milton’s ideas, experience and talents. The examination of the corruption of man’s heart was a necessity for the poet: he wished to explain why human nature had come short of his expectations, why all his hopes had been frustrated” (*John Milton* [London: Langmans, 1960], 127). John Spencer Hill argues that the Fall of man brought evil, death, and doom on man for his foreseen transgression, but in *Paradise Regained* the incarnate Son emerges as the
Milton suggests that Eve adorned her dwelling "with what to sight or smell was sweet." Adam and Eve ate the abundant fruits and drank the water of the brooks. They were surrounded by affectionate and playful animals, all vegetarians like themselves. Before the Fall, the animals had no noxious or predatory impulses. The rose had no thorns. Animals and plants as well as human beings were immortal.

Concerning the character of the prelapsarian earth outside Paradise, Milton gives only hints. Evidently from his epic, it was somewhat less delightful than Paradise for, although the air outside was "pure," the air of Paradise was "purer." The earth outside seems to have been inhabited by animals. Even though the rest of the earth was inferior to Paradise, the whole of it furnished a pleasant environment for human life; that is, for the numerous descendants of Adam and Eve, who were to people the earth. Certainly, the whole of the earth was more luxuriant, more beautiful, climatically more temperate than it is now.

In Milton's view, before the Fall, man lived in perfect harmony with the natural environment created for his happiness. This harmony was so close that when Eve bit into Messiah and Deliverer and regains victory over sin and death, and ultimate defeat of Satan (114-50).


2Ibid., bk. 4, lines 340-52, 92-3.

3Ibid., line 256, 90.

4Ibid., line 153, 87. "That landscape; and of pure now purer air" (ibid.); bk. 11, lines 284-85, 275.

5Ibid., bk. 9, lines 82-84, 203.
the fruit

Earth felt the wound, and Nature, from her seat,
Sighing through all her works, gave signs of woe.¹

And when Adam joined Eve in transgression,

Earth trembled from her entrails, as again
In pangs; and nature gave a second groan;
Sky loured, and, muttering thunder, some sad drops
Wept at completing of the mortal sin
Original; while Adam took no thought
Eating his fill²

The transgression and the subsequent Fall were so tragic that the entire nature mourned and groaned, while the “earth trembled.”³

**Milton and the Effect of Sin on Nature**

Concerning *Natura Continua*, sin has, according to Milton, an adverse effect on nature. The tragic Fall of our First Parents after they sinned brought death and suffering not only on the human race but on the entire nature. Milton, for his part, explains how “man’s first disobedience” affected nature:

A universe of death, which God by curse
Created evil, for evil only good;
Where all life dies, death lives, and Nature breeds,
Perverse, all monstrous, all prodigious things,
Abominable, unutterable, and worse
Than fables yet have feigned, or fear conceived.⁴

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¹Ibid., lines 782-83, 223.
²Ibid., lines 1000-05, 229.
³Ibid., line 1000, 229.
⁴Ibid., bk. 2, lines 622-27, 49.
Adam and Eve are the heroes of *Paradise Lost*, and the story takes them from their creation to the loss of Eden. Adam and Eve become the center between cause and effect. The setting of this mighty plot, the earth, on which the action takes place, swings pendulously below the ramparts of heaven and yet far above hell.¹

The first stages of Adam and Eve’s regeneration are dramatized at the end of Book 10 of *Paradise Lost*. Adam is depicted as confessing his guilt and accepting it as justly his. In this dramatic monologue, Adam, surrounded by the mounting chaos in the natural order as Nature grows “red in tooth and claw,” turns inward in anguished self-examination. Recognizing his guilt, he states:

> On me—me only, as the source and spring
> Of all corruption, all the blame lights due²

Milton further adds in a sense of despair and hopelessness:

> O conscience! Into what abyss of fears
> And horrors hast thou driven me; out of which
> I find no way, from deep to deeper
> plunged³

Adam’s faith in God’s mercy is an important step forward, for it enables him to place his trust in God.⁴


²Milton, *Paradise Lost*, bk. 10, lines 832-33, 258.

³Ibid., lines 842-44, 258.

⁴Book 10 of *Paradise Lost* describes the immediate effects of the Fall. The action in this book is dramatic and fast-moving with rapid changes of locale—from heaven to earth, to hell, then back to heaven.
Man's transgression and the entrance of Satan into paradise bring sin and death into this world. But God foretells the final victory of His Son over them and the renewing of all things. Adam, perceiving his fallen condition, cries heavily and seeks ways to evade the curse likely to fall on his offspring. Book 10 of *Paradise Lost* states:

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Meanwhile the heinous and despiteful act
Of Satan done in Paradise; and how
He, in the serpent, had perverted Eve,
Her husband, she, to taste the fatal fruit
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For Milton, Satan uses the serpent to disguise himself and tempt Eve. In fact, after his expulsion in heaven he descends to earth and transforms himself to deceive Eve and Adam to eat fruits from the forbidden tree springing up before them in the Paradise. Apparently, after greedily reaching to take of the fruit and eating it leads to transgression, and to "Sin and Death, sitting till then at the gates of Hell."²

The final book of *Paradise Lost* ends with the Son of God presenting to His Father the prayers of a repentant Adam and Eve and interceding for them. God accepts them, but declares that they may no longer abide in Paradise. He sends the angel Michael with a band of cherubim to expel them from paradise. Milton describes this solemn moment of expulsion as follows:

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In either hand the hastening Angel caught
Our lingering parents, and to the eastern gate
Led them direct, and down the cliff as fast
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¹Ibid., bk. 10, lines 1-3, 235.
²Ibid.
To the subjected plain; then disappeared¹

For the first time Michael reveals to Adam the coming of the seed of the woman, describing His incarnation, death, resurrection, and the judgment scene. He counsels Adam to believe in the certainty of salvation even before it is fully revealed.²

In *Paradise Lost*, the central conflict between good and evil is reflected and intensified in the contrast between heaven and hell, light and darkness, order and chaos, love and hate, humility and pride, reason and passion, while Adam and Eve reenact the sin and Fall of Satan. Apparently, Milton is using poetry and drama to depict certain truths. The disobedience of our first parents, and their ultimate Fall, led to their expulsion from the Garden of Eden and the loss of paradise. The cause and effect relationship between disobedience or sin and the loss of paradise is best understood in light of the controversy that began in heaven with the Fall of Lucifer and continued in the Garden of Eden with the Fall of Adam and Eve. God and Satan representing forces of good and evil respectively are the main characters in the great controversy.

In *Paradise Lost*, heaven is God-centered and is, therefore, in perfect order and freedom. The unfallen earth reflects that order. Creation is a symbol of goodness and a perfect God. However, after the Fall of man, the earth is now ruined by sin and death.

¹Ibid., bk. 12, lines 637-40, 310-11. Lawrence Babb argues that “after the expulsion, Paradise remained uninhabited for generations and was finally destroyed by the Flood. The mountain on which it was located was devastated by waters and was carried down the Tigris to the Persian Gulf” (36-37).

²Raphael, a divine agent or angel at the request of Adam, relates how and why this world was first created. God, after expelling Satan and his angels from heaven after a rebellion, declared His pleasure by creating another world: Milton’s Paradise.
Milton comments:

Meanwhile, ere thus was sinned and judged on earth,
Within the Gates of Hell sat Sin and Death,
In counterview within the Gates, that now
Stood open wide, belching Outrageous flame
Far into Chaos, since the Fiend passed through,
Sin opening; who thus now to Death began

Before the Fall, time in *Paradise Lost* is an aspect of order, but in postlapsarian life it reflects disintegration of the cosmic order. For Adam and Eve, like Satan, disintegration reflects moral degeneration. Milton explains how the moral disintegration came about:

Moved our grand parents, in that happy state,
Favored of heaven so highly, to fall off
From their Creator, and transgress his will
For one restraint, lords of the world besides?
Who first seduced them to that foul revolt?
The infernal serpent; he it was, whose guile
Stirred up with envy and revenge, deceived

Milton attributes the Fall to a departure by Adam and Eve from reason. *Paradise Lost* represents an example for our fallen world. For Milton, faith and obedience to God’s will provide the foundation for virtuous action, while the Fall leads to alienation from God, self, and others.

According to Milton, the mourning of nature is not figurative, but in *Paradise Lost* it is real and literal. He claims that after man’s transgression there were “some sad

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1Milton, *Paradise Lost*, bk. 10, lines 229-34, 241-42.

2Ibid., bk. 1, lines 29-35, 10.
drops”1 of tears as nature “wept at completing of the mortal sin.”2 Unfortunately, the Fall broke the pristine harmony. Many of the animals immediately developed carnivorous instincts and attacked the milder beasts. Milton claims: “Beast now with beast ‘gan war, and fowl with fowl,”3 as they “devoured each other.”4 The animals developed fear of man or hostility toward him.5 Men, animals, and plants became subject to “the savor of death.”6 At God’s command, angels made changes in the celestial mechanics to produce harsh weather. Since the Fall, there has been discord in nature, discord between man and nature, and discord among men.7

For Milton the Fall brought both an “intellectual and moral”8 dilemma in a postlapsarian world. When Satan entered the Paradise after his expulsion from heaven, man’s ability to distinguish between good and evil was not impaired and did not pose a problem in the Garden. Apparently, there was no evil, only the potentiality of evil; but in the postlapsarian world, the drawing of this distinction is a difficult, ever-present, and

1Ibid., line 1002, 229.
2Ibid., line 1003, 229.
3Ibid., bk. 10, lines 710, 255.
4Ibid., line 712, 255.
5Ibid., lines 712-14, 255.
6Ibid., lines 269, 242; see also lines 603-13, 252.
7See ibid., bk. 10.
8Babb, 4.
painfully important task.\footnote{Ibid.} In the postlapsarian predicament the choice is between known good and known evil; whereas in the prelapsarian situation it is between known good and potential evil, for, as unfallen Adam explains to Eve,

\begin{verbatim}
Evil into the mind of God or Man
May come and go, so unapproved, and leave
No spot or blame behind; which gives me hope\footnote{Milton, \textit{Paradise Lost}, bk. 5, lines 117-19, 115.}
\end{verbatim}

With the Fall, Babb suggests “Adam created intellectual and moral problems far more difficult than his own, which his descendants must solve with their diminished and vitiated endowments.”\footnote{Babb, 4.}

However, Milton expresses optimism and hope about the future. For Adam and his descendants, God is going to give mankind a second chance. This is the final stance of \textit{Paradise Lost}. Here Michael speaks for God:

\begin{verbatim}
I am sent
To shew thee what shall come in the future days
To thee, and to thy offspring; good with bad
Expect to hear, supernal grace contending
With sinfulness of men; thereby to learn
True patience, and to temper joy with fear
And pious sorrow, equally inured
By moderation either state to bear,
Prosperous or adverse, so shalt then lead\footnote{Milton, \textit{Paradise Lost}, bk. 11, lines 356-64, 277.}
\end{verbatim}

Adam’s descendants as a result of sin are living in a world, surrounded by a multitude of beguiling evils, which they must learn to recognize. Man’s intellectual and moral
problems are not beyond solution. God has given mankind a second chance; He has in some measure renewed man’s “lapsed power.” Man may, therefore, by strenuous effort, rectify his erring reason and gain the knowledge requisite to righteous living, knowledge which was either innate in Adam or not necessary to him. To repair the ruins of our first Parent is the object of education. The reconstruction of man’s intellectual mind is an arduous task which can never be fully accomplished yet must be undertaken.

Paradise Lost seems not only concerned with the Fall but with the triumph of grace. Michael finishes his prophecy with the coming of the seed of the Woman; Adam’s joy bursts forth:

O Goodness infinite, goodness immense!
That all this good of evil shall produce,
And evil turn to good; more wonderful
Than that which by creation first brought forth
Light out of darkness! Full of doubt I stand,
Whether I should repent me now of sin
By me done, and occasioned, or rejoice
Much more, that much more good therefore shall spring;
To God more glory, more good-will to men
From God, and over wrath grace shall abound

1Ibid., bk. 3, line 176, 67.
2Babb, 4.
4Milton, Paradise Lost, bk. 12, lines 469-78, 306.
The mood of Adam and Eve is not that of despair but of triumph. They must defeat their "grand foe" and they swing to war as the following lines indicate:

We may with more successful hope resolve
To wage, by force or guile, eternal war,
Irreconcilable to our grand Foe,
Who now triumphs, and in the excess of joy
Sole reigning, holds the tyranny of heaven.\(^1\)

The mood of the conclusion of the last book of Paradise Lost is not failure but joy. Inspite of the Fall of the first parents, God provides them a way out in the form of His own Son. Michael calls Adam and instructs him to go, waken Eve, and share with her the knowledge of

The great deliverance by her Seed to come —
For by the Woman's Seed—on all mankind;
That ye may live, which will be many days,
Both in one faith unanimous, though sad,
With causes, for evils past, yet much more cheered
With medication on the happy end.\(^2\)

The mood of both Adam and Eve changes profoundly. The initial period of uncertainty and turbulent confusion after the Fall gives way to peace. A solution to the problem of sin lies in the future. Lawrence Babb notes that "when Adam sinned he became subject not only to pain but to death, and this, materially speaking, was the gravest of the consequences of the Fall. As punishment for man's first disobedience, all men must die, for all men have sinned with Adam. But God so loved his erring creatures that he gave

\(^1\)Ibid., bk. 1, lines 120-24, 12.

\(^2\)Ibid., bk. 12, lines 600-05, 309-10.
his only begotten Son to expiate the sin by His own death on the cross.”

**Milton and the Future State of Nature**

For Milton, the future of nature or *Creatio Nova* hinges on the promise given to Adam and Eve after the Fall that the seed of the woman will be triumphant over the serpent. The Christian eschatology is the climax of the last stage of Milton’s cosmic drama. For Milton the return of the Lord is the final consummation of nature.

And vengeance to the wicked, at return
Of Him so lately promised to thy aid,
The woman’s Seed; obscurely then foretold,
Now ampler known thy Saviour and thy Lord;
Last, in the clouds, from Heaven, to be revealed
In glory of the Father, to dissolve
Satan with his perverted world; then raise
From the conflagrant mass, purged and refined,
New heavens, new Earth, ages of endless date,
Founded in righteousness, and peace, and love,
To bring forth fruits, joy and eternal bliss

Michael Fixler depicts this cosmic drama in the Paradise Lost as follows: “Satan, having lost the Kingdom of Heaven, covets the Kingdom on earth; Man, losing to Satan the paradisial kingdom on earth, gains ultimately through the love and obedience of Christ the Kingdom of Heaven.” The pilgrimage of the life of man is only one episode in a long history that began before the Creation of our World and will not end, even when the

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1Babb, 51; see also Alex Warner, who suggests that “the nature of man is shown to be, even in the innocence of Eden, capable of making irrevocable mistakes when passion takes over the control from reason” (John Milton [London: Max Parrish, 1949], 68).

2Milton, *Paradise Lost*, bk. 12, lines 541-51, 308.

3Fixler, 228.
World is destroyed at the Last Judgment:

Whether in heaven or earth; for then the earth
Shall be all Paradise, far happier place
Than this of Eden, and far happier days\(^1\)

Milton, in spite of “the fallen state” of nature, is optimistic that nature will finally be restored by a “greater Man.”

With loss of Eden, till one greater Man
Restore us, and regain the blissful seat,
Sing, heavenly Muse, that on the secret top
Of Oreb, or of Sinai, didst inspire
That shepherd, who first taught the chosen seed\(^2\)

In the last act, Michael, in either hand, leads Adam and Eve out of Paradise. They are comforted by the thought of the promise of “the great deliverance . . . by the Woman’s Seed.”\(^3\) Milton reassures the first parents as he claims:

Destined Restorer of mankind, by whom
New Heaven and Earth shall to the ages rise,
Or down from Heaven descend. Such was their song\(^4\)

Milton concludes:

Then Heaven and Earth, renewed, shall be made pure
To sanctity, that shall receive no stain:
Till then, the curse pronounced on both precedes\(^5\)

In Paradise Regained, Milton explains how Christ the Second Adam through His

\(^1\)Milton, *Paradise Lost*, bk. 12, lines 463-65, 306.

\(^2\)Ibid., bk. 1, lines 4-8, 9.

\(^3\)Ibid., lines 600-05, 309.

\(^4\)Ibid., bk. 10, lines 646-48, 253.

\(^5\)Ibid., lines 638-40, 253.
incarnation, death, resurrection, and ascension wins back what the first Adam lost. The climax of Milton’s epics is the restoration of the Paradise that was ruined and lost after “Man’s first disobedience.”

In summary, Milton argues the present condition of nature does not represent a perfect world but is a result of the Fall of man and his subsequent expulsion from the Garden of Eden. The world was created perfect in its Edenic state, but due to the Fall, the nature is in a fallen state. In Milton’s cosmic drama, although the epic begins with the Fall of Lucifer from heaven and Fall of our first parents in the historic “Man’s first disobedience,” the drama ends triumphant with the restoration of the lost paradise. In other words, in the drama, the Paradise is first lost and then regained.

Next, the Leibnizian view of nature will be considered. Contrary to Milton, Leibniz argues that God created the best possible world containing both good and evil. Leibniz contends that the present nature with its decay is the best of all the possible worlds.

The Leibnizian View of Nature

Introduction

The German rationalist philosopher, Gottfried Wilhelm Liebniz (1646-1716),

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1Ibid., bk. 1, line 1, 9.

made significant and fundamental contributions to philosophy, as well as to the development of modern mathematics and science. Leibniz was born on July 1, 1646, in Leipzig, Germany. His father, Friedrich, a scholar and a Professor of Moral Philosophy at the University of Leipzig, died in September 1652, when Leibniz was only six years old. But despite his father’s early death, the younger Leibniz was later to recall how his father had instilled in him a love of learning. Leibniz’s mother, Catherine Schmuck Leibniz (his father’s third wife), was the daughter of a distinguished professor and doctor of law. Leibniz’s legal and academic interests were derived from his parents and their circle of friends.

Learning was, indeed, to become an important part of Leibniz’s life. From his very infancy he gave evidence of remarkable intelligence. Leibniz began school when he was seven years old. At fifteen years of age, he began studying philosophy and mathematics, first at Leipzig and later at Jena. Although trained in law, he earned a living as a counselor, diplomat, librarian, and historian, primarily in the court of Hanover. His contributions in mathematics, physics, and philosophy were published in Europe’s leading scholarly journals and he maintained correspondence with the intellectuals in a

1Leibniz articulates his views on nature in the idea “the best possible world” or “the principle of the best.” If God is essentially good, then it is difficult—but not impossible—to escape the conclusion that the world that he created must be the best of those alternatives available to him (Gottfried W. Leibniz, “A Vindication of God’s Justice Reconciled with His Other Perfections and All His Actions,” in Monadology and Other Philosophical Essays, trans. Paul Schrecker and Anne Schrecker (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1965), 118, 123, 128, 136.
variety of fields.¹

At the center of Leibniz's philosophy stands his metaphysics—an ambitious attempt to discover the reality of nature. This study describes Leibniz's doctrine of the "best of possible worlds"² which best explains his view of nature.

Few philosophical theses are so renowned as Leibniz's illustrious claim that this is the best of all possible worlds. Ironically, the doctrine's great fame is due more to the ridicule it received in Candide than to broad public familiarity with Leibniz's ideas. Even among philosophers well acquainted with Leibnizian texts, the subject of God's standard of perfection has only recently begun to receive detailed discussion.³

Leibniz thought of God as one who non-randomly chooses among possible states of affairs. For example, he claims that God "among all possible creatures he chooses the best and creates it."⁴ In Leibnizian terminology, which contemporary metaphysics has borrowed, God chooses among "possible worlds," and the world which He selects is the


²Leibniz, Theodicy, 31.


⁴Leibniz, Theodicy, 31.
best of all possible worlds.¹ For if God is essentially good, then it is difficult to see why He would not choose the best of the alternatives available to Him.² However, God, being perfectly wise, powerful, and good, is not only obliged to choose the best possibility, but is free to create any world He chooses.

Leibniz's Understanding of Nature

One of the most influential of Leibniz's contributions to philosophy is his doctrine of possible worlds.³ According to Benson Mates, the view of Leibniz on nature may as well be described as "The Story of Creation according to Leibniz."⁴ Leibniz indicates that there must have been a best world—there can been no tie for first place—else God would have created nothing, for He does nothing without a reason.⁵ For Leibniz, there are no two possible worlds which contain the same elements. Many possible worlds could have existed, but God chose one best world from an infinite number of possibilities.⁶ David Williamson's observation outlines Leibniz's basic yardstick for assessing possible worlds:

¹Ibid., 128.


³Leibniz, Theodicy, 31.


⁵Leibniz, Theodicy, 31-32.

⁶Ibid.
For Leibniz, the best world is the one that contains the maximum variety of phenomena and the maximum simplicity of laws. How this standard should be interpreted has been the subject of lively debate in literature, and Blumenfeld canvasses the various possibilities. He rejects the idea that for Leibniz, variety and simplicity pull in different directions and that God is forced into a trade-off in order to achieve maximum overall perfection. Instead, Blumenfeld argues that our world is the one in which both variety and simplicity are at a maximum.1

According to Leibniz, God surveyed all possible options and created the best. He claims: "But all those who acknowledge that God produces the best plan having chosen it from among all possible ideas of the universe"2 must also admit "he there finds man inclined by the original imperfection of creatures to misuse his free will and to plunge into misery."3 Leibniz concludes, "God has chosen the best of all possible worlds."4

Therefore, Leibnizians would argue, the current order of nature with evil and suffering is essential to the originally intended natural order.5 The central question which poses a dilemma to this position is why evil is necessary in the best of all possible worlds. The Leibnizian answer is that this world with its evil reflects God's greater glory.6

John Hick states that Leibniz “does not attempt to demonstrate from the

1David Williamson, Voltaire: Candide (London: Grant & Cutler, 1997), 383.
2Ibid.
3Ibid.
4Ibid.
5Leibniz, Theodicy, 31-32.

6For a brief discussion of Leibniz's premise that God created the best of all possible worlds, see Thane Hutcherson Ury, “The Evolving Face of God as Creator: Early Nineteenth-Century Traditionalists and Accommodationist Theodical Responses in British Religious Thought to Paleonatural Evil in the Fossil Record” (Ph.D. dissertation, Andrews University, 2001), 101-04.
appearances of nature that this is indeed the best possible world.”¹ This current world
with unbelievable evil and suffering is “the best of all possible worlds” because this is the
world God chose to create. In spite of all the bad things that happen from time to time and
the amount of evil that exists, any other world would have been worse.²

Leibniz’s God is infinitely wise, good, powerful, and perfect, whose knowledge
and benevolence are without bounds and whose will and power are necessarily
efficacious. Moreover, God wishes, with respect to the realm of nature, to make the most
beautiful and perfect world possible, to best express and honor the qualities and
perfections possessed by God Himself. Even so, the world which God created appears
imperfect in its details and full of disorders of every variety. It is no wonder that
Leibnizian critics ask if this universe is the best that God can do? For instance, David
Williamson notes:

God, Leibniz claims, does everything in the most desirable way, and cannot have
made things any better than they are. This is the best of all possible worlds, he
insists, but what makes it best is obviously not the absence of pain and other
apparent evils, nor is that these are simply outweighed by a great abundance of
pleasures and other good things. Rather, God has chosen the one out of the
infinitely many possible worlds that best combines simplicity of laws or
“hypotheses” and richness of phenomena. The world must contain the greatest
amount of possibility or essence but be governed by laws which are of maximum


²Williamson, 12-14. The book’s main character, Dr. Pangloss, though
experiencing one unbelievable evil after another, continues repeating the Leibnizian
mantra, “This is the best of all possible worlds.” Voltaire’s other characters in the story
also dispose of their troubles in a similar fashion, claiming that some good will come out
of evil.
Williamson further explains that, for Leibniz, God utilizes limited resources for the maximum and the best overall result:

God is like a good architect who "utilizes his location and the funds destined for the building in the most advantageous manner" or like an "excellent geometer who knows how to find the best construction for a problem." The world we experience may not seem perfect to us in its details, it may be full of apparent irregularities and suffering. But Leibniz says, "I do not believe that which is best and most regular is always convenient [commode] at the same time for all creatures. . . . Evil and misfortune are permitted by God but not positively willed, since they occur by means of the laws of nature that he has established, they are a part of the rich variety of phenomena which, following from and in combination with those laws, constitute the best overall result."  

According to Leibniz, God chose from an infinity of possible worlds, paying particular attention not just to the created theater itself, but especially to its relationship with the laws of nature and grace—laws that must be of maximum simplicity. For Leibniz, there is a sense in which God actually wills or intends evil and sin to exist or occur, but only with a "permissive will." If God could diminish or even eliminate apparent imperfections, pain, and unhappiness, He could interfere with His laws and thus violate the simplicity of the divine ways and detract from the overall and maximum metaphysical goodness or perfection of the world.

It appears that the fundamental distinction of the real world from the totality of all

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1Ibid., 577-78. See Leibniz’s *Theodicy*, 204. Leibniz offers his own assessment in *Theodicy*: “The ways of God are the most simple and uniform: for he chooses rules that least restrict one another. They are also the most productive in proportion to the simplicity of ways and means. . . . One may, indeed, reduce these two conditions, simplicity and productivity, to a single advantage, which is to produce as much perfection as is possible” (2:208).

2Williamson, 578.
possible worlds is an application of the mathematical principle of maximization. Leibniz himself pointed out the connection between the concept of the best of all possible worlds with the principle of maximization noted above. This world must be good and it must be the best of all possible worlds. This chain of thought is the basis of his Theodicy, and Leibniz states at the beginning of the work: ‘God is the first reason of things.’ However, Leibniz does not confine himself to offering an exclusively metaphysical standard for evaluating possible worlds, rather, he argues that the actual world is not only the best metaphysically, but also the best morally. It is in that possible world that human happiness is at a maximum. Indeed, Leibniz appears to believe that the world’s greatest moral perfection can be derived from it having the most metaphysical perfection.

John Dewey compares Leibniz’s mechanical explanation of nature, with that of Descartes. He claims that Descartes had said that the essence of the physical world is extension. “Not so,” replied Leibniz, “it is motion.” These answers mark two typical ways of regarding nature. According to one, nature is something essentially rigid and static; whatever change occurs in it is a change of form, of arrangement, an external

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1 Leibniz, *Theodicy*, 127.

2 Ibid.

3 The assertion that the world that God created is the best of all possible worlds forms the climax of Leibniz’s *Theodicy*. Voltaire mocked Leibniz when he centered his satirical novel *Candide* on this theme (trans. and ed. Peter Gray [New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1963]). In his introduction to *Candide*, David Williamson notes that Voltaire “aimed to seize optimism by the throat” (12).

modification. According to the other, nature is something essentially dynamic and active which changes according to law.¹

Leibniz, in his interpretation of nature, finds to some degree continuity and order in the world.² Dewey explains:

Nature never makes leaps, everything in nature has a sufficient reason why it is as it is; these are the philosophic generalizations which Leibniz finds hidden in the applicability of mathematics to physical science. Reason finds itself everywhere expressed in nature, and the law of reason is unity in diversity continually.³

There must be a sufficient reason for God choosing to create one particular world from among possible worlds. In Leibniz's opinion, God chose the world which has the greatest maximum of perfection.⁴ He explains: "It is true that one may imagine possible worlds without sin and without unhappiness, and one could make some like utopian or sevarambian romances: but these same worlds again would be very inferior to ours in goodness."⁵ Furthermore, according to Leibniz, God has created man in such a way that He chooses what seems to Him to be the best.⁶

Again, the principle of sufficient reason proposes that it is ideally possible to assign a maximum amount of perfection to every possible world. God has designed

¹Ibid.
²Leibniz, Theodicy, 128-29.
³Dewey, 37.
⁴Leibniz, Theodicy, 128-29.
⁵Ibid., 129.
⁶Copleston, 282-84.
humanity in such a way that individuals will choose what is best for them; and for an
infinite mind man's actions are certain a priori. Yet to act in accordance with a judgment
of the reason is to act freely.¹ Theodicists assume that God is all-knowing and all-good.
He created the "best possible worlds."²

In summary, according to Leibniz, evil, sin, and imperfection are an essential part
of a perfect world that is the best of the possible worlds. The present state of nature with
its decay and death represents the intended condition from the beginning. Leibniz re-
affirms that this world, with all its imperfection, suffering, and sin, is indeed the best of
all possible worlds. In this study, Leibniz's assertion implies that death and suffering in
the animal kingdom existed long before the Fall of man. Although Leibniz's concern is
the current state of nature, he says very little about the origin of nature apart from the fact
that he claims God chose to create the best of all possible worlds. Leibniz appears to be
mute about the future of nature. In the next section, the Darwinian view of nature is
considered.

The Darwinian View of Nature

Introduction

The term "Darwinism"³ originally referred to a theory of organic evolution

¹Ibid. Copleston, concludes that "creation is not absolute; but, if God creates it He
certainly, though freely, creates the best possible world" (285).

²Leibniz, Theodicy, 228.

³See also Charles Darwin, Journal of Researches into the Geology and Natural
History of the Countries Visited during the Voyage of H. M. S. Beagles (London: John
Murray, 1845). This semipopular account of the voyage is reprinted in The Descent of
propounded by Charles Robert Darwin as an explanation of organic change in nature. However, “Darwinism” is not necessarily synonymous with the word “evolution.” Rather, “Darwinism” denotes Darwin’s specific view of how the process of evolution came about. His view of the origin of life is “descent with modification” and involves the process of natural selection. On July 1, 1850, this famous English naturalist and Alfred Russell Wallace (1828-1913) stated their theories of evolution in a series of papers delivered before the Linnaean Society. However, Darwin, rushed to publish his findings in *Origin of Species* in 1859 when it appeared that Wallace was about to publish a similar theory. *Origin of Species* is the first formulation of the mechanism of evolution and was said to be supported by an impressive array of data.¹ His companion work on the topic of evolution, *The Descent of Man, and Selection in Relation to Sex*, appeared in 1871.

Evolution theory presupposes that all life forms have descended from a common ancestor by means of natural selection, through a process of gradual change or modification over long periods of time. Thus, evolution is a broad concept that encompasses nearly all alternatives to special Creation, which proposes that God created the basic life forms in six literal days. It is not surprising that thinkers since the pre-

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Socratic philosophers have speculated about evolution.\textsuperscript{1}

**Darwin Develops His Idea**

Darwin was born on February 12, 1809, in Shrewsbury, England, into one of the very best of rural England's intellectual aristocracy. His father, Robert Darwin, a successful and well-connected physician, had no interest in religion. His mother, Susannah Wedgwood, was the daughter of Josiah Wedgwood, a famous potter. She died when Darwin was eight years old and he did not remember much about her. His grandfather, Erasmus Darwin (1731-1802), a physician, died several years prior to the younger Darwin's birth. Although the latter never met his grandfather, nevertheless, he was influenced by his grandfather's writings about evolution.\textsuperscript{2}

Acting as his father's assistant, the young Darwin showed promise for a career in medicine. Although he went to Edinburgh to study medicine, he later admitted that he took no interest in his studies and was a failure. He renounced a career in medicine largely because he realized his father was going to leave him an estate that would make

\textsuperscript{1}John D. Morris, 10. Henry Fairfield Osborne argues that "evolution has reached its present fullness by slow additions in twenty-four centuries. When the truths and absurdities of Greek, Medieval, and sixteenth to nineteenth century speculation and observation are brought together, it becomes clear that they form a continuous whole, that the influences of early upon later thought are greater than has been believed, that Darwin owes more even to the Greeks than we have ever recognized" (*From the Greeks to Darwin*, 2nd ed. [New York: Scribners, 1929], 3-4).

\textsuperscript{2}Nora Barlow, ed., *The Autobiography of Charles Darwin with Original Omissions Restored* (New York: Norton, 1958), 27, 45-48. Reverend William Paley's 1802 book *Natural Theology: Or Evidences of the Existence and Attributes of the Deity, Collected from the Appearances of Nature* came to be one of the most influential texts of the early nineteenth century. Darwin was born seven years after its publication which had a lot of influence during his day.
him independently wealthy for life. His father once said to him: "You care for nothing but shooting dogs, and rat-catching, and you will be a disgrace to yourself and all your family." ¹

After Darwin's failure to be a physician, his father recommended that he take up the study of theology at Christ's College, Cambridge.² Although he eventually earned a degree in theology, it was evident that he had no real interest in this area either. His decision to study theology was primarily in obedience to his father's wish that he do something so as not to disgrace the family.³

In 1831, following Darwin's graduation, Reverend Professor John Henslow, Cambridge Professor of Botany and his advisor, encouraged him to apply for the post of naturalist on the H.M.S. Beagle's voyage to the coasts of Patagonia, Tierra del Fuego, Chile, and Peru. At first, Captain Fitzroy, the able and highly respected commander of the Beagle, doubted Darwin's suitability for the voyage.⁴ Despite the Captain's initial

¹Barlow, 28; see also Gertrude Himmerarb, Darwin and the Darwin Revolution (Garden City: Doubleday, 1959), 39.

²The college where Darwin received his theological training was known for gambling, drunkenness, moral laxity, and lack of discipline. The major interest for students was food and drink. One member of the faculty seems to have spent much of his time at the horse races, while a high official of the school is said to have never opened his mouth without an oath (Bolton Davidheiser, Evolution and the Christian Faith [n.p.: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1969], 58).


⁴It is alleged that the Captain did not like the shape of Darwin's nose. For further details see William Irvine, Apes, Angels, and Victorians: The Story of Darwin, Huxley, and Evolution (London: Weiderfeld & Nicolson, 1956).
uncertainty, the two men struck a genuine friendship which was maintained long after the voyage ended. Even though Darwin was recommended by Henslow for the post of ship’s naturalist, he did not officially occupy that position. Robert McKormick, the ship’s surgeon, was the official naturalist. Darwin apparently traveled on the *Beagle* as a companion to Captain Fitzroy.¹

Just prior to the *Beagle’s* five-year voyage (December 1831-September 1836), the first volume of Lyell’s *Principles of Geology* was published. It was among the few books that Darwin took to read during the voyage. The book quickly became his constant companion. Henslow had recommended Lyell’s book to Darwin because he thought it contained facts that would be of importance during his travels. Nevertheless, he advised Darwin to “on no account to accept the views therein advocated.”² But this advice was not heeded, and Darwin’s acceptance of Lyell’s theory marked the turning point in his life. Upon returning to England, he worked for many years before refine his ideas before writing a detailed account of evolution in 1844.³

¹For details about key characters in Darwin’s life, see Gamaliel Bradford, *Darwin* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1926).


One of Darwin's biographers notes that "Darwin’s point of departure from Orthodoxy on this voyage was, of course, his reading of the first volume of Lyell’s *Principles of Geology.*" Another biographer calls it "the book which influenced him more than any other." Still another remarks that "possibly, without Lyell’s *Principles of Geology,* Darwin would not have written his *Origin of Species.*"

In 1859, when *Origin of Species* was published, most scientists and many theologians acknowledged the validity of Scripture and accepted its account of Creation as being literal. Only a few scientists, who were primarily geologists, questioned the biblical account of the origin of life. Most Christians, on the other hand, considered any attempt to question the truth of the Bible as nothing less than blasphemy, believing that it

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4 An example of how unquestioning the view of believers was, is encapsulated in Charles Murray Nairne's *Paley's Evidences of Christianity: with Notes and Additions* (New York: Robert Carter & Brothers, 1876). Charles Nairne indicates that this book was a standard and well-respected religious text that was published in its twenty-third edition in 1859. Darwin certainly must have read one of the earlier editions while a student at Cambridge, and undoubtedly understood its two essential admonitions (according to the book’s editor Charles Nairne): (1) to study the evidences for and against Christianity with an open, receptive mind, and to avoid prejudices and prejudgetment; and (2) because the Bible is completely true, it can be studied as such. Paley displayed logical reasoning based on the above injunctions, which explains the success of his book until the Darwinian theory of evolution delivered a simultaneous blow to Paley’s logic and the theory of Creation (ibid., 1-18.).
was the true record of the works of God. Archbishop James Ussher, using the chronology found in Scripture, suggested that Creation occurred in 4004 B.C.¹ Other scholars refined his methods and determined that Adam was created on October 23, 4004 B.C., at exactly 9:00 a.m.²

**Darwin’s Understanding of Nature**

The origin of nature

Concerning *Natura Originalis*, Darwinian theory presupposes that all living things evolved by a gradual, natural process—from nonliving matter to simple micro-organisms, leading eventually to man. The underlying presupposition of the theory is anti-theistic, and is described in naturalistic terms, meaning that the process is not directed by any purposeful intelligence, but it involves chance mechanism guided by natural selection. In other words, nature was not designed and has no purpose, and that human beings are the product of blind natural processes that are completely impersonal.³

Charles Darwin made the theory a scientific concept by showing that major transformations could occur in very small steps by purely natural means. The Darwinian theory supposes that one kind of creature by some small genetic mutations could gradually transform into another. For example, there could be a change or transformation from single-celled bacteria to complex plants and animals, from fish to mammals, and


²Ibid.

³Johnson, 3-10.
from apes to men.\textsuperscript{1} In the Darwinian view of nature, new species appeared during the long
course of the earth's history by a natural process called "descent with modification." The
second proposition is that this evolutionary process can be extended to account for nearly
all the diversity of life, because all living things descended from a very small number of
common ancestors, perhaps a single microscopic ancestor. The third proposition, and the
one most distinctive to Darwinism, is that this vast process is guided by natural selection
or "survival of the fittest," a guiding force so effective that it could accomplish prodigies
of biological craftsmanship that people in previous times had thought to require the
guiding hand of a creator.\textsuperscript{2}

The present status of nature

Darwin's \textit{Natura Continua} suggests that the process of nature that brings into
existence new species is on-going, wholly naturalistic, and non-static. Nature 'selects'
which forms will die or live and reproduce; only the fittest survive. The main points of
Darwin's theory at this point claim that all organisms produce far more offspring than are
able to survive, some of which will survive and produce offspring, while others will die.
In other words, evolution presupposes a long history of animal death through deep time,
which is characterized with a struggle. Death and the struggle for existence are crucial to
the process of evolution and essential characteristics in an ever-increasing order of life.\textsuperscript{3}

\textsuperscript{1}Ibid., 10-14.

\textsuperscript{2}Ibid., 15-16.

\textsuperscript{3}See Darwin, \textit{Origin}, 1:79; 2:305. Beginning with the publication of Darwin's
\textit{Origins}, a rising tide of evolutionism entered the scientific, educational, and religious
The struggle for survival acts as the driving force behind evolution. Many mediocre species are killed in every generation, and only the prime specimens do survive. Because Darwinism views the biological species as evolving primarily by means of chance variation and natural selection, it overrules any divine activity.

Darwin's historicization of nature is well articulated by Stephen Toulmin, who suggests that

from the late sixteenth century on, again, mathematical and experimental natural philosophers in western Europe thought of nature as creation: as fashioned by divine design, to God's own fixed pattern and specification. How could merely human thinkers decipher the design for such a divinely-created nature? It was, presumably, within God's power to give us the intellects required to do that stupendous task. While separating nature from humanity, matter from mind, and causes from reasons, proponents of the new, seventeenth-century science thus preserved the earlier picture of nature as static; and this picture was reinforced by the current scale of historical time, which encompassed the entire life of the world within a few thousand years.¹

He explains that from 1750, the accepted scale of historical time was forcibly expanded from a few thousands years to many million:

Only from 1750 on did the new historical point of view begin to put down serious roots. At first, it made inroads only into the human sciences, but it soon spread into natural sciences: first into the history of the earth, by way of paleontology, and historical geology, and next into biology, with the discovery of organic evolution, which led up to Darwin's theory of variation and natural selection. As a result, the accepted scale of historical time was forcibly expanded from a few establishments. By the turn of the century, evolution theory was being taught as fact in most major universities throughout the world, where it had become dogma. See Gish, *Creation Scientists Answer Their Critics*, 1; Michael Behe, *Darwin's Black Box: The Biochemical Challenge to Evolution* (New York: Free Press, 1996).

thousand years to many million.¹

Before Darwin, the prevalent view of many religiously inclined persons can be seen in the thought of William Paley, who argues eloquently that nature shows the effect of the activity of a divine designer. However the publication of *Origin of Species* was a radical departure from the nineteenth-century religious thought. The book claims that now nature "selects" those members of a species best adapted to the environment in which they find themselves. The idea that plants and animals had evolved constituted a blow to orthodox theological opinion, for it replaced the divine Creation of species with a natural process and implied that man was not unique, but similar to other animals.²

Evangelicals who subscribe to this view of nature are called theistic evolutionists. They cannot bring themselves to oppose any widely accepted scientific ideas, and so they accept Darwinism. Apparently, Darwinian evolution to these evangelicals is merely the method by which God used to create every living thing. The majority of theistic evolutionists have a somewhat liberal view of the Bible, and often regard the early chapters of Genesis as a collection of Hebrew myths.³

¹Ibid., 234-35.


The future of nature

Concerning *Natura Nova*, Darwinian evolution suggests that man is improving and will soon approach Utopia.¹ It denies historic Adam and Eve. Man is depicted as having developed from an animal ancestor after a gradual change and transformation from a single-celled organism. In the future, man is set to overcome disease, crime, and even death; and yet be a better steward of the environment.²

However, only in the twentieth century did neo-Darwinism³ offer a new assessment of nature. It is based on newer knowledge, unfamiliar to Darwin’s original theory. The modern conception of evolution would be seen by Darwin as more intricate and complex than he had originally imagined.⁴ This new understanding of the origin of life has now reached the same position of reverence in some quarters of science that the theory of Creation had in 1859. Most biologists not only accept some form of neo-Darwinism, but accept it as a biological law which is the complete and only truth about the origin and evolution of life on earth.⁵

With regard to *Natura Nova*, neo-Darwinism offers a new scientific evaluation of

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²Ibid.

³Neo-Darwinism can be defined as the modern understanding of Darwin’s theory in light of recent trends in the study of origin and evolution.

⁴Hayward, 8.

the future. The universe, instead of ending in Utopia, is doomed to physical decay and will eventually decay or collapse, ending in cosmic futility.\footnote{Stoeger, 19-28.}

The neo-Darwinian theory has become a modern overview of Darwin's theory, attempting to restate it in the context of subsequent biological discoveries. Evolution is seen to have occurred in genes as they changed randomly and where the associated changes to the characteristics or features which are controlled by the changed genes have improved the chances of the offspring surviving and propagating the species in preference to its unchanged contemporaries. Hence, the gradual accumulation of these advantageous genes in descendent lineage has resulted in the progressive appearance of new and more complex species, while the disadvantaged genes have become extinct.\footnote{See Michael A. Corey, \textit{Back to Darwin: The Scientific Case for Deistic Evolution} (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1994).} The modern scientific field of genetic engineering is seeking to restate Darwin's theory in terms of the new discoveries.

The three contrasting views of nature discussed above provide the philosophical background for the discussion of nature among contemporary American evangelicals in the twentieth century. Henry Morris and Bernard Ramm are leaders of two contrasting world-view camps in the evangelical discussion of nature, as will be seen in the next section. They represent a diverse worldview of nature. Morris is considered in this study as the leader of the evangelical special Creationists or strict concordists. While Ramm is considered the leader of the evangelical progressive creationists or broad concordists.
The Contemporary American Evangelical Discussion of Nature

The Special Creationist's or Strict Concordist's Worldview

The contemporary context of the evangelical discussion of nature has proximal roots to various scientific and professional associations that were established after 1935 in North America as proponents sought to outline their views of nature. We turn first to the proximal root of the contemporary American evangelical discussion of nature in the twentieth century.

In general, the philosophical framework of Milton, Leibniz, and Darwin as discussed above provided the basis of the earlier twentieth-century discussion of nature by the evangelicals in North America. A Seventh-day Adventist scholar and author, George McGready Price, started a discussion on recent-creationism in America during the revival of recent-creationism by Price came at a time when creationism was at its lowest ebb during the first quarter of the twentieth century. As early as 1935, various associations were formed by the evangelicals to respond to Price's geological ideas. He argued that the Flood accounted for the earth's geological structure and opposed the bulk of American creationists who accepted the geologic evidence of a great age for the earth. Price inspired a new breed of evangelical creationists who became outspoken advocates of the Flood geology. Price's Flood geology was not without opposition. The climax of evangelical contemporary discussions of nature was the publication of Bernard Ramm's 1954 work *The Christian View of Science and Scripture*. In this classical work which seemed to support the Leibnizian view of nature, Ramm kept the strain of broad concordism alive by urging fellow evangelicals to repudiate "narrow bibliolatry" and adapt what he calls "progressive creationism," a position that is between fiat Creation and theistic evolution. He accepted much of the evolutionary picture and was a believer of an "old earth" created in a lengthy process of billions of years. Such attempts by Ramm to espouse a broad concordance in harmonizing science and Gen 1 stretched the meaning of creationism to almost the point of accepting divinely guided evolution. This provoked a backlash among the increasingly outspoken advocates of George McGready Price's geology. In response to Ramm, in 1961, John C. Whitcomb, Jr., and Henry M. Morris published *The Genesis Flood*, which sought to establish a recent special Creation and Flood geology as the only orthodox understanding of Genesis. In a more narrow or strict
the early twentieth century along the lines of Miltonian understanding, His several books, including *The New Geology* (1923) and *The Modern Flood Theory of Geology* (1935), triggered a new wave of discussion of nature that swept through the country. This discussion resulted in a major realignment of evangelicals into two main camps as they struggled to harmonize the result of Genesis exegesis and modern science.

The establishment of the Religious and Science Association (RSA) in 1935 was the creationists' first attempt to create their own society. Dudley Joseph Whitney, a rancher with a B.S. degree in Agriculture, carried out most of the organizing tasks under the guidance of George McCready Price. While finding no agreement on the meaning of Gen 1 within the fundamentalist community, Whitney, an ardent advocate of Price's Flood geology, decided to affirm this vital issue through the new society, the RSA, which sought to find agreement on the meaning of Gen 1 among creationists and ardent followers of Price. The efforts of Flood geologists to make a consensus were fruitless, and the divisions became so great that they destroyed the association itself, with the group splitting into three different interpretations of Gen 1: Flood geology, day-age theory, and the gap theory.

Concordism, Morris disagreed with Ramm and other evangelicals regarding the approximate age of man and the earth. As a "young earth" creationist, he held that the earth was created six to ten thousand years ago in six literal twenty-four-hour days. He seemed to espouse a Miltonian view of nature.

1Hayward, 76-77.

2For a detailed history of creationist activities during this period, see Ronald Numbers, *The Creationists*, 102-39 and 158-213. The society simultaneously endorsed three different interpretations of Flood geology, in order to explain major geological phenomena: (1) the formation of fossils and geological strata by the Noachian Flood; (2)
Whitney disagreed with gap theorist L. Allen Higley of Wheaton College, whom he and Price had earlier recruited to be the president of the association. Though Higley had prestige and scientific credentials, and was a professor of a leading evangelical college, holding a Ph.D. in organic chemistry from the University of Chicago, he continued to show an unfailing commitment to the gap interpretation of Gen 1. Contrary to Price's and Whitney's optimism about converting Higley to Flood geology, in the 1936 conference, Higley, to the disappointment of Whitney, focused on the subject of antievolution, rather than the differing views of Creation on Gen 1. Higley thought such a theme would bind a wide range of creationists invited to the conference, especially gap theorists and day-age supporters, to a common cause. Higley invited a mainstream geologist to present the scientifically orthodox view of an ancient earth within the evolutionary framework. Even more, he praised the evolutionary geologist as the best performer of the entire convention. Outraged by Higley's unashamed tolerance of evolutionary geology, Whitney declared the conference an utter disaster. Soon the internal division consumed all the energy and, eventually, the life of the organization itself. By the

“Day-Age Theory,” which accommodated the modern geological time scale by interpreting the six Creation “days” as indefinite geological ages; and (3) the “Gap Theory,” which accommodated modern geology and allowed an indefinite time gap between the grammatical pause between “in the beginning” (Gen 1:1) and the Creation of Eden. Unlike Day-Age theorists, Gap theorists accept the literal, 24-hour-day interpretation, but assume that several cataclysms and creations occurred prior to the Edenic Creation. During those turbulent periods before the Edenic Creation, fossils and geological strata were formed. Flood geologists find this idea unacceptable because it implies that death existed before the Fall of Adam. Furthermore, multiple cataclysms leave no major geological role for the Noachian Flood, which Flood geologists cherish as the backbone of their geology (ibid.).

1Ibid., 108-13.
end of 1937 the organization was on its deathbed.\footnotemark[1]

In 1938, shortly after the death of the RSA, the creationists started yet another venture. They named the new society the “Society for the Study of Creation, the Deluge, and Related Science,” popularly known as the “Deluge Geology Society” (DGS).\footnotemark[2] As with the RSA, the new society was firmly committed to the literal interpretation of Genesis. In 1941, the society began to publish its own scholarly publication, *Bulletin of Deluge*.

Henry M. Morris correctly observes that this new society was founded by the same key players of the RSA:

George McCready Price, Dudley Joseph Whitney, and Harold Clark may have given up on the Religion and Science Association, but they still felt the need for an organization with the same purpose, yet more firmly committed to strict creationism and the worldwide, geologically significant Flood of Noah. Therefore, they soon set about organizing another society which would meet these specifications.\footnotemark[3]

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\footnotetext[2]{The Deluge Society had various official and unofficial names during its existence from 1938-1945. First known as the Creation Deluge Society, it was later more formally organized as the Society for the Study of Deluge Geology and Related Sciences and, in January 1943, its name was changed to the Society for the Study of Creation, the Deluge, and Related Sciences. Although the society’s leaders objected, it is not surprising that such an unwieldy title was abbreviated to the Deluge Society by most people (Henry M. Morris, *A History of Modern Creationism* [Santee, CA: Institute for Creation Research, 1993], 133).}

\footnotetext[3]{Ibid., 132. Morris notes that lessons were learned in the abortive history of the Religion and Science Association. The most obvious was that compromise for expediency’s sake does not work. Without Higley, Dawson, the Wheaton men, and others who wanted to compromise with the geological-age system, the founders feared the Association would be too weak and not survive, a well-founded fear that eventually came...}
The founders of this new society tried to avoid the mistakes and internal divisions that led to the premature demise of the RSA by creating a more doctrinally homogeneous organization. The membership seemed to have been open to Flood geologists who believed in a six-literal-day Creation and the Noachian Flood as the cause of major geological phenomena.\(^1\)

Morris notes that this new society became more successful than the RSA: "The Creation-Deluge Society was immensely more successful in recruiting members than the Religion and Science Association had been. By 1943 it had almost 500 members and in June of 1945, just before the unfortunate takeover of the Society by an 'Old Earth' minority and its rapid dissolution thereafter, it had more than 600 members."\(^2\) The main source of problems this time was division among the younger university-trained scientists in the DGS. As a result of being exposed to modern disciplines, they found it difficult to accept some of the ideas held by their mentors, especially Price.\(^3\)

true. Another weakness was the scarcity of qualified creationist scientists, which was not a fault of the Association, however. The Religion and Science Association was a noble and needed pioneering venture, and the seeds which were sown would eventually bear fruit (131-32).

\(^1\)Numbers, The Creationists, 118. Despite the effort of creating a more doctrinally homogeneous organization with a conservative bent, internal disharmony eventually brought the same fate to it as to the Religion and Science Association.

\(^2\)Morris, History of Modern Creationism, 132. For a historical background of the development of organized anti-creationism in America, see Hee-Joo Park, "Anti-creationism in America" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Melbourne, Australia, 1997).

\(^3\)Perhaps the best example is the bitter dispute between Harold Clark, the first Adventist to obtain a graduate degree in biology, and his mentor, Price. Clark denied a uniform sequence that was so important in Price's Flood geology. Price was infuriated by the denial of his long-held principle. Although Clark still believed the Noachian Flood to
Apart from several disputes, more serious damage to the DGS was made by the controversy over the issues that had destroyed the RSA. The dispute over the post-Edenic speciation had returned, this time between Harold Clark and Frank Marsh, the first Adventist Ph.D. biologist. While both accepted micro-evolution within the originally created kind, Marsh complained that Clark went too far. All these controversies and disputes did not help to strengthen the society.

As with the RSA, the source of disintegration of the DGS was the growing presence of a more liberal attitude within the society toward the interpretation of Gen 1 and evolution. Furthermore, with the advent of radiometric dating, some more highly educated, younger intellectuals of the DGS felt pressure to reconcile this forceful evidence for an ancient earth with their literal reading of Gen 1. One easy solution was to put a gap between vss. 1 and 2 of Genesis to allow the needed time of one and one half billion years, the mainstream view of the age of the earth at the time.

be the main cause of geological phenomena, he denied a uniform sequence of Price's Flood geology and stood his ground (Numbers, *The Creationists*, 84).

1 Frank L. Marsh graduated in 1940 with a Ph.D. in Botany from University of Nebraska. He was the first Seventh-day Adventist to earn a Ph.D. in the field of Biology. Marsh started as a professor at Union College. In 1963, he became a member of the team of ten creationists who formed the Creation Research Society (CRS), which published the *Creation Research Society Quarterly*. He was the only SDA of the 10. Marsh was voted a fellow of the CRS in 1976. He was a professor of Biology at Andrews University at the time.

2 For the disputes over the post-Edenic speciation, see Numbers, *The Creationists*, 84.

3 Ibid., 159. Numbers observes that “the ASA liberals proved so successful in nudging evangelicals toward evolution [and against Flood geology] . . . they helped to spark a conservative Creationist counter offensive in the 1960s” (ibid.).
The Progressive Creationists or Broad Concordists

The influence of liberals became even more visible in another science-religion organization, the American Scientific Affiliation (ASA). It was founded three years after the formation of the DGS by evangelical scientists who needed a more tolerant organization than the earlier Flood geologist association.

The American Scientific Affiliation was formed in September 1941 by five evangelical engineers and scientists at the Moody Bible Institute in Chicago. The purpose of this new organization was to discuss and explore the relationship between science and religion. The Religion and Science Association, which had been founded three years previously, and the Creation-Deluge Society, formed in 1938, were not broad enough to include the more liberal "progressive creationists" and "gap creationists." The ASA sought earnestly to fill this vacuum and to engage with the mainstream academic world.

Alton Everest, then an electrical engineer on the faculty of Oregon State College

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2 Numbers, The Creationists, 159.

3 Many evangelicals resented the fact that earlier associations had been dominated by strict young-earth creationists who were Seventh-day Adventists. The American Scientific Affiliation became thus "broad enough to include other than strict young-earth creationists. It seemed to satisfy a need for a more tolerant organization for the broader evangelical community" (ibid.); see also William L. Craig, "Evangelical and Evolution: An Analysis of the Debate between the Creation Research Society and the American Scientific Affiliation," Journal of Evangelical Theological Society 17, no. 3 (1974): 131-48.
in Corvallis, played a central role in forming this new organization. He became acquainted with other evangelical scientists through the influence of Irwin A. Moor, who became widely known for his "Sermons from Science" during World War II. Everest, sponsored by Moody Bible Institute, and the president of Moody Institute, Dr. Will H. Houghton, undertook the task of selecting a name and preparing a constitution for the new organization.¹

Moor and Houghton sent a letter to a number of scientists of known orthodoxy, inviting them to an organization meeting in Chicago scheduled for September 2-4, 1941.² All the men invited were creationists, but they were not as conservative and strict as those in the Creation-Deluge Society. These evangelical scientists seem to accommodate modern geology through the gap theory or the day-age theory. They disagreed with Flood geologists that life had begun on the earth only a few thousand years ago and, therefore, the Flood must account for geological strata. The influence of the liberals was not confined to the issue of Gen 1 and geology, but was extended to evolution as well. Although antievolution sentiment prevailed among its members when the ASA was


²Those who attended this Chicago meeting were Peter W. Stoner, Professor of Mathematics and Astronomy at Pasadena City College in California and author of a book (Peter W. Stoner, *From Science to Souls* [Chicago: Moody Press, 1944]) advocating the day-age theory; Dr. John P. van Haitsma, Professor of Organic Science at Calvin College in Michigan and sponsor of the Nature and Scripture Study Club from 1935 to 1942; Dr. Russell D. Sturgis, Professor of Chemistry at Ursinus College in Pennsylvania; and Dr. Irving A. Cowperthwaite, Plant Engineer for the Thomson Wire company in Massachusetts. The first three were members of the Baptist church, Stoner was a member of the Congregational Church, and van Haitsma came from a Christian Reformed background (Hartzler, 24-7; and Morris, *A History of Modern Creationism*, 147-62).
originally formed, it soon began to shift to progressive and even theistic evolution. The most significant consequence of this liberal shift, and its growing influence with the evangelical community, was that the strict creationists felt threatened and, therefore, began to make serious efforts to reinforce their position.¹

The ideological battle lines among evangelicals were drawn during this first organization meeting of September 2-4, 1941 when, at the invitation of the president of the Moody Bible Institute, a group of five evangelical Christian scientists met in Chicago to establish the American Scientific Affiliation (ASA) as noted earlier. These scientists initially opposed evolution but soon came to accept organic development over time, punctuated by divine interventions, especially for the creation of matter, life, and humans. More liberal evangelicals have since increasingly identified evolution as simply God’s method of Creation and ignored the problem of reconciling science and scripture.² This new realignment will be the basis of discussion which follows.

During the period after the Second World War, as the ASA drifted toward theistic evolution under the influence of the liberals, Bernard Ramm published The Christian

¹It was J. Laurence Kulp who finally expelled Flood geology. Kulp, a geochemist who became an authority on the application of radiocarbon dating to geological problems, joined the ASA in 1945. As a young fundamentalist, he had first accepted Flood geology, then gap-theory, and now adopted a metaphorical interpretation of the Genesis story of Creation. When Everest, president of the ASA, approached him with a proposal to demolish Flood geology at the 1949 annual ASA convention, he readily accepted the proposal since he was convinced that Flood geology hurt the propagation of the gospel among the educated people (Numbers, The Creationists, 166-69).

²Theistic evolutionists who are devoted Christian evangelicals include J. van Till of Calvin College and many members of the evangelical American Scientific Affiliation, who see little or no evidence of God in nature, but who, for theological reasons, believe God created the world by means of evolution.
View of Science and Scripture in 1954. The book ignited vigorous responses from the young-earth creationists and set the stage for major realignment among the evangelicals. Ramm, an evangelical philosopher with a Ph.D. in philosophy from the University of Southern California, emerged as a leader of a liberal neo-evangelical scholarship which was attempting to fight the extreme fundamental militancy of strict creationists.

Ramm opposed the Flood geology and the gap theory. He firmly believed that "true science and the Bible agree and do not conflict," thus developing his own way of accommodating science and the Bible. He called this scheme "progressive creationism" and based it on a far looser interpretation of Gen 1 than existing views. He categorized Gen 1 as a "pictorial revelation," rather than a factual description of a six-literal-day Creation. He also espoused the antiquity of the earth and of humans and rejected a universal Flood. Instead, he adopted a local Flood theory. This harmonization was the most attractive aspect of the local Flood theory for its supporters, but it was also the most hated point for the Flood geologists, as it deprived the Flood of its principle geological role.

Ramm's "progressive creationism" was enthusiastically embraced by many evangelical scientists as it allowed them ample space theologically to accommodate modern disciplines. On a broader level, Ramm's book excited and influenced many

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1Ramm, The Christian View of Science and Scripture, [9].
2Ibid., 112.
3Ibid., 9-10.
4Ibid., 112.
within the conservative Christian community on the issue of science and religion, leading
many evangelicals to accommodate evolution and modern geology.¹

Ramm’s attack on strict creationism created vigorous responses from
fundamentalist circles, culminating in the publication of The Genesis Flood in 1961 by
evangelical theologian John C. Whitcomb and Henry Morris.² The writing of The Genesis
Flood is the single most important publication for the revival of modern creationism, and
it split the evangelical community into two camps. The two contrasting books, Ramm’s
The Christian View of Science and Scripture and Whitcomb and Morris’s The Genesis
Flood, bring into clear focus the subject of this dissertation.

Energized by the publication of The Genesis Flood, in 1961, and two years after
the appearance of the classic book, Morris and nine other like-minded creationists banded
一起 to form the Creation Research Society (CRS). These strict creationists, after
organizing the new society (CRS), elected Walter F. Lammerts as the first president. This
new society seemed to appeal to those disenchanted with the liberal leaning of the ASA

¹Morris, A History of Modern Creationism, 145. Morris lamented that by the end
of the 1950s “almost all Christian colleges and seminaries were going along with the neo-
evangelical intellectuals such as Ramm and the ASA scientists. The strict creationists
were generally disorganized and discouraged, and Ramm’s work aided the revival of
strict creationism by providing them with a rallying point” (ibid.).

²In 1955, the ASA convened a conference at Grace Theological Seminary where
Whitcomb was teaching and working toward his Doctor of Theology degree. Finding that
Ramm’s newly released book was highly commended by the ASA scientists at the
meeting, while Flood geology was denounced, Whitcomb was deeply disappointed and
resolved to devote his dissertation to the defense of Flood geology. Two years later, he
finished his dissertation entitled “The Genesis Flood” and then immediately set to work
to publish it. He later teamed up with Henry Morris to publish The Genesis Flood
(McIver, 143-48).
toward evolution\(^1\) and focused on publications to promote creationism and Flood geology. The creationists insisted on beginning with a literal reading of scripture and then trying to fit science into that context, rather than constantly accommodating the Bible to the findings of science. They argued this approach presented the only acceptable way of interpretation of the first eleven chapters of Genesis. This argument struck a responsive chord with many concerned Christians.\(^2\) However, members resolved not to use any political or legal means for the purpose of promoting their society or to affiliate with any other organizations. Rather CRS provided a forum for the young-earth creationists to pool and affirm ideas and information.

In 1972, the Institute for Creation Research (ICR) was established, with a full-time paid staff focusing on popularizing strict creationism, following the original Creation Science Research Center’s breakup. The Institute became the best-known creation-science organization. Morris and Gish, ICR president and vice-president respectively, are the most prominent and widely recognized creationists in the world: Morris as creation-science theoretician and revivist, and Gish as indefatigable debater. The members of the ICR, led by Morris himself, insisted that God had created the entire

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\(^2\)G. M. Price’s “flood geology” and a recent, literal six-day Creation of all life on earth, found popular expression in Whitcomb and Morris’s *The Genesis Flood*, which has sold over 200,000 copies and is still available in Christian bookstores throughout the world.
universe, not just earthly life, within the past 6,000 years or so.¹

During the past decade, there has been a serious discussion in intellectual circles regarding whether there is, in fact, a Designer. This discussion has dominated several important conferences. Examples include the “Cosmos and Creation” conference at Cambridge University (1994), the “Mere Creation” conference at Biola University (1996), the “Science and the Spiritual Quest” conference at the Berkeley Campus of the University of California (1998), and the “Nature of Nature” conference at Baylor University (2000).²

The most remarkable and unprecedented of the above intellectual events occurred in Los Angeles on November 14-17, 1996. Under the sponsorship of Christian Leadership Ministries, Biola University hosted a major research conference bringing together scientists and scholars who rejected naturalism as an adequate framework for doing science, and who sought a common vision of Creation, united under the rubric of Intelligent Design.³ The two hundred conference participants included first-class

¹The members of ICR all possessed some scientific or technical training at the graduate level, which included five biologists with Ph.D. degrees. The leaders of this contemporary incarnation of creationism were Henry Morris and Duane Gish. Their goal was to establish creationism as an equal to Darwinian evolution and as a scientific alternative. They called it “Scientific Creationism.” See Walter J. Wilkins, Science and Religious Thought: A Darwinism Case Study (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1987).


³William A. Dembski, ed., Mere Creation: Science, Faith, and Intelligent Design (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1998): 9. Many of the participants could be described as evangelical Christians. This new emergent movement of scholars is exploring the possibility of intelligent design as an explanatory theory in scientific descriptions of the universe (Behe, Darwin’s Black Box; D. L. Brock, Our Universe: Accident or Design? [Wits, South Africa: Star Watch, 1992]).
scientists as presenters and other academicians as participants. The group was non-homogeneous. Most had not met each other, and did not consider themselves creationists. Yet virtually all the participants questioned the reigning paradigm of biology—namely, that natural selection and mutation can account for the origin and diversity of all living things.¹

This Intelligent Design movement began in 1991, when a brilliant Berkeley Law professor entered America’s origins conversation. His book *Darwin on Trial* was a surprise best-seller within a year or two after its publication. Philip E. Johnson set the agenda for the origins debate in the 1990s, and his influence shows no sign of waning.²

In 1996, the “Intelligent Design” group officially launched a Discovery Institute at Seattle, Washington State, a subsidiary branch of the Center for the Renewal of Science and Culture (CRSC), whose mission is to promote their agenda and create a science of intelligent design. This is a coalition of thinkers who have, for the most part, subordinated their considerable differences in order to create a movement under the banner of intelligent design. The leaders of this design movement are almost all deeply religious, and some of them are even biblical fundamentalists.³

The twenty-first century, it appears, will be influenced by the new evangelical


³Dembski, 9.
scientific movement of Intelligent Design. There are various attempts to create a new “community of thought” dedicated to the empirical investigation of design in nature. Science, philosophy, and theology are all destined to feel the influence of this growing community of thought. As noted, this is spearheaded by evangelical scholars, who reject naturalistic evolution and claim to see evidence of an intelligent Designer in the complexity of nature.¹

This chapter has outlined a historical background for the present study, and sets the contemporary context of the evangelical discussion of nature by considering three contrasting views of nature. In the next chapter, Henry M. Morris’s concept of nature is considered in the context of the threefold epochs of nature. Morris’s life and work are explored, along with his creationism and strict concordist hermeneutics.

¹A new generation of evangelical scholars is picking up the materialist challenge and is determined to advance the theory of intelligent design. This became especially evident in the Fall of 1992 when Christian Leadership Ministries and Discovery Institute jointly sponsored a Consultation on Intelligent Design in Dallas, Texas. This consultation was preceded by the Mere Creation Conference a year earlier. The consultation demonstrated the remarkable progress and impact that the intelligent-design movement is having in awakening public interest in intelligent design. Among the leading scholars are Paul A. Nelson, William A. Dembski, Stephen C. Meyer, Jonathan Wells, and Bruce Gordon, the editors of the journal *Origin and Design*. Other intelligent-design theorists are Michael Denton, Philip E. Johnson, and Michael J. Behe (*Dembski*, *Mere Creation*); William A. Dembski and James M. Kushiner, eds., *Signs of Intelligence: Understanding Intelligent Design* [Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001]).
CHAPTER III

THE CONCEPT OF NATURE IN THE WRITINGS

OF HENRY M. MORRIS

Background and Publications of Morris

Henry Madison Morris, Jr., was born October 6, 1918, in Dallas, Texas, to Henry Madison and Ida Hunter Morris, and grew up as a Southern Baptist.1 Sadly, he died on February 26, 2006. As a boy he lived in a number of Texas towns before his family finally settled in Houston, where his father worked as a realtor. During the Great Depression, the Morris family slipped into poverty making it impossible for young Henry to fulfill his dream of pursuing a degree in journalism at the University of Texas in Austin.2 He enrolled instead in the local Rice Institute (now University), where tuition was free and he could live at home. While studying at the Institute, he became a theistic

1The sources of this biographical information are: Personal correspondence by e-mail with Henry Morris, dated May 30, 2003; Numbers, The Creationists, 192-200; Morris, History of Modern Creationism, 103-12; and McIver, 134-43. See also Morris’s biographical listings: World Who’s Who in Science, Antiquity to Present; Who’s Who in America: American Men of Science; Who’s Who in Engineering; Who’s Who in Science and Engineering; Who’s Who in the World; Who’s Who in Religion; Contemporary Authors.

evolutionist.\textsuperscript{1} Morris graduated in 1939 with distinction from the Institute, obtaining a bachelor of science degree in civil engineering (B.S.C.E.). He was at the top of his class with an outstanding academic record, and was elected to Phi Beta Kappa (humanities). Morris is also a member of other honor societies: Sigma Xi (science), Tau Beta Pi (engineering), and Chi Epsilon.\textsuperscript{2}

Morris was employed as a junior engineer of the Texas Highway Department from 1938-39. After just one year, he was promoted to assistant hydraulic engineer with the International Boundary and Water Commission at El Paso, Texas. He worked there from 1939-42.\textsuperscript{3} Since his family and fiancee were all in Houston, he spent a lot of the time while he was alone reflecting on the meaning of life and studying his Bible, which led to a new-birth experience.\textsuperscript{4} As a youth, he had drifted unthinkingly into evolution and religious indifference. In his own words, he confesses:

\begin{quote}
I had been taught from earliest days that the Bible was God’s Word, and it never occurred to me in those childhood days to doubt any of these stories. Years later, however, the evolutionary teachings in college (Rice University), combined with years of lukewarm teaching in church and Sunday school during junior and high school years, left me with many questions. Consequently, I soon became what would now be called a theistic evolutionist. The great Creation and Flood stories could hardly be
\end{quote}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{1}Morris, \textit{The Genesis Record: A Scientific and Devotional Commentary on the Book of Beginnings}, xi; idem, \textit{History of Modern Creationism}, 103.
\item \textsuperscript{2}Morris, \textit{History of Modern Creationism}, 104; idem to the author, February 19, 2003, El Cajon, California. All personal correspondence was by e-mail. The author is honored to have this communication with Morris, and is saddened about the death of this influential thinker in the same year this dissertation is written, 2006.
\item \textsuperscript{3}Henry Morris to the author, February 19, 2003, El Cajon, California.
\item \textsuperscript{4}Numbers, \textit{The Creationists}, 193.
\end{itemize}
taken literally any more, and the tales of the patriarchs apparently had many legendary embellishments over their hidden core of facts. I practically stopped reading the Bible altogether during those college years, though I was still fairly regular in church attendance.¹

A thorough study of the Bible convinced him that Creation had taken place in six literal historical days and prompted him to re-evaluate his belief in evolution.

Morris married Mary Louise Beach on January 24, 1940. He and his bride began teaching Sunday-school classes to young people, and he joined the Gideons, an evangelical fellowship famous for its distribution of Bibles.²

In 1942 he became completely convinced of the truth of Creationism and of the importance of harmonizing science and the Bible when Irwin A. Moon brought his illustrated “Sermons from Science” to town. This was the turning point in the life of the Texas-bred engineer.³ From the itinerant Moody preacher he learned for the first time about the geological effects of Noah’s Flood and the vapor canopy that had enveloped the earth until the Flood.⁴

During World War II, Morris did not join the armed forces as did many other young people of his day. Instead, he returned to Rice Institute to serve as an instructor in

¹Morris, The Genesis Record: A Scientific and Devotional Commentary on the Book of Beginnings, xi.

²Who’s Who in America, s.v. “Morris, Henry Madison, Jr.”

³Numbers, The Creationists, 192-93. This information is based on Numbers’s interviews with Henry M. Morris, October 26, 1980, and January 6, 1981. See, too, Morris, History of Modern Creationism, 103-4.

⁴Morris, History of Modern Creationism, 104.
civil engineering, teaching young men headed for military duty in the navy. During his years of teaching at Rice (1942-46), the Institute was known locally as a hotbed of infidelity. Morris, however, who continued working with the Gideons, became active in the Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship, and served as the faculty advisor to the Baptist Student Union. As a newborn Christian, he had a lot of religious enthusiasm.

Increasingly, Morris's thoughts turned to the Creation and Flood. He became more and more convinced that the Bible clearly taught recent Creation and a global Flood. The writings of Rimmer and Price in *New Geology* convinced him that all evolution was false. He especially liked Rimmer's *Theory of Evolution and the Facts of Science*, which helped affirm his strong opposition to evolution.

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1 When Morris was called to Rice Institute, he had already been approved for an ensign's commission in the Navy Seabees. Rice arranged for him to be released from the Navy so that he could teach male students in the Navy V-12 and ROTC programs (ibid.).


4 Harry Rimmer, *The Theory of Evolution and the Facts of Science* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1935). He was a prolific writer, and wrote more than forty popular books on prophecy, general apologetics, Bible archaeology, and other subjects, as well as on creationism. Rimmer's best-known creationist works are: *Modern Science and the Genesis Record* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1937); *The Harmony of Science and Scripture* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1936); *Lot's Wife and the Science of Physics* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1947); *The Facts of Biology and the Theories of Evolution* (Los Angeles, CA: Research Science Bureau, 1929).

5 Morris, *History of Modern Creationism*, 106-08; Numbers, *The Creationists*, 194. This information is based on interviews by Numbers with Henry M. Morris, January 6, 1981. In 1943, Morris arranged meetings at the First Baptist Church in Houston and invited Rimmer to be the main speaker. Later he admitted it was "an unforgettable week" of meetings and "a life-changing experience for me." Soon thereafter he joined the
While still teaching at Rice, Morris continued his great passions for witnessing and sharing his beliefs in God and Creation. He routinely passed out Gideon Bibles and invited students to attend evening Bible classes in his home. In 1946, he published his first apologetical book *That You Might Believe* for college students.\(^1\) Morris published the book as a scientist from a secular university to advocate recent special Creation and a worldwide Flood. This was before he returned to graduate school; he was just twenty-eight years old. Most of the book contains biblical and scientific creationism and evidences for flood geology, as well as chapters espousing other examples of creation science.\(^2\)

Zondervan turned down Morris’s first book, but eventually, Good Books agreed to publish it.\(^3\) This original edition allowed for the gap theory of creationism because he was Deluge Geology Society.


\(^2\)Ibid., 10. In this book, Morris emulates Rimmer by discussing such problems as the identity of Cain’s wife, the ‘great fish’ that swallowed Jonah, and the long day of Joshua. If the Bible is “God-given,” he argues, “it is unthinkable that it should contain scientific mistakes. Either it is scientifically accurate whenever it happens to touch on some phase of science, or it is purely the product of human beings and no better than any other book of ethics” (ibid.). In writing about the Flood, he tends to follow Price, whom he describes as a “world leading authority on historical geology” (ibid.). Morris concluded his book with a premillennialist testimony to his belief in the literal second coming of Christ. The quotation about the “first book” appears in the introduction to the revised edition of *That You Might Believe* (San Diego: Creation-Life Publishers, 1978), 10. See also Morris, *History of Modern Creationism*, 93, and Numbers, *The Creationists*, 194-95.

\(^3\)Numbers, *The Creationists*, 195.
not yet committed to strict young-earth creationism.\(^1\) Morris claims the book “allowed the possibility of the ‘gap theory’ as a means of accommodating a great age for the earth.”\(^2\) He later shifted in his thinking. Morris says: “I soon regretted this, of course, and rejected the gap theory and all other such accommodationist views in my later books.”\(^3\) In the revised and expanded edition of his book *That You Might Believe*, he deleted his earlier discussion of the gap theory in favor of a simple affirmation that “a literal reading of the biblical record will yield a date of about 4,000 B.C. for the creation.”\(^4\) While the earlier edition of his first book was at press, a critique of radiometric dating by Price’s disciple and a Seventh-day Adventist, Clifford L. Burdick, convinced Morris to drop the gap theory. He “no longer had to dabble with the gap theory or some other means of allowing a great age for the earth.”\(^5\) Burdick’s paper convinced Morris that the Bible clearly taught recent Creation, a world-destroying Flood, and a young earth.\(^6\)

Morris left his teaching position at Rice and headed north to study hydraulic engineering at the University of Minnesota. Apparently, the main motivation for him to return to graduate school was to satisfy his curiosity about the effects of water in earth

\(^1\)Ibid.


\(^3\)Ibid.


history, Flood geology, and mathematics. He graduated in 1948 with a Master of Science degree from the University of Minnesota. Thereafter he began working on a Ph.D. at the same university.

While living in Minnesota and working on his doctoral dissertation at the University of Minnesota, the publishers of That You Might Believe asked Morris to expand and update the book for a new edition under the new title of The Bible and Modern Science. This revised and expanded version was published in 1951. By this time a new publisher, Moody Press (later Tyndale Publishing House), had bought the book from Good Books, Inc. The updated edition was 25 percent longer than the original edition. In 1949, Morris joined the American Scientific Association (ASA) in Minnesota.

Morris received his Ph.D. in 1950 from the University of Minnesota. The title of this doctoral dissertation was "A New Concept of Flow in Rough Conduits." Roland

2Morris, History of Modern Creationism, 111-12.
3While studying at the university, Morris took the position of instructor and assistant professor, and worked as a research project leader of the St. Anthony Fall Hydraulics Laboratory from 1945-51. See Prince, 47.
4Morris, History of Modern Creationism, 111. See also, Numbers, The Creationists, 194.
5Morris, History of Modern Creationism, 111.
6Numbers, The Creationists, 194-96.
Numbers claims: “Despite having made his unpopular creationist views known, he had earned excellent grades and had encountered no overt prejudice.”\(^1\) After graduation, he initially planned to go to Afghanistan to organize a civil-engineering curriculum for a new technological institute.\(^2\) However, at the last minute, he accepted an appointment as Chair and Professor of Civil Engineering at the Southwestern Louisiana Institute of Lafayette (now the University of Southwestern Louisiana).\(^3\) He remained there from 1951-1957.\(^4\)

Soon after moving to Louisiana he attended his first ASA meeting and met John Whitcomb. Numbers alleges: “The paper Morris presented on that occasion, like his earlier submissions to the Journal of American Scientific Association, failed to meet the ASA’s criteria for acceptance.”\(^5\) The next year, while reading Ramm’s book, The Christian View of Science and Scripture, which had already been embraced by the ASA, Morris expressed the prophetic hope that Ramm’s book would at least “stimulate some capable men, who take Genesis seriously, to begin some intensive and much-needed studies in flood geology and related issues.”\(^6\)

In early 1957, Morris moved to Southern Illinois University. All along, he was

\(^1\)Numbers, The Creationists, 197.

\(^2\)Ibid.

\(^3\)Ibid.

\(^4\)Ibid. See, Morris, History of Modern Creationism, 111-12.

\(^5\)Numbers, The Creationists, 197.

\(^6\)Ibid.
revising and updating *The Bible and Modern Science* that had been published originally in 1951.¹ The new edition was published in 1956, but Moody Press decided the book would have even a wider ministry if it were placed in their Colportage Library of Inexpensive Paperbacks. This required a significant reduction in size and cost, but, because of the very low cost of publishing the book, Morris now had a lot of copies he could pass to any student who would request one.²

Morris served only seven months as professor of Applied Science at Southern Illinois University before he resigned. Late in 1957, he moved to Blacksburg, Virginia, to head up one of the largest civil–engineering programs in the country. His formal position at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University was as Professor of Hydraulic Engineering and Chair of the Civil Engineering Department.³

During the fall of 1957, Morris and John Whitcomb, who had just finished his dissertation that spring, joined in a venture of co-authoring a book. Morris signed on with Whitcomb to collaborate on *The Genesis Flood*. Despite his teaching and administrative duties, Morris made steady progress on his promised chapters of *The Genesis Flood*. The book was planned to have one hundred pages, but the total reached to 350 pages. Morris

¹Ibid.

²Morris, *History of Modern Creationism*, 112.

³Morris had come to Carbondale, Illinois, to plan and help start a new engineering school serving as the Dean of Engineering. But the Illinois legislature voted against the proposed new engineering school there. See Morris, *History of Modern Creation*, 168.
overshadowed Whitcomb’s 151 pages “by better than a two-to-one margin.” Numbers indicates: “Although Morris’s name would appear second on the title page, he served in many respects as the senior author.”

In 1959, Morris attended the National Science Foundation Summer Institute on Advanced Fluid Mechanics at the University of Pennsylvania. He wrote a classic textbook *Applied Hydraulics in Engineering* in 1963 and attended the National Science Foundation Summer Institute on Water Resources at New Mexico State University, Las Cruces, New Mexico. The co-authored textbook (Morris and Wiggert) was revised and enlarged in 1972. Morris also had entries on “Hydraulics,” “Fluid Mechanics,” “Hydrostatics,” and “Hydrodynamics,” in *Encyclopedia Americana* (1970).

The writing project on *The Genesis Flood*, which was started in December 1957, was essentially completed by November 1960. However, Morris and Whitcomb continued to work together, each continually reviewing the other’s contributions. Hence, the book was a genuine joint-authorship venture and was finally published in March

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1Numbers, *The Creationists*, 197; Morris, *History of Modern Creationism*, 169-74. Before meeting Whitcomb, Morris was working on a book about Flood geology he planned to call *The Creation and Destruction of the World*. In *The Genesis Flood* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1961) chapters 1-4 were written by Whitcomb; Morris wrote the introduction and chapters 5-7. A geology professor at Morris’s University of Southwestern Louisiana wrote the foreword entitled “Dedicated Creationist.” See McIver, 144-7. In this study *The Genesis Flood* will be considered as one of Morris’s works, without reference to joint authorship with Whitcomb.


4Henry Morris to the author, February 19, 2003, El Cajon, California.
1961. In the meantime, Morris continued to teach and lead the Civil Engineering Department at Virginia Polytechnic Institute, where he spent thirteen years (1957-70).1

By 1961, Morris had six children, three of whom were teenagers. He helped organize and sponsor a Youth for Christ Club for the community and was also actively teaching a large college Sunday-School class, working with the Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship chapter, and attending the Gideon Camps in the area.2

After *The Genesis Flood* was published by Presbyterian and Reformed Company in 1961,3 both Morris and Whitcomb were much sought-after speakers all across the United States by different denominations and interdenominational groups, secular campuses, pastoral conferences, summer Bible conferences, youth conventions, the Christian Teachers' Convention, and various other meetings.4

*The Genesis Flood* was, in large part, an updated restatement of George McCready Price's *Flood Geology*.5 While Price was influential outside of the Adventist circle, *The Genesis Flood* became the catalyst for the modern "scientific" creationist movement, from which arose a great curiosity and a revival of interest in creationism.6

This great awakening of creationism led to the formation of The Creation

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2Ibid., 172.
3Ibid., 173-74.
4Ibid., 170.
6Ibid., 198-208.
Research Society in 1961. The new organization was dedicated to strict creationism.

Walter Lammerts was appointed as the first president of the Society, as well as, the editor of its journal. Soon Lammerts was succeeded as CRS president by Morris himself. In 1966, Bob Jones University granted Morris an L.L.D.¹

After his thirteen years in a successful career at Virginia Polytechnic Institute (VPI), Morris agreed to leave VPI because of his increasing involvement with creationist-caused controversies. He left with the condition that he would get a year of sabbatical leave with full pay, which VPI accepted. Despite tempting offers from Auburn University and Le Tourneau College, Morris’s real dream was to found a truly Christian university based on creationism.²

At a Bible Conference at Biola College, Morris met Tim LaHaye, pastor of Scott Memorial Baptist Church in San Diego, who had a similar vision. In 1970, Morris and LaHaye, along with LaHaye’s colleague, Art Peters, founded the Christian Heritage College (CHC), sponsored by LaHaye’s Scott Memorial Congregation. The college was located on the grounds of the San Diego church until 1973, when it moved to the campus of a former Catholic school in El Cajon, also in San Diego.³ The doctrinal statement for CHC insists, in explicit detail, on biblical inerrancy; a strict, recent, flat Creation ex

¹The other members of the original “Team of Ten” who founded the CRS, besides Morris, were: Frank Marsh, Duane T. Gish, R. Laird Harris, John W. Klotz, Edwin Monsma, John Grebe, Walter Lammerts, Wilbert H. Rusch, and William J. Tinkle. See Morris, History of Modern Creationism, 202-12.

²Ibid., 167-233.

³Ibid.
nihilo; the worldwide catastrophic Flood as a result of man’s sin; and other
fundamentalist doctrines.\textsuperscript{1} Morris wanted to make absolutely certain that his college
would never have the opportunity of sliding into compromise on these issues.\textsuperscript{2} From
1970-78, Morris was co-founder, professor of apologetics, and vice president for
academic affairs at CHC. Later, in 1978-80, he became the president of CHC.\textsuperscript{3} Morris
observes:

Dr. LaHaye was the president of the college until 1978. I then served as president
for two years, then Art Peters for two years. Dr. Eddy Miller, who originally came
as Dean in 1973, was president from 1982 to 1984. Dr. Earl Mills was made
president in 1985 and served until 1988, when Dr. David Jeremiah (who had
replaced Tim LaHaye as pastor of Scott Memorial Baptist Church) took over the
presidency.\textsuperscript{4}

Morris started a “creation research division” at CHC in 1970. Later, it became the
Creation-Science Research Center (CSRC).\textsuperscript{5} The main project of the new Center was to
produce creationist books and textbooks; specifically the “Science and Creation Series”;
eight booklets for grades 1-8, in student and teacher editions, plus an overall reference

\textsuperscript{1}Ibid., Appendix F.
\textsuperscript{2}Ibid., 256-65.
\textsuperscript{3}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{4}Ibid., 262.
\textsuperscript{5}The Creation Research Society (CRS) should be distinguished clearly from the
Creation-Science Research Center (CRSC) and the Institute for Creation Research (ICR).
They are often confused in the media. The CSRC was formed in 1970 as an arm of
Christian Heritage College of San Diego, California, with Henry Morris as the first
director. It was reorganized in April 1972 under its present name, which is ICR.
book. The reference book *Science and Creation*¹ was completed in 1971. The book consisted of the standard creation-science arguments, advocated strict young-earth creationism, and contained both scientific and biblical references.² Among others who joined the new venture were Nell Segraves and Jean Sumrall, avid advocates for creationism, who led out in the Bible Science Association.³

The Creation-Science Research Center split into two constituent parties in 1972. After the split, the Segraves retained the CSRC name but were no longer affiliated with Morris's CHC. They reorganized the CSRC elsewhere in San Diego.⁴

After Segraves and Sumrall left, Morris set up the Institute of Creation Research (ICR) at Christian Heritage College (CHC) in April 1972. Duane Gish and Harold Slusher, who had recently joined the faculty, together with Morris comprised the original ICR science staff. That same year John Morris, one of Morris's sons, led the ICR Ararat expedition, and the next year he joined the ICR and CHC staff. Morris and Gish were respectively the first ICR president and vice president from 1970 to 1995.⁵

While this Institute of Creation Research was founded as the research division of


³Nell Segraves and Jean Sumrall were founders of Bible-Science Radio in Los Angeles. They led in an effort to try to get California to adopt creation textbooks and curricula in the schools.


⁵Ibid., 275-77, 292-94.
CHC, it became institutionally independent of the college and of all trans-denominational educational institutions in 1980. Morris writes:

Accordingly, I resigned as president of the college in 1980, and ICR ‘spun off’ as a separate educational institution shortly thereafter, beginning its graduate programs in 1981. A contract was set up between the two institutions, allowing for much cooperation between them, but the administrations were completely separate thereafter.1

The institute remained physically on the CHC campus until 1985, when it moved to a new building in nearby Santee. At that time, it began to offer a Master of Science degree with majors in biology, astro/geophysics, geology, and science education. The ICR Museum of Creation and Earth History, founded in 1977, occupies expanded quarters in the new ICR building.2 After serving as president of ICR for about twenty-five years (1970-95), Henry Morris left and became president emeritus of the Institute for Creation Research, a position he held to the time of his death. In 1989, Liberty University granted him an honorary Litt.D.3

Morris has been a member of several professional organizations which further enhances his credentials as a scientist, scholar, and civil engineer. He was formerly the President of CRS from 1967 to 1973. In the past, he has served as the secretary-editor of the Civil Engineering Division of the American Society for Engineering Education (1960-61); a member of the Research Award Committee, American Society of Civil engineers

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1Ibid., 263.


3Morris, History of Modern Creationism, 263; Henry Morris to the author, February 19, 2003, El Cajon, California.
(1969-71); a member of the Ad Hoc Accreditation Visitation Committee, engineer
council for Professional Development (1968-73); president of Louisiana Gideons (1954-
56); a member of the Gideons (1942-2006); president and co-founder of the Trans-
National Association of Christian Schools (1982-1994); and a member of the Board of
Directors (1978-1995). He is a fellow of the following organizations: the American
Association for Advancement of Science, the American Society of Civil Engineers, and
the American Scientific Affiliation. He is also a member of the American Geophysical
Union, the Geological Society of America; the American Association of Petroleum
Geologists, the Geochemical Society, Society of Economic Paleontologists and
Mineralogists, and the Society for the Study of Evolution.¹ Morris’s hermeneutics will be
considered in the next section.

**Hermeneutics of Henry Morris: Strict Concordism**

Henry Morris is one among various evangelical strict concordists who are trying
different ways to harmonize the interpretations of the biblical account of the origin of
nature with science.² He is a leading proponent of strict evangelical concordism. Morris

¹The details of this paragraph come from a personal correspondence by Henry
Morris to the author, February 19, 2003, El Cajon, California.

²Pinnock, “Climbing Out of a Swamp,” 143-44. Evangelicals, in spite of having a
good track record in defending the inerrancy of the Bible, have yet to come to a consensus
on how to interpret the creation texts. Pinnock comments on the dilemma thusly: “The
problem . . . Davis Young identifies is the proclivity of evangelicals to treat the creation
texts of early Genesis as a source of usable scientific concepts and accurate historical
information which can be employed in dialogue with modern science. This tendency is
well known and has been dramatized for the public by the recent Arkansas court case, the
resurgence of creationists fervor in its many forms, and by an acquaintance with popular
fundamentalism, one of whose prominent traits in recent years is its stubbornly anti-
observes that “the book of Genesis thus is in reality the foundation of all true history, as well as of true science and true philosophy.”¹ As will be documented subsequently, he and other strict concordists take the days of Gen 1 to be six literal, twenty-four-hour historical days for the creation of all things from nothing, and appeal to the tradition of Flood geology. They advocate a recent and fiat Creation of about six thousand years ago. Hence they are the so-called “young earthers” since they are opposed to theistic evolution which endorses a process of billions of years for the formation of life forms on earth. Strict evangelical concordists argue against “old earth” approaches as an unnecessary concession to evolutionary science.² Rather than accommodate part of the Bible to science, they propose that the sciences, when properly understood, affirm the cosmology evolutionary streak” (ibid.). See Langdon Gilkey’s racy account of his experience at the creationist trial in December 1981, Creationism on Trial: Evolution and God at Little Rock. For another view see Norman L. Geisler, The Creator in the Courtroom. See, too, Numbers, “The Creationists.”

¹Morris, The Genesis Record (1976), 21. Charles Colson and Nancy Pearcey suggest: “The truth is that much of Darwinism is not science but naturalistic philosophy masquerading as science so an honest debate between Darwinism and Christianity is not fact versus faith but philosophy versus philosophy, worldview versus worldview” (Developing a Christian Worldview of Science and Evolution [Wheaton, IL: Tyndale, 1999], 93).

²Pinnock, “Climbing Out of a Swamp,” 143-46. John MacArthur claims: “What old-earth creationists (including, to a large degree, even the evangelical ones) are doing with a Genesis 1-3 is precisely what religious liberals have done with all of Scripture–spiritualizing and reinterpreting the text allegorically to make it mean what they want it to mean. It is a dangerous way to handle Scripture” (The Battle for the Beginning: The Bible on Creation and the Fall of Adam [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001], 20).
and cosmogony of the Bible.¹

While strict concordism advocates a literal interpretation of Genesis, Morris points to the liberal approach of an increasing majority of "evangelical accommodationists": "Nevertheless there seem to be an increasing number of evangelical scholars today who are advocating the notion that this section [Gen. 1-11] is only a great hymn, or liturgy, or poem, or saga—anything except real history!"² Morris disagrees with this approach mainly adopted by Ramm who states that "Genesis 1-11 is myth in the sense of prescientific explanation."³

According to Morris, the basic tenets of a literalist interpretation of Gen 1-11 propose that the universe is relatively young (a few thousand years old), and the history of the earth after the Fall has been characterized by violent, formative geological and meteorological catastrophes that include a universal Flood as opposed to the uniformism of traditional geology and biology. The basic "kinds" of life-forms appeared suddenly, in a fiat Creation. Thus, Morris argues that evolution is hopelessly flawed, and scientific

¹Lloyd R. Bailey, *Genesis, Creation, and Creationism* (Malwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1993), 5. The writings of Henry Morris are characterized by a strict perspective, with his uncompromising insistence that Scripture requires a young earth, recently created in a six-day period. This view was dominant in CRS, but the society was not monolithic. ICR is more ideological and reflective of Morris's view.

²Morris, *Biblical Cosmology and Modern Science*, 57. Morris rejected Davis A. Young's *Creation and the Flood* (1977) and *Christianity and the Age of the Earth* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1982), although Young is "an avowedly evangelical Christian" (Morris, *Biblical Cosmology and Modern Science*, 57). Young, though, prefers the "day-age theory" to account for an "old earth." Morris characterizes him as among the 'evangelical accommodationists'" (ibid., 56-58.).

creationism provides a far better explanation of the evidence, both scientific and scriptural, that bears on the origins of the cosmos, earth, life, and humanity.¹

Is the entire Bible supposed to be taken literally? For Morris, “a literalistic approach has been taken, not only in Genesis but throughout the whole Bible. It would seem that, if the Bible is really God’s word, intended as His authoritative revelation to all men, we assume He means exactly what He says.”² He explains: “If figures of speech or symbols or metaphors are used, they are for the purpose of helping us understand not confusing us, so they will be explained in the Biblical context itself, not requiring the professional help of specially illumined priests or prophets.”³

Morris believes that the Bible is a sacred text which is indeed the “Word of God.” Describing a personal practice, Morris confesses that “every day for over fifty years has been partially devoted to the study of the Bible itself. The result has been a deep and settled conviction, stronger every year, that the Bible is indeed the very Word of the living God.”⁴ Morris implies that the Bible presents the Word of God as it was given by God to the writers. However, he does not believe in a dictation theory. He assumes then

¹Morris, *Biblical Cosmology and Modern Science*, 57. James MacArthur notes: “Evangelicals who accept an old-earth interpretation of Genesis have embraced a hermeneutic that is hostile to a high view of Scripture. They are bringing to the opening chapters of Scripture a method of biblical interpretation that has built-in anti-evangelical presuppositions” (20).

²Henry M. Morris, *The Defender’s Study Bible: King James Version* (Grand Rapids, MI: World, 1995), [ii]. *The King James Version* will be quoted in this study unless otherwise stated.

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid., [i].
that the story of creation in Genesis was given to human authors by God and cannot, therefore, contain any errors. Morris states emphatically concerning the Bible: “Its histories are authentic, its science is accurate and far in advance of its times, its practical wisdom for daily living is unexcelled, and its insights into the human heart are profoundly perfect for every need.”

For Morris, the early creation chapters of Genesis provide “marvelous and accurate accounts of the actual events of the primal history of the universe!” Moreover, Genesis gives data and information “far beyond those that science can determine,” while offering “an intellectually satisfying framework within which to interpret the facts that science can determine.”

The strict concordists, also referred to as “creationists,” adhere to certain principles of interpretation of Gen 1-11. The following are four principles of interpretations either explicitly stated or implied in the writings of Henry Morris.

1Morris, The Defender’s Study Bible, [i].

2Henry M. Morris and John D. Morris, Scripture and Creation vol. 1, The Modern Creation Trilogy (Green Forest, AR: Master, 1996), 13-14. Since Henry Morris is the recognized leader of contemporary creation science and the leading strict concordist, and almost all of the arguments offered in the Modern Creation Trilogy have appeared in his earlier works, I will refer to Henry Morris as the author of this series, though the book’s coauthor is Morris’s son John. John Morris holds a doctorate in geological engineering from the University of Oklahoma and is the President of the Institute for Creation Research.

3Bailey, 131. There may not be a comprehensive list of such principles, either in general or for individual interpreters. As noted above, some of these principles are either explicitly stated or implied in the writings of Morris. See ibid., 131-38.
Divine Inspiration Is Free from Error of Any Sort

First, the Bible "as the divinely inspired revelation of the Creator" is inspired in a fashion which guarantees that it is infallible ("free from error of any sort") even in scientific and historical matters.\(^1\) Morris observes that it is "in harmony with our conviction that the Bible is the infallible word of God, verbally inspired in the original autograph."\(^2\)

Morris further affirms that "its [the Bible's] unique, plenary, verbal inspiration guarantees that these writings, as originally and miraculously given, are infallible and completely authoritative on all matters with which they deal, free from error of any sort, scientific and historical as well as moral and theological."\(^3\) In other words, verbal inspiration guarantees that the Bible is free from all errors. In fact, Morris affirms the full inspiration and authority of the Bible. He believes that the Bible contains no theological, historical, or scientific errors. He argues that if the Bible cannot be trusted in its scientific statements, then it cannot be trusted in its history or its theology.\(^4\)

Morris adds that a Christian must receive biblical instruction based on a straightforward hermeneutic of literalism, and evidences of Scripture are "far weightier" than those from science:

\(^1\)Whitcomb and Morris, 118.

\(^2\)Ibid., 1.

\(^3\)Henry M. Morris, "Creation and the Seven-Day Week," ICR Impact Series, no. 75 (September 1979): 19.

\(^4\)Whitcomb and Morris, 118.
The instructed Christian knows that the evidences for full divine inspiration of Scripture are far weightier than the evidences of any fact from science. When confronted with the consistent Biblical testimony to a Universal Flood, the believer must certainly accept it as unquestionably true.¹

According to Morris, for example, if there is an apparent conflict between Scripture and science, a Christian must go with the evidences of Scripture, since Scripture has full inspiration, divine authority, and is free from errors. On biblical inspiration and inerrancy, Morris feels that the scientific reliability of the Bible is crucially important. He argues that the Creation account in the book of Genesis, particularly Gen 1-11 should be interpreted literally, and to do otherwise would be reckless and dangerous.² For Morris, a non-literal interpretation of Genesis undermines the rest of the Scriptures.³ If the first Adam was not real and if the Fall of Adam did not take place, then man is not lost and does not need a savior. Morris concludes by asserting that, “If these first eleven chapters are not historical, then our entire biblical foundation is removed.”⁴

Scripture Interprets Itself

A second principle, though not explicitly stated, seems to underlie much of Morris’s interpretation: “Any statement in scripture may, in theory, be used to interpret any other, since the totality ultimately has a single author [God] who infallibly inspired

¹Ibid.
²Morris, The Defender’s Study Bible, [iii].
³Morris, Biblical Cosmology and Modern Science, 57.
⁴Ibid.

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each human speaker or writer.\textsuperscript{1}

Morris claims: "There is no doubt that Christ and the apostles all believed the Old Testament Scriptures to be the divinely inspired, infallible, inerrant, authoritative written Word of God."\textsuperscript{2} He indicates: "They quoted from it and referred to it profusely, always with absolute confidence in its accuracy and integrity."\textsuperscript{3}

Morris believes that the Bible is an utterly reliable sacred text. While written by humans, its actual author was God. Morris reflects this understanding when he contends that "the only proper and true view of the inspiration of the Bible is that it is completely and literally inspired, altogether free of error and conveying exactly what God wished to say to man."\textsuperscript{4} This view, known doctrinally as the plenary verbal inspiration of Scriptures, suggests that a human author of a given biblical text may have produced a text that contained information he did not understand. Such information could be in the form of scientific insight that would have been incomprehensible to the writer, prophecies to be fulfilled later, or more controversially, even secret mathematically encoded information.\textsuperscript{5}

According to Morris, all of the ancient biblical writings are "actual firsthand

\textsuperscript{1}Bailey, 133.

\textsuperscript{2}Morris, \textit{The Defender's Study Bible}, [iii].

\textsuperscript{3}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{4}Morris, \textit{Many Infallible Proofs}, 164.

\textsuperscript{5}Ibid., 235-43.
accounts written by eyewitnesses.”\textsuperscript{1} Consequently, Adam was the author of Gen 2:3-5:1, and God Himself, “either with His own ‘finger’” (as in the Ten Commandments) or by “direct supernatural revelation” wrote Gen 1:1-2:3.\textsuperscript{2} He speculates that “it is reasonable that Adam and his descendants all knew how to write, and therefore kept records of their own times (note the mention of ‘the book of the generations of Adam’ in Genesis 5:1).”\textsuperscript{3} Morris explains, “These records (probably kept on stone or clay tablets) were possibly handed down from father to son in the line of the God-fearing patriarchs until they finally were acquired by Moses when he led the children of Israel out of Egypt.”\textsuperscript{4} He indicates: “During the wilderness wanderings, Moses compiled them into the book of Genesis, adding his own explanatory editorial comments where needed.”\textsuperscript{5} Morris concludes: “Genesis is still properly considered as one of the books of Moses, since its present form is due to him, but it really records the eyewitness records of these primeval histories, as written originally by Adam, Noah, Shem, Isaac, Jacob and other ancient patriarchs.”\textsuperscript{6} The question of authorship and whether the Genesis account is meant to be interpreted literally is a subject of debate as noted below which helps to illumine the position of

\textsuperscript{1}Morris and Morris, \textit{Modern Creation Trilogy}, 1:15-16.

\textsuperscript{2}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{3}Morris, \textit{The Defender’s Study Bible}, 2.

\textsuperscript{4}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{5}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{6}Ibid.
Morris.

Currently, scholars are divided over the question whether the author of Gen 1 and 2 intended the reader to take the account literally and historically, on the one hand, or theologically, on the other hand. For instance, Ernan McMullin claims: “To interpret [Genesis] literally or quasi-literally is to misunderstand the point that the writers of those narratives were trying to make, the great majority of contemporary Scripture scholars would agree.”¹ Alvin Plantinga claims that Ernan McMullin speculates “that the writer(s) of the early chapters of Genesis meant to tell us no more than that the world was indeed created by and is dependant upon God.”² Indeed, McMullin claims, “They do not mean to tell us anything at all about how God created—whether he did it in seven 24-hour days, whether he created humankind separately, whether there was an original human pair in the garden of Eden.”³ He concludes, “They mean to tell us only that the world depends upon God.”⁴

However, responding to McMullin’s arguments, Plantinga claims that “there are indeed theologians who deny that the (human) writer(s) of Genesis meant to say more


³Ibid.

⁴Ibid.
than that the world depends upon God; but there are many more who think that the
original (human) authors had a great deal more in mind."¹ What does Morris think about
this question? Did the author of Genesis intend it to be interpreted literally? Morris
answers "Yes" and adds, "Jesus took it literally."² Morris observes that the book of
Genesis, which was compiled and edited by Moses, was intended to be taken literally.³
He declares: "We are advised to take the Genesis account of Creation seriously and
literally, for God is able to say what He means and will someday hold us accountable for
believing what He says."⁴

Morris claims that his "Defender's Study Bible supports literal Biblical
creationism."⁵ He explains: "Probably the most distinctive feature of The Defender’s
Study Bible is an uncompromising commitment to literal Biblical creationism. That is, it
accepts at face value the majestic revelation of special creation in the Bible’s very first
chapter, acknowledging and defending the literal, six-day creation of all things."⁶

¹Ibid., 216.
³Morris, The Defender’s Study Bible, 2.
⁴Ibid., 1496.
⁵Ibid., [ii].
⁶Ibid. By contrast, Massimo Pigliucci suggests: "An even more liberal
interpretation of the Bible is adopted by old-Earth creationism: the day-age system.
According to this idea, each ‘day’ referred to in the traditional six-day account of creation
is comparable to a geological age, so it literally took tens of millions of years to create
stars, planets, and life on Earth—in convenient agreement with the evidence from
astronomy and geology." (Denying Evolution: Creationism, Scientism, and the Nature of
In Summary, Morris believes the author of Genesis intended the Creation account to be taken literally as a space/time/matter event. Since the Bible had in some fashion been inspired by God, and it was God's intention to explain how He created the world, then no modern reader should be surprised to find that the Bible makes references to scientific development that came much later.

The Best Interpretation Is No Interpretation

The third principle is illustrated in a cartoon which appeared in an ICR publication. The dilemma of strict concordism is in its literal interpretation and whether the "creationists" would want to honor the traditional distinction between "letter" and "spirit," therefore what a text literally "says" may not necessarily be the same as what it "means." Morris charmingly asserts: "Therefore, the only proper way to interpret Genesis 1 is not to 'interpret' it at all. That is, we accept the fact that it was meant to say exactly


1Morris, The Defender's Study, 3. This principle is also held by interpreters in a wide spectrum of "conservative" Protestant groups who believe the Bible is verbally "inspired" and "infallible." The Bible is believed to speak for itself and to interpret itself.

2Ken Ham, "Five Vital Questions to Ask Your Church or School," ICR Back to Genesis (May 1985), 8. Strict evangelical concordists may agree with Bailey that "to know what a text in the Bible says is to know what it means." This principle, as illustrated in the cartoon, is narrated by Bailey: "In the first of two drawings, Dr. Brown informs his class: "It's not what Genesis says that's important, it's only what it means!" In the second drawing, Brown cowers in alarm as one of his students drives him through a stop sign at high speed, with a collision just ahead. The student says, "I know what it [the stop sign] says, Dr. Brown, but what does it mean?" Presumably, then, the Bible (with all its diversity of literature and translational difficulties) is as clear as to meaning as is a traffic signal and is to be taken just as literally" (Bailey, 134-83).
what it says.”¹ Morris further clarifies this assertion by saying: “The scriptures, in fact, do not need to be ‘interpreted’ at all, for God is well able to say exactly what he means. They need simply to be read as the writer intended them to be read, then believed and obeyed.”² In other words, he suggests “the best interpretation is no interpretation.”³ Morris sums it up as follows: “Thus it would mean precisely what it says, with no interpretation necessary at all.”⁴

Gaps in Interpretation Call for Supply of Historical Details

Lastly, “when a Creationist’s interpretation leaves questions in the minds of readers, it is legitimate to supply historical details which the text lacks.”⁵ This principle of interpretation is not formally stated, but it is abundantly evident in “creationist” literature, especially in the writings of Morris.⁶ Some good example of filling in “historical” details is the story of Noah’s drunkenness (Gen 9:20-27) and the encounter between Eve and the serpent (Gen 3). Morris supplies additional “historical” details not

¹Morris, The Genesis Record (1976), 54.
³Morris, The Defender’s Study Bible, 1427.
⁴Ibid.
⁵Bailey, 135.
⁶Ibid., 135-38. Bailey gives several illustrations how this principle applies to the writings of Henry Morris.
Hermeneutics, for Morris, is not only a belief in the literal interpretation of the Bible, but a belief in the inerrant interpretation of the Bible. As mentioned above, Morris believes that the Bible contains no scientific, historical, or theological errors. Though he argues that the Bible is a textbook of science, Morris also indicates that the Bible is not a scientific Textbook. In other words, the biblical statements that touch on the subject of science are inerrant and reliable. Morris implies that the Scripture contains true and pure science.

The impact of Morris’s approach and methodology on his understanding of the three epochs of nature is to be developed in the next sections.

Natura Originalis

Scientific Protology: Big Bang
Evolutionary Cosmology

What does Morris think about the big bang protology? For Morris, “no other cosmogony, whether in ancient paganism or modern naturalism, even mentions the

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1See Morris, The Genesis Record, 41-109. For example, when Morris speaks of Eve’s conversation with the serpent in Gen 3, he supplies some “additions” to the text: “The physical serpent was clever, and possibly originally able to stand upright, eye-to-eye with man (the Hebrew word is nachash, possibly originally meaning a shining, upright creature). More likely, God allowed Satan to use the serpent’s throat (as He later allowed Balaam’s ass to speak-Numbers 22:28) and Eve was, in her innocence, not yet aware of the strangeness of it” (Morris, The Defender’s Study Bible, 11).


absolute origin of the universe." He explains: "All [cosmogonies] begin with the space/time/matter universe, already existing in a primeval state of chaos, then attempt to speculate how it might have ‘evolved’ into its present form." For many years, the generally accepted evolutionary cosmology explained that the origin of the universe was the result of the so-called “Big Bang theory.”

Morris asserts that “modern evolutionism begins with elementary particles of matter evolving out of nothing in a ‘big bang,’ and then developing through natural forces into complex systems.” Thus evolutionary theory postulates that a primeval particle exploded about fifteen billion years ago and that molecules, stars, galaxies, and planets all gradually evolved from the expanding matter of this ancient explosion. The present universe came about through a series of gradual steps from the simple to the complex, from the unordered to the organized, from formless gas of elementary particles to molecules, and, further, to more structured liquids and solids. Finally, the sophisticated living organism came into existence. Furthermore, Morris explains that the complex molecules are said to have slowly evolved into living cells and, finally, into human beings!

According to Morris, the big bang theory is an atheistic explanation of the origin

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1Morris, *The Defender’s Study Bible*, 3.
2Ibid.
3Ibid.
of nature.\footnote{Morris, \textit{The Defender's Study Bible}, 3.} It has wide acceptance among astronomers and cosmogonists as the standard evolutionary cosmogony. After the explosion “life” somehow arose, increasing the “order” of the whole universe over time.\footnote{Morris, \textit{Creation and the Modern Christian}, 196.} In other words, big bang cosmology seeks to explain the origin of nature without the intervention of a God. In formulating a naturalistic model, a belief in a divine Creator is completely unnecessary and unscientific.

Paradoxically, no cosmologist could now tell how the Big Bang—the explosion of a super hot, super dense atom—ultimately gave rise to galaxies, stars, and other cosmic lumps, let alone our universe.\footnote{Ibid.} Morris claims that the big bang theory contradicts both basic laws and Scripture: “The so-called big bang theory of the origin of the cosmos, postulating a primeval explosion of the space/mass/time continuum at the start, beginning with a state of nothingness and then rapidly expanding into the present complex universe, contradicts both these basic laws as well as Scripture.”\footnote{Morris, \textit{The Defender's Study Bible}, 3.}

According to Morris, one must have a remarkable faith in naturalism to believe that this marvelously complex universe has evolved from the supposed, primeval Big Bang.\footnote{Morris, \textit{Creation and the Modern Christian}, 64.} Morris notes that the supposed big bang evolutionary cosmogony has several

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\footnote{Morris, \textit{The Defender's Study Bible}, 3.}

\footnote{Morris, \textit{Creation and the Modern Christian}, 196.}

\footnote{Ibid.}

\footnote{Morris, \textit{The Defender's Study Bible}, 3.}

\footnote{Morris, \textit{Creation and the Modern Christian}, 64. The claim by evolution that nature moves from disorder and disorganization to order and organization naturalistically contradicts the famous second law of thermodynamics, which says that disorder must increase in nature.}
inherent difficulties:

For many years, the accepted evolutionary cosmogony has been the big-bang theory. However, there have always been many difficulties with that concept, one of which is to explain how the primeval explosion could be the cause of the complexity and organization of the vast cosmos, and another of which is to explain how a uniform explosion could generate such a non-uniform universe. Creationists have been emphasizing these problems for years, but now the evolutionists themselves are beginning to recognize them.¹

For Morris, the big bang theory and evolutionary theory fail to explain how life with its complexity could have begun. He wonders, too, how order and organization in the cosmos would come from an explosion?

The law of conservation of Angular Momentum states that pure radial motion (in the primeval explosion, all products would move radically outward from its center) cannot give rise to orbital motion, yet planets, stars, and galaxies somehow all managed to start to rotate in vast orbits around a different center throughout the universe.²

Finally Morris concludes his exposition of the evolutionary cosmology by saying:

Evolutionists, for their part, have labored mightily to contrive a naturalistic explanation of the development of the sun and stars, but the best they have come up with so far is the supposed Primal Big Bang, 18 billion years ago (according to current speculations), which they think initiated the subsequent evolution of the universe.³

Morris completely rejects a naturalistic explanation of the origin of the universe and, of course, the big bang theory. He strongly argues that there is no mechanism known as yet that would allow the universe to begin in an arbitrary state and then evolve to its present state.

¹Ibid.

²Ibid., 196.

³Ibid., 194.
highly ordered state. Morris’s own explanation of the origin of nature is given in the following section.

Morris’s Prelapsarian Biblical Philosophy of Nature and Its Origin

God as the Creator

God, who is omnipotent and eternal, existed before the universe and is its Creator.

Concerning Gen 1:1, Morris notes that “this opening verse of the Bible is unique, the foundation of foundations, probably the first words ever written down, either revealed to Adam, or even written directly by God himself.”1 He further explains that “this verse records the creation of space (‘heaven’), of time (‘in the beginning’) and of matter (‘the earth’), the tri-universe, the space/time/matter continuum which constitutes our physical cosmos.”2

Regarding Col 1:17, Morris indicates that “all things were not only created by God in Christ, but also for Him (Romans 11:35; I Corinthians 15:38, Ephesians 1:10).”3

Notes:

1Morris, The Defender’s Study Bible, 3. Robert Berry claims: “The Genesis accounts of Creation are about the Creator first and foremost; they are only secondarily about His actions. It is God who speaks; it is God who sees His work is good; and it is God who puts His image into man” (God and Evolution: Creation, Evolution and the Bible [Vancouver, BC, Canada: Regent College, 2001], 46).

2Morris, The Defender’s Study Bible, 3.

3Ibid., 1323. Wayne Frair concurs with Morris. He observes, “The Bible reveals that a supernatural God not only is the Creator but also is the sustainer of nature, and we learn from the New Testament that this God is Jesus Christ, God’s son. For example, see Colossians 1:16-17 where Christ is presented as the creator and the one who holds all things together. In Hebrews 1:2-3 Christ is pictured as the creator and as ‘sustaining all things by his powerful Word’” (Science and Creator: An Introduction to Some Tough Issues [St. Joseph, MO: Creation Research Society, 2002], 30).
He adds: “By Him all things were created in the past, by Him all things consists in the present, by Him all things are to be reconciled in the future. Therefore, in Him all fulness dwells. He is Alpha and Omega, all and in all.”

According to this principle, nothing is now being either created or annihilated—only conserved, as far as quantity is concerned.”

Morris indicates: “The reason nothing is now being created is because Christ created all things in the past. The reason why nothing is now being annihilated is because

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1Morris, *The Defender’s Study Bible*, 1323.

2Ibid.

3Ibid.

4Ibid. This law is the First Law of Thermodynamics, which according to Morris is the best-proved law of science.
all things are now being sustained by Him.”1 He warns that “if it were not so, the binding energy of the atom, which holds its structure together, would collapse, and the whole universe would disintegrate into chaos.”2

Concerning the origin of angels, Morris speculates that “probably they were created on the first day of the six days of Creation week.”3 This reasoning is in line with Morris’s reaffirmations that the entire universe, the heavenly hosts and stars, were created several thousand years ago. For Morris the angels are a part of the universe and God’s creation and did not exist from eternity. He indicates that the light waves from stars should not be interpreted to mean the stars were created earlier because “men could have been able to see stars billions of light-years away at the very moment of their formation, in accordance with the principle of mature creation, or creation of apparent age”4 to which we turn.

Nature a Result of a Fiat, Historical, Six-day Creation

God formed His creation completely mature from its inception. The new universe, according to Morris, is also created with “an appearance of history.” He claims that Adam and Eve were fully grown adults after God made them and the entire universe had an appearance of age from the start, which means that light from the sun, moon, and stars

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1Ibid.
2Ibid.
4Morris, The Defender’s Study Bible, 6.
were shining on the earth as soon as they were created. Morris suggests that "man would have been able to see stars billions of light-years away at the very moment of their formation, in accordance with the principle of mature creation or creation of apparent age."  

When one examines Morris's works, one finds that he teaches that the current geographical and biological phenomena of nature are best explained by his approach to "Scientific Creationism," which is built on a literal interpretation of Genesis as established earlier. He believes that God created the universe in a period of six, historical, contiguous, twenty-four-hour days, and the climax of His creation was man on the sixth day. On the fifth day, God began to create the animals of the sky and sea, a work that He completed the following day by creating the beasts of the earth. Morris asserts that "all the animals were created to be herbivorous rather than carnivorous. The change came later after the fall and curse on the creation." 

Morris further teaches that the universe is quite young, approximately six thousand years old, and is "in support of straight-forward biblical chronology, literal, six-day creation and the world-wide cataclysmic deluge as the main cause of the geologic strata and great fossil beds." 

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1 Morris, The Defender's Study Bible, 6.

2 Ibid., 6-8.


4 Morris, History of Modern Creationism, 48.
A Tree of Life

In prelapsorian nature, Morris claims that the "tree of life" was an actual and a literal tree, with real fruit (Genesis 3:22; Revelation 22:2) whose properties would have enabled even mortal men to live indefinitely.1 He further explains, "Though modern scientists may have difficulty in determining the nature of such a remarkable food, they also have been unable so far even to determine the basic physiological causes of aging and death."2 Morris concludes, "Thus it is impossible to say scientifically that no chemical substance could exist which might stabilize all metabolic processes and thereby prevent aging."3

No Rain in Original Nature

Gen 2:5, 6 states, "The Lord God had not caused it to rain upon the earth, and there was not a man to till the ground. But there went up a mist from the earth, and watered the whole face of the ground." According to Morris, "This verse is applied specifically to the initial completed Creation, but there is no mention made of any change in this meteorological phenomenon after the Fall, so it evidently continued until the time of the Deluge."4 These words show that Morris alleges that there was no rain before the Flood and in a prelapsarian world. He further adds: "This inference [that rain did not

1Ibid., 9.
2Ibid.
3Ibid.
4Whitcomb and Morris, 241.
occur till the Flood] is supported also by the fact that the rainbow is mentioned as a new sign from God to man after the Flood, implying strongly that rain as we know it and the subsequent rainbow were experienced for the first time then (Genesis 9: 11-17).”

In explaining Gen 2:5, 6, Morris states that “the primeval hydrological cycle was subterranean rather than atmospheric. The absence of rain was a consequence of the water vapor above the firmament and the uniform temperature which it maintained over the earth.”

Morris explains how rain is formed today: “Rain today is dependent on the global circulation of the atmosphere, transporting water evaporated from the ocean inland to condense and precipitate on the lands. This circulation is driven by worldwide temperature difference in the atmosphere and would be impossible to attain with the global warmth sustained by the canopy.” He further suggests that “although it is a matter of difference in opinion, we would say that the Bible is rather plain in suggesting that there was no rainfall such as we know it now until the time of the Flood.” In other words, Morris indicates that rain is one of the consequences of the Divine Curse.

Original Nature as a Curse-Free Domain

According to Morris, “when God’s six-day work of creation was completed,

1Ibid.

2Morris, The Defender’s Study Bible, 9.

3Ibid.

everything in the world was ‘very good.’”¹ The created order was initially perfect. He explains: “There was nothing out of order, no pain, no suffering, no disease, no struggle for existence, no disharmony, no sin, and—above all—no death.”² The original creation was a curse-free domain.

Gen 1:31 states, “And God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, it was very good. And the evening and the morning were the sixth day.” Morris claims: “This one verse precludes any interpretation of Genesis which seeks to accommodate the geological ages in its system.”³ He explains: “The ‘geological’ ages are identified by the fossil dated in the sedimentary rocks of the earth’s crust, which supposedly depict a billion year history of the evolution of life on the earth.”⁴ According to Morris, “fossils really depict a world in which death reigns”⁵ and not a curse-free domain of the original creation.

**Original Nature a Predation-Free Habitat**

For Morris, in a perfect Creation that was “very good” animals were created to be herbivorous rather than carnivorous in the Garden of Eden as well as the whole earth.

Nature was only good and there was no evil. In other words, there was no bifurcation in

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²Ibid.
³Morris, *Defender’s Study Bible*, 8.
⁴Ibid.
⁵Ibid.
nature into good and evil. Concerning Gen 1, Morris further claims, "Six times before in this chapter, God had adjudged His work to be 'good.' Now, after completing everything, He declared it all to be 'exceedingly good' (literal meaning of the Hebrew word rendered 'very')." Hence "there were no predators within or without the Garden of Eden" as suggested by Bernard Ramm and other broad concordists. Morris concludes that "fossils are the remains of dead organisms, from amoebae to man, and thus represent a world full of suffering and death, not a world pronounced by God as 'very good.'"

Biblical and Scientific Creationism and the Origin of Nature

Morris believes that creationism fits the scientific facts better than Darwinism. He uses modern scientific methods in the interpretation of Genesis as he seeks to harmonize the two. Creationism, which explains the origin of nature and of all things, has two approaches, each of which leads to the same conclusion: "biblical creationism" and "scientific creationism." Morris defines the two approaches as follows: "Biblical Creationism: No reliance on scientific data, using only the Bible to expound and defend the creation model." On the contrary, "Scientific Creationism: No reliance on biblical

1Ibid.
3Morris, Defender's Study Bible, 8.
revelation, utilizing only scientific data to support and expound the creation model."¹ He admits that even though the tenets of scientific creationism can be expanded quite independently of the tenets of biblical creationism, the two systems are completely compatible. Since the facts of science support biblical creationism and all statements in the Bible are consistent with scientific creationism, they can be taught either independently or concurrently.²

Genesis protology is understood better in terms of recent Creation. The Genesis record of Creation and its literal interpretation are the key to a comprehensive understanding of the origin of nature. Morris observes:

The Book of Genesis (i.e., “Beginnings”) is the foundation of the Bible, upon which all the rest is built. The most important chapter in Genesis is the first chapter, the basis of all the later chapters, and of all the thirty-one verses in this first chapter of Genesis, the very first verse is the one upon which all the others depend. ‘In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth’ (Gen 1:1).³

Morris takes pains to show that the Scriptures clearly emphasize a recent, direct, fiat Creation of the universe by an omnipotent and omniscient God. Further, he argues that this plain teaching of Scripture is supported by all true facts of science. Morris is

¹Ibid. Scott M. Huse notes: “Biblical creationism, however, has recently been revived and is gathering impressive momentum. Literally thousands of distinguished scientists are rejecting evolution in favor of creationism” (The Collapse of Evolution [Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1993], 12).

²Morris, “The Tenets of Creationism,” iv, 5. Huse further claims: “Before the nineteenth century, the vast majority of scientists interpreted earth history in terms of biblical creationism and catastrophism (Genesis Flood), and consequently, believed in a relatively young earth” (23). However, the more recent acceptance of a principle of uniformitarianism has successfully promoted the idea of the ancient earth.

³Morris, The Biblical Creationism, 17.
confident, too, that the scientific data will correlate with Scripture, because the same God who wrote the Word made the world.\textsuperscript{1} Morris admits:

One of the most surprising phenomena of the second half of the twentieth century has been the resurgence of Creationism—not a compromising amalgamation of evolutionary thought with theistic overtones, but a clear-cut Bible-centered, literalistic, young-earth creationism.\textsuperscript{2}

In summary, Morris presents a model of the origin of nature based on God’s revelation in the Bible and its literal interpretation. He thinks this model which is “Bible-centered” fits the facts of science much better than that of modern evolutionists. The creationist model of the origin contends that God originally created the world in a six-day period, where all the created materials were in a perfect order, until man and woman sinned against God.

This above discussion heads to the question of Morris’s understanding of the present status of nature to which we now turn.

\textit{Natura Continua: Or Morris’s Biblical Postlapsarian Philosophy of Present Nature}

Morris makes a case that the world in its present conditions is not the best of all possible worlds. He claims “things are not ‘very good’ in the world now.”\textsuperscript{3} The creation,

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{1}Ibid., 14.
  \item \textsuperscript{2}Morris, \textit{History of Modern Creationism}, xv. He further adds, “Accompanying this has been the concurrent development of a clear-cut non-religious, non-evolutionary scientific creationism. . . . This movement led, not by churchmen, but by scientists—scientists with Ph.D. degrees from recognized universities, holding responsible scientific positions, and using scientific data and argumentation” (ibid.).
  \item \textsuperscript{3}Morris, \textit{The Genesis Record}, 105.
\end{itemize}
which was once "very good," is now marred by the presence of sin and penalty of death.

But Morris concurs with Paul's Epistle to the Romans which unpacks the events of Gen 1-11, especially references to creation, the Fall of man, and the resultant curse of death on man and his dominion. Morris observes that "the sin of Adam, rebelling against the word of God, brought death into God's previously 'very good' world." He explains:

When God's six-day work of creation was complete, everything in the world was "very good." There was nothing out of order, no pain, no suffering, no disease, no struggle for existence, no disharmony, no sin, and—above all—no death.

But things are not "very good" in the world now! In the physical realm, everything tends to run down and wear out. In the living world, each animal is engaged in a perpetual struggle against other animals and against disease as well as the universal process of aging and death.

Morris also admits that "the problem of the existence of evil in a world created by a holy God is one that has exercised the minds and hearts of philosophers and theologians through the ages." As noted earlier, John Milton is a classical example of a poet who underscores the problematic condition of nature today.

In other words, for Morris, the current status of nature is a bifurcation or dualism of good and evil. Good and evil presently have to live side by side, since the Fall. He claims the original perfect Creation was cursed because of the entrance of sin into the world through the Fall of Adam, and that the resultant moral and spiritual deterioration eventually brought on the judgment of the great Flood. As will be noted subsequently,

1Morris, Biblical Creationism, 164.

2Morris, The Genesis Record, 105.

3Ibid.
the key to Morris’s understanding of the present status of nature is his understanding of the Fall to which we now turn.

The Effect of the Fall upon Present Nature

According to Morris, the perfect creation was ruined when Adam and Eve disobeyed God’s instruction to abstain from eating the fruit from the literal “tree of knowledge of good and evil” (Gen 2:17). Morris, of course, must account for the profound difference between the newly created prelapsarian world and the present postlapsarian world. Many of the most significant features of the present postlapsarian world were not part of God’s original creation; they are a result of the Fall.

Morris takes pains to explain that “the book of Adam” describes the Fall, among other things. He notes: “It seems certain that Adam knew how to write for this section is called a ‘book,’ and no one but Adam could have known about all the events of this section.” He claims that Adam, “to be able to name the animals, as God commanded, and to subdue the earth, . . . must have had extraordinary intelligence and skill. He had come directly from the Creator’s hand and was ‘in His image’—thus surely capable of accurate, rapid, analytical reasoning and precise verbal and written communication.” Morris concludes: “Therefore we can regard this ‘book of Adam” as being a precisely

1Morris, Biblical Creationism, 23. Robert Berry notes: “A blunt worry was expressed by the famous Scopes era anti-evolutionist George McGready Price: ‘No Adam, no fall; no atonement, no Saviour’” (135).

2Morris, Biblical Creationism, 23.

3Ibid.
accurate accounting of the events it describes.”¹

According to Morris, when the first human couple sinned, they destroyed the perfection in creation, and introduced death into it. In regard to the nature of the Fall, Morris argues that Adam narrated the story of his own fall, after the temptation came through the serpent:

Adam told the sad story of his fall in simple, yet poignant, words. The temptation came through the serpent, the most “subtle” of the beasts of the field named by Adam... He had been cast out of heaven to the earth, where he would be allowed to tempt Adam and Eve also to rebel against God. Being a powerful spirit being, he was able to possess and control the body of the brilliantly shining serpent.²

For Morris, there is no doubt that man would have lived forever had he not sinned, and so apparently would have the animals. The temptation and the subsequent fall that came through the serpent brought destruction and death to the original creation.

Morris explains that the serpent led both Adam and Eve to eat of the forbidden fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. This act of doubting and disobedience brought spiritual and physical death to the first parents:

Whether the serpent in the primeval creation was able actually to speak in human language is a matter of uncertainty... In any case, whatever the exact mechanism may have been, Eve reported it to Adam as an actual conversation with the serpent, and he then recorded it as such. The end result, of course, was that Adam and Eve both ate of the forbidden fruit of the knowledge of good and evil, first doubting God’s word and finally disobeying his explicit commandment. As God had warned (Gen 2:19), they died as a result. They

¹Ibid.

²Ibid., 25-26. According to Robert Berry who disagrees with Morris: “The death that came into the world was Spiritual (separation from God), not physical death. Adam and Eve ‘died’ the day they disobeyed (Genesis 2:17) but they survived physically (and produced all their family) after their exclusion from God’s presence” (70).
first died spiritually, in the sense that their fellowship with God was instantly broken. They also began to die physically, the law of decay starting to work in their bodies, and this process would finally take them back to the dust from which their bodies had been formed.¹

However, the biblical doctrine of the Fall cannot be harmonized with uniformitarian views of the earth’s history and paleontology. Morris states that uniformitarian paleontology

assumes that uncounted billions of animals had experienced natural or violent deaths before the Fall of Adam; that many important kinds of animals had long since become extinct by the time God created Adam to have dominion over every living creature; and that long ages before the Edenic curse, giant flesh-eating monsters like Tyrannosaurus Rex roamed the earth, slashing their victims with ferocious, dagger-like teeth and claws.²

The Second Law of Thermodynamics in Present Nature

Morris suggests that the principle of “decay” is universal and has always operated in the world since the Fall, but of late has been “rapidly accelerating.”³ But the scientific community continues to deny and acknowledge its biblical basis and its theological significance. Morris explains: “This principle is so universal that scientists have come to recognize it as a basic law of science, calling it ‘the law of increasing entropy’ or ‘the

¹Morris, Biblical Creationism, 26.
²Whitcomb and Morris, 454-55.
³Henry M. Morris, Creation and the Second Coming (El Cajon, CA: Master Books, 1991), 126. According to Scott Huse: “The second law of thermodynamics... All processes of nature have a tendency toward decay and disintegration. The universe is proceeding in a downward, degenerating direction of decreasing organization. Material possessions deteriorate and all living organisms eventually return to dust, a state of complete disorder” (77).
second law of thermodynamics."

He adds, “They generally refuse, however, to acknowledge its Biblical basis and its theological significance.”

Morris goes on to say that the present world is not progressing upward, but downward toward disintegration and death, contrary to the views of scientists:

Furthermore, they reject its obvious testimony against their belief in universal evolution. The fact is, nevertheless, that the world is not progressing upward through an imaginary process of evolution, but downward toward disintegration and death, by the very real process of thermodynamics.

For Morris, there is no doubt that, with “an explosive increase in science and technology” in the contemporary world, modern technology seems “to be hastening these decay processes” as the whole creation groans, awaiting death.

Morris indicates: “In the face of such clear-cut passages as Romans 5:12-21 and 1 Corinthians 15:21-22, few who accept the Bible as the word of God will deny that Adam’s sin and fall introduced spiritual and physical death into the human race.”

In sum on this point, Morris states:


2. Ibid.

3. Ibid. Dorothy Allford claims, “The aging process, disease, and trauma assist in the working of the second law of thermodynamics. How? Every human being is vulnerable to the processes that lead to decay and death. Another way of stating the second law of thermodynamics is that everything breaks down or eventually wears out. Everything goes from the complex to less complex. This change is called entropy” (*Instant Creation—Not Evolution* [New York: Stein and Day, 1978], 123).


5. Whitcomb and Morris, 455.
And so God placed the curse on man and on his whole environment, thus forcing him to recognize the seriousness of his sin, as well as his helplessness to save himself and his dominion from eventual destruction... 

In the animal and plant kingdom likewise, limitless proliferation would be checked by these new factors of disease, predation, parasitism, and so on. Had the Fall never taken place, animal life would no doubt have remained constant at an optimum population by divinely directed constraints on the productive process.¹

Thus according to Morris, man’s sin brought the curse on himself and the entire creation. Man’s greatest frustration was that he could not save himself and his environment from the curse and destruction. Animal and plant kingdoms were not spared from the curse either; the Fall brought disease and predation among others calamities. In the next section, the origin of death in present nature will be considered.

**The Origin of Death in Present Nature, in Particular: Romans 5 and 8:19-23**

Morris suggests that the sin of man in Gen 3, and the subsequent Fall, affected the whole universe, extending the divine curse through the entire created cosmos. It ushered in a reign of suffering and death. Sin, indeed, had universal repercussions. Now, the universe operates under the process of decay and death, as it awaits delivery into the glorious new age to come at Paradise.²

Morris then establishes a cause-and-effect connection between sin and death in nature. In fact, Morris indicates that there was no death before the Fall:

It is very important also to note that there was no death in the world until sin entered the world through Adam [Rom 5:12]. Modern evolutionary

¹Morris, *The Genesis Record*, 126.

theory assumes that suffering and death reigned in the world for hundreds
of millions of years before man appeared and brought sin into the world.
By such a concept, death is part of nature itself, having no relation to sin at
all. Thus God would become directly responsible for the supposed
worldwide, billion-year-long monstrous system of suffering and death—
and this cannot possibly be true of the omniscient, omnipotent, loving,
gracious God revealed in the Bible.¹

Morris further asks, What would be the implication of some of the presuppositions of the
modern evolutionary theory that suffering and death existed for long ages prior to sin and
the Fall of man?

Furthermore, if death reigned for a billion years and, therefore, is not really
the divine penalty for sin, then the death of Christ can have no special
significance, and we have no promise of salvation and eternal life after all.
The whole scenario of evolution, however, is nothing but a humanistic
nightmare, with no reality to it at all. Adam did bring sin and death into
the world, and Christ did bring righteousness and life back into the world,
and the free gift of God’s grace is real!²

Morris disagrees with broad evangelical concordists whom he calls “Christian
compromisers,” who argue that it was only human death that Adam brought into the
world with his sin, and that animals (including human-like creatures before Adam) had
indeed been suffering and dying for long ages prior to man. Morris states categorically:
“The bible is quite explicit in teaching that there was no suffering and no death of sentient
life in the world before man brought sin into the world (Genesis 3:14-19; Romans 5:12;
8:20-23; 1 Corinthians 15:21,22; Revelation 21:4,5; etc.).”³ Morris insists that “the tragic
fact, is that he [Adam] did sin, and thereby brought sin and death into the world.

¹Ibid., 164.
²Ibid., 165.
'Wherefore, as by one man sin entered the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men for that all have sinned' (Romans 5:12). 'In Adam, all die' (I Corinthians 15:12).\(^1\) He observes that this unwarranted twisting of the plain meaning of the scriptures is completely refuted by the tremendous testimony of Rom 8:19-23.\(^2\)

Morris observes regarding Rom 8:19-23 that it is the "whole creation" that was affected by man's sin and put under the "bondage of corruption," but nature awaits redemption. He states:

> It is thus not just the human realm but the whole creation which is travelling in pain under the "bondage of corruption," brought on by man's sin. The "bondage of corruption," incidentally, suggests the second law of thermodynamics, for it can also be translated, "bondage of decay." The creation will one day be delivered from this bondage under sin and death and we shall "be glorified together with Christ" (Rom 8:17) when he comes to complete his work of redemption and to accomplish all his purposes in creation.\(^3\)

Morris emphasizes: "Not only mankind but also 'the whole creation' has been delivered into the 'bondage of decay' and has ever since been 'groaning and travelling together in pain' (Romans 8:21, 22)."\(^4\) He states that fossil deposits suggest sudden burial after Adam's fall:

> Similarly, in Romans 8:20: "The creation was subjected to vanity." As

\(^{1}\text{Morris, The Genesis Record, 112-13.}\)

\(^{2}\text{Morris, Biblical Creationism, 165. Bernard Ramm, an evangelical broad concordist, argues that it was only human death that Adam brought into the world with his sin, and that animals had indeed been suffering and dying for long ages prior to man. See Ramm's book The Christian View of Science and Scripture, 334-35.}\)

\(^{3}\text{Ibid.}\)

\(^{4}\text{Whitcomb and Morris, 239.}\)
already noted, most of the fossil deposits give evidence of sudden burial and therefore betoken catastrophe of some kind. The whole appearance of the fossiliferous rocks seems completely out of harmony with the system of creation which God so many times pronounced as “very good.” Therefore, we feel compelled to date all of the rock strata which contains fossils of once-living creatures as subsequent to Adam’s fall.¹

The fossils really depict a world in which death reigns soon after the Fall. According to Morris, the fossils, the remains of dead organisms, from amoeba to man, represent a world full of suffering and death, not a world pronounced by God as “very good.”²

Present Nature as Transformed Nature

For Morris, Rom 8:19-22 indicates that “the groaning creation” is a transformed nature after the Edenic Curse. Apparently, after the Fall, the curse not only affected man but had a devastating effect on the entire nature. Morris claims the Fall affected the animals, and ruined man’s relationship to the animal kingdom. Morris states:

But there are other passages besides Romans 8:19-22 which indicate rather clearly that the Edenic Curse has far-reaching effects upon nature, including the animal kingdom. In Genesis 1:28, for example, we are told that God gave to Adam “dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the heavens, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.”³

Daily experience teaches us that dominion of this kind is no longer being exercised by the human race over the animal kingdom. Something drastic has taken place in man’s relationship to the animal kingdom since the days of the Garden of Eden. The subservience and instant obedience of all classes of animals to the will of man has been transformed into a fear and dread of man that often

¹Ibid.

²Morris, The Defender’s Study Bible, 8.

³Ibid., 459.
brings with it violence and destruction.¹

In other words, Morris suggests that the animal kingdom was not spared by the Fall and Edenic curse. Prior to the Fall, man had dominion over the animal kingdom and a relationship of respect and trust existed. But soon after the Edenic curse, the relationship between man and animal was transformed to that of fear and mistrust, often leading to violence and death.

Morris continues to make a case that the present status of nature is a “transformed nature.”² He says Rom 8:19-22 explains “the stupendous transformation experienced by the entire creation, when, at the time of the Fall and as a result of the Edenic Curse, it entered into a ‘bondage of corruption’ from which it still longs to be delivered.”³ Subsequently, with the entrance of sin into the world, the judgment of decay and death was imposed upon Adam and nature by God: “Cursed is the ground for thy sake,” God said to Adam (Gen 3:17).

In the meantime, “the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now” (Rom 8:22).⁴ Morris makes the following observation as he tries to explain the meaning of “the Groaning Creation”:

It was at the time of the Edenic Curse of Genesis 3:17-19 that “the creation was subjected to vanity” by God. This “vanity” (of which the Book of Ecclesiastes speaks so eloquently) is further described as “bondage of corruption,” which is the

¹Ibid., 460.
²Ibid., 459.
³Ibid., 472.
⁴The Greek word stenagmos refers to intense, yet inaudible sighing.
explanation for the fact that “the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together now.” This passage teaches very clearly that some tremendous transformation took place in the realm of nature at the time of the Edenic Curse; and therefore any scientific theory which purports to explain the history of life on this planet without taking into full account the effects of the Fall upon the realm of nature must be rejected.¹

Apparently with the fall of man, a new order of things took place, dramatically altering the state and status of nature. Not only was the relationship between man and God affected, but also the earth was “cursed for man’s sake” (Gen 3:17; 5:29). The whole creation was delivered into the bondage of corruption, groaning and travailing in pain together.²

The subsequent entrance of sin into the Garden of Eden which affected our first parents, Adam and Eve, led to their fall, decay, and death. Mankind was not only delivered into the “bondage of decay” but ever since has been “groaning and travailing together in pain” (Rom 8:21, 22).³

Morris realizes that “it is thus not just the human realm but the whole creation which is travailing in pain under the ‘bondage of corruption’ brought on by man’s sin. The ‘bondage of corruption’ incidentally suggests the second law of thermodynamics, for it can be translated ‘bondage of decay’.⁴ He indicates that “the creation will one day be delivered from the bondage under sin and death and we shall ‘be also glorified together’

¹Morris, The Genesis Record, 459.
²Ibid., 215.
³Ibid., 239.
⁴Morris, Biblical Creationism, 165.
with Christ (Rom 8:17) when he comes to complete his work of redemption and to accomplish all his purpose in creation.”

Although the whole creation suffered because of God’s primeval curse on His creation due to sin (Gen 3:14-19), nature has been promised future deliverance. It awaits the unveiling to the world of all those who have been brought into God’s spiritual family.

Three Divine Curses upon Present Nature as Constitutive of Human Sin

A Curse on the Animal Kingdom

In the writings of Morris three different divine curses can be distinguished which affect, respectively, the animal, the plant, and the mineral kingdoms. Morris indicates, “The Curse thus applies to man and woman, the animals, and the physical elements: God’s whole creation.” He claims, “God’s Curse fell first on the Serpent, representing man’s great enemy the devil, as a perpetual reminder to man of his fall.” Morris indicates: “All other animals were also placed under the Curse, but the Serpent was Cursed above all others, becoming a universal object of dread and loathing. Whatever may have been its original posture, it would henceforth glide on its belly, eating its prey directly off the ground and covered with the dust of the earth.”

1Ibid.

2Morris, The Defender’s Study Bible, 14.

3Ibid., 13.

4Ibid.
merely a talking snake."\textsuperscript{1} He asserts that the serpent "was Satan himself (Revelation 12:9; 20:2) possessing and using the serpent’s body to deceive Eve."\textsuperscript{2} Why did Satan use the serpent? Morris’s response is: "The physical serpent was clever, and possibly originally able to stand upright, eye-to-eye with man, (the Hebrew word is nachash, possibly originally meaning a shining, upright creature)\textsuperscript{3} and may have been very charming compared to other animals in the Garden.

According to Morris, the curse could have been averted "had Eve not sinned."\textsuperscript{4} He claims: "The experience of childbirth would have been easy and pleasant, like every other experience in the perfect world God had made. The Curse, however, fell in a peculiar way on Eve and her daughters, as the pain and sorrow of conception and birth would be greatly multiplied."\textsuperscript{5} In spite of the unfortunate fate of the woman, Morris offers a word of comfort. He says, "Nevertheless, the bearing of children, especially by a woman who loves God and seeks to obey Him, is a time of blessing and rejoicing even though accompanied by a time of suffering (John 16:21)."\textsuperscript{6} Morris further adds: "In the experience of giving birth, every woman experiences by proxy, the privilege granted Mary when she became the mother of the promised Seed. Furthermore, she even becomes a type of Christ, who ‘shall..."

\textsuperscript{1}Ibid., 11.

\textsuperscript{2}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{3}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{4}Ibid., 13.

\textsuperscript{5}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{6}Ibid.
see his seed... he shall see of the travail of his soul and shall be satisfied’ (Isaiah 53: 10,11)." According to Morris the woman would now be ruled by the husband. He argues that “she who had acted independently of her husband in her desire for the forbidden fruit must henceforth exercise her desires through her husband, and he would be ruler in the family.”

According to Morris, “the full force of the Curse fell on Adam, as the responsible head of the human race, and on all his dominion. Instead of believing God’s Word, Adam had ‘hearkened to the voice of his wife,’ and she had been beguiled by the voice of the serpent.” He suggests: “The Curse on Adam had four main aspects: (1) sorrow, because of the futility of endless struggle against a hostile environment; (2) pain, signified by the thorns; (3) sweat, or tears, the ‘strong crying’ (Hebrews 5:7) occasioned by the labor necessary to maintain life and hope; and (4) eventual physical death in spite of all his efforts, returning to the dust.”

**A Curse on the Vegetable Kingdom**

As to a second Curse, Morris argues that “it seems unlikely that God actually created ‘thorns and thistles’” at the beginning. He indicates: “More probably, He [God]

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1Ibid.

2Ibid.

3Ibid.

4Ibid., 14.

5Ibid.
allowed the beneficent processes and structures Morris also claims the "ground" was
cursed, and all the "elements of matter, out of which all things had been made, were
included in the Curse [on] the 'whole creation.' . . . That is, all things would begin to decay
back to the dust again."¹ In other words, Morris argues that sin and curse affected the
'whole creation' and all aspects of nature. Death and decay became the order of the day in
nature. He had made previously, all of which were very good initially, to deteriorate in
varying degrees, some even becoming harmful to man and to each other."² Morris further
explains: "There exists now a host of systems in nature [such as] disease, bacteria, viruses,
parasites, fangs and claws, weeds and poisons. [These conditions] reflect a state of
conflict, predation, and struggle for existence in the plant and animal kingdoms, as well as
in human life, all of which seems, at first, to be inconsistent with the concept of an ideal
creation."³

A Curse upon the Mineral Kingdom: Effect of
a Global Flood upon Present Nature

Examination of Morris's teaching reveals that the present state of nature in the
material world can be explained in the context of three basic events as noted earlier: the
six-day period of special creation, the Fall, and the Great Flood.⁴

The first event is God's initial creation of the world, that is, God's creation of a

¹Ibid., 13
²Ibid.
³Ibid.
perfect world and the subsequent ruination of that world through man’s sin, as discussed earlier.

The second key event after creation was the rebellion of man and woman against God. God’s first creation was perfect and sinless, but when Adam and Eve sinned they introduced decay and death into the world. Their sin accounts for the fact that the entire universe is now decaying, or winding down.

The third event is very important and represents a third pillar of scientific creationism which, by inference, can represent a third curse, a curse on the mineral kingdom. It is the great devastating worldwide Flood recorded in Gen 6:1-9:12. Consistent with Morris’s interpretation of the Creation and the Fall, he draws scientific implications from a literal reading of the account of the Flood. As will be noted subsequently, Morris suggests that as a judgment on man’s sin, God sent a great flood upon the earth in which He released all the water in the upper atmosphere and beneath the surface of the earth. The water covered the entire globe and destroyed all land creatures on the earth except those who were preserved in the ark. Morris alludes that the Great Flood with its accompanying earthquake, volcanic activities, atmospheric disturbances, tidal waves, and the like, explain almost all of the world’s geological phenomenon.

In their classic work *The Genesis Flood*, Whitcomb and Morris dismiss the evolutionary account of the formation of the geological column and argue that most of the strata in the earth’s crust was laid in the Flood described in Gen 6-9 and the aftermath.2

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2Ibid.
Morris takes this Flood to have been global. He explains the distribution of fossils by arguing that ruptures in the ocean floors (Gen 7:1) would have killed and buried sea creatures at an early stage; while low-lying land habitats would have been flooded before those higher up. He explains further that less mobile animals would have been drowned before more mobile ones; while physical sorting of animal and vegetable remains would have been buried in the running water and main global disturbance of the Flood.1

Genesis mentions torrents of water falling from the skies and vast reservoirs of water from the fountains of the deep opening up. Morris extrapolates that all this was accompanied by violent tidal actions and great gusting winds that would have generated massive geological disruptions, reshaping the entire topography of the earth.2

Morris is unpersuaded by an accommodationist solution which suggests that the Flood was a localized event that did not cover the entire earth, or the Flood was worldwide but "tranquil" in such a way as to come and go without leaving any traces. He suggests that these accommodationist solutions compromise the strict literal meaning of the Bible to adjust to the discoveries of science. To those who would argue that the Flood was local, Morris points out that Gen 7:19-20 says that the "Flood covered the tops of the highest mountains" for at least nine months—hardly a localized event! Moreover, why construct an ark? If the Flood were a limited regional affair, then why spend a century preparing a huge

1Ibid.

vessel to carry animals from the whole world? Furthermore, Morris argues, if Jesus Christ, the Son of God, referred to a flood that destroyed "them all," then it must have happened. And to those who suggest that the Flood was tranquil, he responds that floods are anything but tranquil events. "The idea of a worldwide, year-long 'tranquil' flood is hydrologically and geophysically absurd," Morris notes, "about like a tranquil worldwide explosion!"

Morris rejects the validity of uniformitarianism and evolutionism as the controlling principle in historical geology, and favors what he calls "Biblical Catastrophism":

The fossil-bearing sedimentary rocks cannot, as we have just seen, be attributed either to the creation period or to any hypothetical period before the creation period. Therefore, they must be explained in terms of events after the creation period. They speak eloquently of death, and the Bible says there was no death in the world until man brought sin into the world (Romans 5:12; I Corinthians 15:21), and God imposed the Curse on man’s dominion (Genesis 3:17; Romans 8:20-22). It seems evident, therefore, that at least the major part of the great sedimentary rocks must be attributed to events associated with the great Flood, as described in Genesis 9. This was the greatest visitation of death upon the world’s inhabitants since the world began. The Apostle Peter, describing it, said: ‘the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished’ (2 Peter 3:6).

Morris explains the benefit of the flood model over the uniformitarian one:

The creation model thus also includes as another major component the global cataclysm of the Deluge. It maintains that the actual facts of geology, including the sedimentary rocks and their fossils, as well as the present structure of the earth's

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1Ibid., 1:67.
2Ibid., 1:139-41.
3Ibid., 1:69.
4Morris, Many Infallible Proofs, 278-79.
crust and surface features, can be more easily and naturally explained in terms of
the Flood than it can in terms of the uniformitarian model. The various rock
systems do not represent evolutionary ages at all, but rather diluvial stages.¹

In Genesis 6-9 appears the record of the great global cataclysm known as the
Noachian Flood. All men, as well as all land animals except those in Noah’s ark,
were destroyed by a great, world-enveloping flood that was sent as divine
punishment because “all flesh had corrupted His way upon the earth” (Genesis
6:12).²

There is no doubt that if the worldwide flood actually destroyed the entire antediluvian
human population, as well as all land animals except those preserved in Noah’s ark, then
its historical and scientific implications are significant. Morris argues that the Genesis
Flood and the events associated with it are profoundly important to the proper
understanding of anthropology, geology, and all other sciences which deal with historic
and prehistoric events and phenomena.³

Moreover, Morris also dismisses the geologic column as “a system constructed in
such a strange and arbitrary manner . . . [which] contain[s] many anomalies and
contradictions”⁴ that, he alleges, is supposed to have been “found in complete and proper
order everywhere in the world.”⁵ He explains:

The fact is that it exists nowhere in the real world, except on the pages of
textbooks. The standard column is at least one hundred miles in thickness, . . .
Nowhere in the world is the complete column found; only a few of the

¹Ibid., 279.
²Ibid.
³Whitcomb and Morris, xix.
⁴Morris, Science and the Bible, 68.
⁵Ibid., 68-89.
twelve periods are normally found at any given location, and there are many places where none of the periods are found, with the crystalline “basement rocks” practically at the surface.¹

Therefore Morris concludes: “The only possible explanation for the geologic column and fossil records, consistent with scripture, must therefore be sought in terms of the Noachian Deluge. This tremendous worldwide cataclysm does provide a satisfactory framework within which to reinterpret these data.”²

A global Flood appropriately fits a biblical framework. The Flood cannot be a local event for many biblical reasons such as:

The story of the Flood becomes a silly fable if it is interpreted as a local event. The elaborate provisions for the preservation of life in the ark were utterly unnecessary. God could merely have warned Noah to move into a nearby region that the flood would not cover, and Noah could have done that with far less time and labor than were needed for the construction of the ark and the collection of animals and birds. Finally, if the Genesis Flood was only local, then God’s promise that there would never again be such a flood was a lie.³

In other words, Morris argues there is no way the Genesis Flood could be a local event. He claims such a possibility would not make sense and lacks biblical support.

In sum, Morris warns: “If the flood was really of the magnitude and intensity the Bible indicates, then the entire case for evolution collapses. Evolution depends entirely on the fossil record interpreted in terms of vast geologic ages. If these did not take place,

¹Ibid., 69.

²Morris, Scientific Creationism, 251.

³Morris, Science and the Bible, 65.
evolution is impossible."\(^1\) The role of Satan in nature will be explored in the next section.

Role of Satan in Present Nature

In Morris’s demonology, Satan is playing an active role in the present nature in relation to humans. Satan began this role in heaven when he led a rebellion against God and has since been actively tempting human nature in the present nature. In a nutshell, Morris suggests that “doubting God’s Word, augmenting, then diluting, and finally rejecting God’s Word—this was Satan’s temptation and Eve’s sin, and this is the common sequence of apostasy even today.”\(^2\) He notes that Satan was the name given to Lucifer after his rebellion against God in heaven. “When iniquity was found in this perfect being—evidently the sin of rebellion against God—he who had been Lucifer (“Light-Bearer”) became Satan (“The Adversary”), and has remained God’s greatest foe ever since.”\(^3\)

Morris also claims that Lucifer “was clearly of the angelic order, for he had been ‘created,’ not born.”\(^4\) As noted earlier, Morris believes that angels and Lucifer “were probably created on the first day of the six days of created week.”\(^5\) According to Morris,

\(^1\)Ibid. Morris adds, “It is not surprising, therefore, that orthodox geologists strongly oppose the idea of a worldwide flood. In view of this intense and almost unanimous opposition, many evangelicals insist that Genesis be interpreted in terms of a local flood” (ibid.).

\(^2\)Morris, The Defender’s Study Bible, 12.

\(^3\)Ibid., 878.

\(^4\)Ibid.

although Lucifer had a throne as God’s “anointed cherub” (Ezek 28:14), he aspired to reign over all God’s holy angels, all of whom have been created to serve God and to become ministers to those who would be “heirs of salvation” (Heb 1:14). He not only desired to rule angels but to be like God Himself, no doubt ultimately aspiring to displace God. This absurd ambition led to his ultimate fall.1 Unfortunately, according to Morris, Lucifer first sinned, sometime after the creation week. He has the following to say about this tragic moment: “[H]e [Lucifer] rebelled against God in the heavenly Eden (sometime after the six days of creation, for everything in heaven and earth was still ‘very good’ at that point in time—Genesis 1:31-2:3),”2 Morris adds, “God ‘cast him to the ground’—that is, ‘to the earth’—where He allowed him to test Adam and Eve in their earthly Eden, to see whether they also would rebel against God’s word, and seek to be gods themselves.”3

For Morris, the fall of Lucifer in heaven (Isa 14:9-14) and his expulsion to the earth (Ezek 28:12-15) had serious consequences for humans in prelapsarian nature. Morris further explains: “Of course the sin of Adam was occasioned because of the previous sin of Satan and in a sense the curse on the serpent in particular in relation to the latter, but in general yes the various curses were the result of Adam’s sin as the Bible

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1Morris, The Defender’s Study Bible, 731.

2Ibid., 878.

3Ibid. Apparently, after the rebellion of Satan in heaven, according to Morris, God “cast him to the ground” (Ezek 28:17), where He allowed him to test Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, to see whether they also would rebel against God’s Word, and seek to be gods themselves (ibid.). Morris states that God allowed “Satan to tempt the very ones he had been created to serve” (ibid., 11). The result was the first parents rebelled against God and fell in sin (ibid.).

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explicitly declares.”

Morris concludes, “Satan merely implanted a slight doubt concerning God’s veracity and His sovereign goodness. The approach so successful in this case has provided the pattern for his temptations ever since.” This means that in present nature Satan continues to actively tempt human creatures. Signs of Satan’s influence today are indicated by Morris’ as “incurable pestilences, sophisticated weapons of destruction . . . explosive increase of drug use, legalized abortion and homosexuality, species extinctions.” There is no doubt for Morris that Satan is responsible for all these evils that have devastated present nature.

Morris’s views concerning the future of nature will be considered in this last section.

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Natura Nova

A Scientific Eschatological Framework

As a background to what we might call Morris’s biblical consummation philosophy of nature, we note briefly how some theologians respond to the scientific eschatology of nature. Scripture anticipates a time when God “will wipe every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more, for the first things have passed away” (Rev 21:4 NRSV). Science is concerned not only with the present condition of nature, but also with

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2 Ibid.
3 Ibid., 127-29.
its future. Debates persist in many scientific circles, however, as to how the universe will end. This means that science has its own eschatology of nature. Conventional science gives a careful and detailed account of the risks of catastrophes that would be destructive to life and earth. Science also makes it clear that the universe itself eventually will decay or collapse, ending in cosmic futility.¹ In other words, the universe will perish in some fashion as we are frequently told. Ted Peters suggests the universe will “freeze or fry.”²

Scientific eschatology depicts the universe and human life as faced with life-terminating hazards and disasters. Some of these catastrophes are absolutely certain, such as the explosion of the sun and the collapse or decay of the universe. These cannot be averted. Even though these destructive events lie far in the future, they cannot be ignored in the present unfolding of cosmic history and shifting eschatological moods. The certain eventual disappearance of all life from the universe makes the future of nature gloomy, without hope or joy.³

Though nature and the cosmos are characterized by order and reliability, they are most strikingly characterized by their life-threatening elements. Isaac Asimov, in his well-known book A Choice of Catastrophes,⁴ has catalogued the various possibilities of catastrophes in detail. The most reliably supported world-ending scenarios are

³Polkinghorne and Welker, 17.
⁴Asimov, A Choice of Catastrophes.
life-terminating, astronomical disasters. Other scenarios include disease, episodes of flooding or volcanism, pollution, and global self-destruction. The earth and the sun are destined for eventual destruction by the very forces that gave them existence. The universe itself eventually will evanesce or possibly collapse in a fiery final conflagration.¹

Polkinghorne and Welker caution regarding the common eschatological concerns of scientists and theologians: “A universe moving from big bang to hot death or cosmic crunch hardly seems to lead to the human heart!”² How do we believe in God when we think of His intentions for the universe as doomed with physical decay and as about to come to an end?

Polkinghorne contends that the universe will perish but there will be a new cosmic order put in place. He suggests that science may help explain the resurrection hope—a crucial aspect of Christian understanding of the Creatio Nova.

Concepts from science that may help in framing the continuity side of a resurrection hope include an increasing recognition of the significance of relationality and of the need for holistic accounts of physical reality, and the realization that the conventional matter—energy approach of physics needs supplementation by a holistic concept of pattern—forming information. Such a hope can only spring from a conviction of the faithfulness of God, but is not contrary to what this worldly science can say about human nature.³

For Polkinghorne, science confirms that there is continuity of the present nature beyond death and cosmic destruction. Although he admits that the present universe will end and all living things will die, there will be a new universe. He asserts that physics supplements

¹Ibid.

²Polkinghorne and Welker, 7.

³Ibid.
religion by shedding light on the new creation that will never end or die.¹

Nature and Its Ontological Consummation

According to Morris, the future of nature is crucial in a universe faced with environmental crises, the continuing surge of global poverty, and the threat of an age of increasing conflict, scarcities, and despair.² He notes “that the world is not progressing upward through an imaginary process of evolution, but downward toward disintegration and death.”³ Many people around the world look to a future without hope. Whereas destructive events or forces appear to lie far in the future, theology cannot afford to ignore the shifting eschatological moods in the unfolding of present cosmic history. For Morris, God’s ultimate plan for nature will be realized when He removes all effects of sin and restores creation to its original created character and purpose.

Morris suggests that “Genesis is the foundation and Revelation is the consummation of God’s plan in creating and redeeming the world.”⁴ The two books fit together as the book of “Beginnings” and the book of “Unveilings,” depicting the Lord Jesus Christ as both Creator (Col 1:16) and Consummator (Col 1:20) of all things.⁵

²Morris, Creation and the Second Coming, 127-29.
³Ibid., 126.
⁴Morris, The Defender’s Study Bible, 1579.
⁵Ibid. Ted Peters and Martinez Hewlett wonder if “the book of Genesis reports saying that the creation is ‘very good.’ By what criterion is God measuring it? The book of Revelation presents a vision of the heavenly Jerusalem with the original Garden of
Morris indicates that Revelation is "this final book of the Bible—final in time of writing, final in standard canonical order, and final in terms of both historical record and promised fulfillment—is the most exciting of all." He declares, "It records the restoration of all things to God's created perfection and the consummation of all His purposes in creation."

Morris outlines his eschatological views of the dramatic and awesome world-ending events in a fashion which at times "seem paradoxical, or even contradictory," although he seems to concur with the Bible in some basic facts. He states: "Jesus had taught, when He was on the earth at His first coming, that there would be two resurrections—'the resurrection of life' and 'the resurrection of damnation' (John 5:29)." Morris notes: "But it was not revealed at that time that there would be a thousand years between the two. The first would be completed at the end of the tribulation period, the second at the end of the millennial period... The first resurrection relates only to the saved, the second—a thousand years later—only to the lost, who are then condemned to the lake of fire."

Eden in its downtown Central park. Just what constitutes eschatological harmony between civilization (city) and nature (garden) here?" (Evolution from Creation to New Creation: Conflict, Conversation, and Convergence [Nashville: Abingdon, 2003], 27).

1Morris, The Defender's Study Bible, 1426.
2Ibid.
3Morris, Creation and the Second Coming, 168.
4Ibid., 160-61.
5Ibid., 161.
Subsequently, Morris attempts to give some sequence of events as he unfolds his eschatological, end-of-the-world perspective. Before the new earth there will be a whole series of events:

This may seem paradoxical, or even contradictory, but the problem vanishes when we recognize that His second coming—just like His first coming—will include a whole series of events, not simply instantaneous end-of-the-world judgment. The very first necessary event in that series—that for which all Christians have been exhorted to watch—is His descent from heaven into the earth's atmosphere, with both dead and living believers being resurrected and glorified, then caught up (or 'raptured') to meet Him in the air. The various prophesied signs of His coming may or may not (but need not) take place before this. If they do begin to take place before this, then we know His return is that much nearer, for the signs relate to the total aspect of His coming; especially the climactic event when He will come to the earth itself and put down all rebellion at Armageddon.\(^1\)

For Morris, it appears the climax of the end-of-the-world series is the change in human nature when the dead and living believers are resurrected and glorified, then caught up to meet Jesus in the air. He further clarifies: “At least some of the events associated with Christ’s coming must, therefore, take place only after the first necessary event, the resurrection and rapture of His followers of this age, both dead and living.”\(^2\)

Morris sheds light on what happens after the rapture: “In particular, the seven-year treaty of the Antichrist with Israel must be signed after the rapture, thus revealing specially the identity of the Antichrist. The return of Israel in unbelief to their land, followed by Gog’s invasion and defeat, also must take place before the seven-year treaty is signed.”\(^3\)

\(^1\)Ibid., 168-69.
\(^2\)Ibid., 169.
\(^3\)Ibid., 169-70.
But Morris is uncertain whether these “may or may not take place before” the rapture.¹

An understanding of Morris’s belief in the rapture is important in order to understand his view of the future of nature. Morris concurs with Paul concerning “the coming resurrection and rapture to meet Christ in the air, and to live together with Him (1 Thessalonians 4:15-17).”² He believes that this event will ultimately lead to a new earth and the final consummation of nature. Morris, however, comforts the believer concerning these fast unfolding last-day events. He suggests that “this promise specifically assured these believers that they were not to experience the divine wrath of the tribulation period that is coming to unbelievers.”³ Morris explains: “That period is to be specifically a time of plagues and judgment and destruction on a world in conflict with God, not a time of chastisement on God’s people.”⁴

As noted earlier, the climax of the last-day events is what Morris calls “the meeting in the air.”⁵ He indicates that “this will be an indescribably glorious meeting! Our dead

¹Ibid., 169. Morris further observes that “the reason God will call for the resurrection and rapture to take place before the seven-year period of the treaty is that these will be the years of God’s wrath on an unbelieving world that is in specific and climactic rebellion against its Creator and Redeemer, Jesus Christ. It is ‘the great and terrible day of the Lord’ (Joel 2:31), the ‘great day of . . . the wrath of the Lamb’ (Rev 6:17, 16)” (ibid., 170).

²Ibid., 171.

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid.

⁵Ibid., 173.
ones will be caught up first, then we ‘together with them’ will ‘meet the Lord in the air.’”¹ He says that every generation has been looking forward to “the resurrection of the dead in Christ and the meeting in the air of all His saints with Him.”² This placement of saints being caught up to meet Him in the air is rapture. For sure Morris is a believer in “the great doctrine of the rapture of the saints, caught out of this world to be with the Lord forever.”³ The saints are “caught up” or “raptured.” They are “seized” or “carried away” to be with the Lord.⁴ This meeting will include “only those who possess His indwelling Holy Spirit as a result of their new birth, received on the basis of personal faith in Christ as their redeeming Savior and resurrected Lord.”⁵

The Primeval Curses Lifted in Natura Nova

According to Morris, the first two chapters of the Bible describe the first heaven and the first earth in their primeval “very good” created state. Due to the Fall, the first earth passes away at some point in time. The discontinuity in nature between the present nature and the future nature is dramatically depicted in the book of Revelation. Now, in the last two chapters of Revelation, there is a description of the new heaven and new earth, once again made “very good” by their Creator.

¹Ibid., 174.
²Ibid., 173.
³Morris, The Defender's Study Bible, 1333.
⁴Ibid.
⁵Morris, Creation and the Second Coming, 173.
Morris suggests that “actually the word ‘new’ here is not neos, meaning ‘novel’ or ‘young,’ but kainos, meaning ‘fresh’ or ‘renewed.’ That is, the new earth will be the old earth made new again by purging out all age-long evidences of sin and the curse, decay and death.” In the new earth described in Rev 22, “the primeval curse (Genesis 3:17-19) will be completely lifted from the new earth.” The earth “will be purged from all the age-long effects of God’s curse (the fossil remains of billions of dead creatures that had perished in the great flood and other subsequent terrestrial catastrophes).”

Morris, referring to the future of nature and its eschatological end, observes:

Thus the Creator who has become Savior will also be Consummator and Eternal Sovereign. “Unto them that look for Him shall He appear the second time without sin unto salvation” (Hebrews 9:28). The coming of the Creator into the world—both for His human incarnation and for His final, everlasting reign—comprises all the motivation and power for Christian faith and life. But to understand the meaning of His coming, one must first understand and believe the record of His primeval work of creation and man’s terrible rebellion against Him.

In other words, Morris is asserting that eschatology and consummation in the book of Revelation need to be understood in the light of God’s primeval work of creation and the Fall. Christ’s second coming is to restore that which was lost in the beginning due to sin and the Fall. Everything will be made new, fresh, and perfect just as in creation week, and

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1Ibid., 1464.
2Ibid., 1467.
3Ibid., 1463.
4Morris, *Creation and the Modern Christian*, 16-17.
they will stay that way eternally in the "new earth."\textsuperscript{1}

God created a perfect world, but with the entrance of sin, He imposed the judgment and curse of decay and death upon Adam and all his dominion. Due to the Fall, there is a need for the full restoration of man from "the bondage of corruption." Morris reminds us that

even without the witness of the prophetic Scriptures we can know we are in the last days of planet Earth, for it simply cannot survive much longer apart from divine intervention. The world's leaders and planners need to consider all of these modern secular "signs" in light of both God's primeval curse and His coming judgment on man's rebellion.\textsuperscript{2}

For Morris, if Christ should tarry and not return soon, the universe will apparently be on a self-destructive path with its demise inevitable and fatal. God has to come before the unchecked evil destroys the universe, "for behold, the Lord cometh out of His place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity" (Isa 26:21). In that great day of His wrath He will "destroy them which destroy the earth" (Rev 11:18). "For the curse and death to be removed, sin must also be forever banished."\textsuperscript{3}

Glorious Purposes in the Future Nature Accomplished at \textit{Parousia}

Morris goes on to state that Christ will return not as a savior, but as a judge: "As a matter of fact, He will be coming again one day into the world that was made by Him, and the world will indeed know Him this time—not as a loving savior but as an offended and

\textsuperscript{1}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{2}Morris, \textit{Creation and the Second Coming}, 126.

\textsuperscript{3}Ibid., 132.
angry Creator and Judge.”

Looking into the future, Morris observes:

Therefore, there will be a second coming of Christ! “For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first. Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught off together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air; and so shall we ever be with the Lord” (1 Thess 4:16-17).

Morris reaffirms his belief in the second coming and concurs with apostle Paul’s description of this spectacular event. He appears to be looking forward to Christ’s soon coming.

For Morris, the imminent return of Christ affects the fate of nature. He notes that Jesus will come to fulfill “His glorious purposes in creation.”

The final consummation is to be realized only when Jesus Christ, now in heaven at the right hand of the Father, returns personally to the earth to destroy all rebellion and to establish His perfect and eternal reign. His second coming, like His first, will involve many events, including the rapture of His Church, the Seven-Year Tribulation Period, and the glorious appearing of Christ on the earth to set up His Millennial kingdom. This will culminate in the installation of a new earth and a new heaven, which will last forever and in which His glorious purposes in Creation will finally be accomplished. In the meantime, His coming is imminent and may be expected momentarily.

Thus, for Morris, the second coming of Christ is any time now and will be the final consummation of nature. Jesus Christ will return to the earth with an agenda to establish a new earth and a new heaven and to set up an eternal order. Morris claims that Christ at

1Ibid., 18.
2Ibid.
3Morris, History of Modern Creationism, 419.
His second coming will finally be able to accomplish “His glorious purposes in Creation.”

A Two-Stage Restoration of Nature

Morris seems to propose a two-stage restoration of nature which marks the final consummation. This process begins “when Jesus Christ, now in heaven at the right hand of the Father, returns personally to the earth to destroy all rebellion and establish His perfect and eternal reign.” The first stage, according to Morris, will be “the glorious appearing of Christ on the earth to set up His Millennial kingdom.” The second stage will “culminate in the installation of a new earth and a new heaven.” He says: “The old cosmos will [be] dissolved . . . then made over again as a ‘new’ (Greek kainos, meaning ‘fresh’ rather than ‘young in age’) cosmos, with all the age-long effects of sin and the curse forever removed.”

Stated briefly, the new earth for Morris begins at the end of the Millennial period. The present nature will cease to exist as we know it today, when the Holy City comes down to the earth. He suggests in the new earth: “The great judgments that are to be unleashed on the Christ-rejecting world are not only punitive but also restorative.”

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1Ibid.
2Ibid.
3Ibid.
4Ibid.
5Morris, The Defender’s Study Bible, 1408.
6Ibid., 1427.
Morris indicates that “the primeval, ‘very good’ creation (Genesis 1:31) is to be restored to its original perfection in the ‘new earth’ (or better, ‘earth made new again’) with all effects of the Edenic Curse removed (Revelation 22:3).”¹ In other words, for Morris, the future nature will be finally a make over of the original creation.

The Millennial Kingdom and Nature

According to Morris, Christ and His saints will reign for a thousand years over the earth.² This period will begin with the return of Christ to earth to set up His throne. Although the millennial kingdom “will again be a beautiful world of peace and prosperity,” man will still have a sinful flesh and “will still be subject to death.”³

Morris describes in his own words Christ’s millennial kingdom:
Similarly, the millennial world, where Christ and His redeemed saints will reign for a thousand years, will again be a beautiful world of peace and prosperity, a world where war and crime and overt sin will not be allowed at all. Yet people will still be born in the flesh with their inherited sinful natures, and will still be sinful inwardly, even if not outwardly, until they (just as people in every age) are born again spiritually through faith in the redemptive work of God, in Christ, on their behalf. Furthermore, there will be death during the millennium. People will live hundreds of years again, just as their counterparts did in the antediluvian period, but they will still be subject to death.⁴

According to Morris, the millennial period is literally a thousand years of peace and righteousness here on earth under the rule of Christ and His resurrected saints. Though

¹Ibid.

²Morris, Creation and the Second Coming, 133.

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid.
there will still be sin and death present, nature will be elevated. Morris explains that “the catastrophic changes on the earth’s surface during the tribulation judgments will have restored the gentle topography and protecting vapor over the earth, so that the primeval ‘very good’ condition of the whole world (Genesis 1:31) will be restored in larger measure.”¹ He indicates: “Harmony will also be restored between men and animals, and people will again have only one language and will live to great ages (Isaiah 11:6-9; Zephaniah 3:9: Isaiah 65:20).”²

During the millennium period, according to Morris, “apparently, there will be a reversion even in the animal world from predation and carnivorous appetites back to the harmony and herbivorous behavior of the primeval animal environment.”³ There will only be herbivores in the millennial period as well as the new earth, if animals are present there. Morris indicates that this “question is left unanswered in Scripture”⁴ whether animals will exist in the Millennium kingdom and the new earth. However, he points out that “all carnivorous animals will revert to their Edenic state in the new earth, where they were herbivores (Genesis 1:30). Indeed ‘the lion shall eat straw’ (Isaiah 65:25).”⁵ He asserts “in the millennium, life spans will be long again, appetite will be herbivorous again, rains will be gentle again, storms will be absent again and the whole world will be

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¹Morris, *The Defender’s Study Bible*, 1462.
²Ibid.
³Morris, *Creation and the Second Coming*, 134.
⁴Morris, *The Defender’s Study Bible*, 776.
⁵Ibid.
The Future Nature Described as a New Earth and a New Heaven

This is the second step toward a full restoration of the original purpose of nature. According to Morris, after the end of the millennial kingdom, Christ will install a new earth and a new heaven. This will be a dramatic event. Morris describes it as follows: “When the holy city comes down to earth at the end of the millennial period, the earth will also be the new earth, not this present world.” He further claims that God “will bring the Holy City with Him to the atmospheric environs of the earth . . . in the place He has prepared for them, suspended high in the air.” Morris points out that “everything will be made new, fresh and perfect, just as in creation week, and they will stay that way. The entropy law (aging, decay, death) will have been repealed, for the curse will be gone.”

Morris proposes that due to the Fall, the present nature is now far from being an ideal creation and is in need of purging:

There exists now a host of systems in nature (disease, bacteria, viruses, parasites, fangs and claws, weeds, and poisons, etc.) which reflect a state of conflict, predation, and struggle for existence in the plant and animal kingdoms as well as in human life, all of which seems at first, to be

1Morris, Creation and the Second Coming, 135.
2Ibid., 176.
3Ibid.
4Morris, The Defender’s Study Bible, 1465.
inconsistent with the concept of an ideal creation.\(^1\)

According to Morris, this state of hopelessness and disintegration in the non-human kingdom will be brought to an abrupt end in the new earth. What had been lost due to the Fall and curse will be restored back to a perfect creation. Morris states, “The new earth will be the old earth made new again by purging out all the age-long evidences of sin and the curse, decay and death.”\(^2\) He declares categorically, “On the new earth, there will be no sin and death (Revelation 21:4).”\(^3\) And “this final cosmos will continue forever, free of all sin and death.”\(^4\)

For Morris, Isa 65 gives a dramatic description of animals in a new heaven and new earth: “The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, and the lion shall eat straw like the bullocks: and dust shall be the serpent meat. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain” (vs. 25). Morris explains why theistic evolution is blasphemous:

This future state of the animal kingdom is evidently presented as the ideal state. This fact can only mean that there was no struggle for existence and survival of the fittest in the originally created animal world. The evolutionary scenario, postulating a billion years of animal suffering and death before man evolved, is thus false and even blasphemous, charging God with deliberately creating such a monstrous system as His means of producing men and women (Isaiah 11:6-9).\(^5\)

In other words, the animal kingdom will revert from predation and carnivorous instincts

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\(^1\)Ibid., 14.

\(^2\)Ibid., 1464.

\(^3\)Ibid., 775.

\(^4\)Ibid.

\(^5\)Ibid., 776.
back to herbivorous behavior in primeval nature. Morris wonders how God would have used an evil and cruel system of evolution and its billion years of animal suffering and death to make humankind. There is no doubt for Morris that, in the new earth, all animals will revert to their Edenic condition. He claims "the new earth represents restoration of paradise, before sin entered the world."¹

Morris in describing the new earth insists that it will not be this present world which is now permeated by curse. The present world needs purging and purification For the curse and death to be removed, sin must be banished forever:

When the holy city comes down to the earth at the end of the millennial period, the earth will also be the new earth, not this present world. But the Lord will also be with His people all through the tribulation and millennial periods. The logical implication is that He will bring the Holy City with Him to the atmospheric environs of the earth. When He comes again to call His people up to meet Him, they will meet Him there, in the place He has prepared for them, suspended high in the air, perhaps even orbiting the earth like a gigantic space platform.²

According to Morris, the present earth will finally be burned up and then made new again. It will be a new beginning for nature:

During the thousand-year reign of Christ and His saints over the earth, peace and righteousness will prevail. Then Satan will be unleashed again to lead one last rebellion against God. At this time, the earth will be burned up and then made new again, the judgment of the dead will be accomplished, and the Devil and all the unsaved men and women of all ages, with all the fallen angels, will be banished forever to the far-distant lake of fire.³

¹Ibid., 775.
²Ibid., 176.
³Ibid., 186.
Apparently, during the millennial period, Satan will be active on earth before leading in
the last rebellion against God. According to Morris, the Devil will lose this battle and the
present nature will be banished forever in a lake of fire.

Morris significantly, claims: “The unsaved men and women of all ages, with all
the fallen angels,”¹ will be moved far away from the presence of their Maker, and there
they will be banished forever in a lake of fire. “There they must continue in their sinful
state, hating God, never resting, without light, without love, without peace, without
anything that speaks of the presence or power of God, forever.”² For Morris, “the word
‘destruction’ does not mean annihilation, but ‘ruin.’ Thus, the unsaved will be removed
far away from the presence of the Lord, and they will remain forever.”³ He believes that
the unsaved will not be annihilated. “They must exist forever somewhere since they had
been created in God’s image which by definition is eternal.”⁴ This claim will closely be
assessed in the chapter on comparision.

The Future Status of Nature a Mirror Image of
the Original Nature

Nature in the future will reflect the restoration of the former primeval Edenic
conditions. In the original creation, Morris claims: “The ‘tree of life’ was an actual tree,
with real fruit (Genesis 3:21; Revelation 22:2) whose properties would have enabled even

¹Ibid.
²Morris, The Defender’s Study Bible, 1464.
³Ibid.
⁴Ibid.

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mortal men to live indefinitely."1 But due to sin and the Fall, Morris suggests: “The
cherubim had once been directed by God to prevent sinful men from eating the fruit of the
tree of life and living forever in their sins (Genesis 3:22-24).”2 Nevertheless, he
indicates, “in the new Jerusalem, however, the tree of life will always be freely accessible
to all; it will probably also grow alongside the river wherever its distributaries flow
throughout the whole earth.”3 Morris further concurs with the Bible that the tree of life
will bear twelve manner of fruits. In his own words he says, “Here is a marvelous thing.
Instead of twelve different kinds of fruit trees, each bearing its fruits only in its particular
season, God has programmed this tree to bear all of them, each in its proper time.”4

Will there be a face-to-face communication between God and man in the new
Jerusalem? Morris answers “yes.”5 He states: “The glorified bodies of the saints will be
like that of Christ (Philippians 3:21), capable of moving at great speed through space,
and, therefore, can easily move both horizontally and vertically about the city.”6 Morris
suggests that “the ancient tabernacle in the wilderness, where God dwelt and occasionally
communicated with His earthly people Israel, was merely a type of the eternal tabernacle,
the new Jerusalem, where God will dwell personally forever with all His people from

1Ibid., 9.
2Ibid.
3Ibid., 1467.
4Ibid.
6Morris, The Defender’s Study Bible, 1466.
Morris claims that "God cannot fail, and He created this world and its inhabitants for a glorious and eternal purpose. Sin and the Curse have intervened for a little season, but He has promised someday to 'make all things new' again (Revelation 21:5)". He adds: "Eventually, the earth will be purified, the Curse removed, and everything will again be 'very good' (Genesis 1:31) as it was in the beginning." The new earth will be like the primeval world of Eden which was a "very good" world, with no sin, no suffering, no death, nor curse. According to Morris, there shall be "no more death, neither sorrow, nor pain. . . . And there shall be no more Curse" (Revelation 22:4; 22:3).

Morris declares that "'the holy city, New Jerusalem,' is the place that Christ is preparing for His own since He returned there following His resurrection (John 14:2-3)." He notes, however, "it will probably be set high in the atmosphere when the Lord brings it with Him at His descent to meet His resurrected and raptured saints (1 Thess 4:16, 17) and may well remain there as a great satellite orbiting the earth during the tribulation and millennial periods."

The new earth for Morris is the ultimate consummation of nature. "Everything

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1Ibid., 1465.
2Morris, Creation and the Second Coming, 130-31.
3Ibid., 131.
4Ibid.
5Morris, The Defender's Study Bible, 1465.
6Ibid.
will be new, fresh and perfect, just as in creation week, and they will stay that way. The entropy law (aging, decay, death) will have been repealed, for the curse will be gone." In other words, in *Natura Nova* nature is fixed forever and there will be no future change! Morris says "the primeval curse (Genesis 3: 17-19) will be completely lifted from the new earth" and "four aspects of the primeval curse of Genesis 3:17-19 (sweat, sorrow, pain and death) are specifically removed when God wipes away our tears."

This kind of future of nature falls into a Miltonian point of view as discussed previously. According to the Miltonian tradition, the present condition of nature does not represent the original nature or the best of all possible worlds but is in dire need of restoration at parousia. For Milton, the final consummation of nature is when "the earth Shall all be Paradise, far happier place Than this of Eden, and far happier days." He claims that Paradise was lost at the Garden of Eden but will be regained in the final consummation of nature, when the "Destined Restorer of mankind, by whom New Heavens and Earth shall to the ages rise, Or down from Heaven descend." Milton indicates, "Then Heaven and Earth, renewed, shall be made pure To sanctity, that shall receive no stain."

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1Ibid.
2Ibid., 1467.
3Ibid., 1465.
5Ibid., bk. 10, line 647, 253.
6Ibid., lines 638-39, 253.
Morris seems to be in agreement with Milton that in *Natura Nova*, nature will finally be restored when "the primeval curse will be completely lifted from the new earth." Milton indicates, "From the conflagrant mass, purged and refined, New Heavens, new Earth . . . [will be] Founded in righteousness, peace, and love, To bring forth fruits, joy and eternal bliss." Apparently, Morris concurs with Milton that although "sin and curse have intervened for a little season, but He has promised someday to ‘make all things new’ again." Milton suggests that the entrance of Satan into Paradise and man’s subsequent transgression were indeed a "heinous and despiteful act," but he claims God foretold the final victory and triumph of nature by "the great deliverance . . . by woman’s seed." In a nutshell, Milton makes a case of how Paradise was lost due to "man’s first disobedience" but will be restored back to its original state by being "made pure To sanctity, that shall receive no stain." The issue of the full consistency of Morris’s mirror image of original and future nature will be evaluated in conclusion.

Having examined the essence of Morris’s three diachronic epochs or realms of

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1Morris, *The Defender’s Study Bible*, 1467.
2Milton, *Paradise Lost*, bk. 12, lines 18-21, 308.
4Milton, bk. 10, line 1, 235.
5Ibid., line 600, 309.
6Ibid., bk. 1, line 1, 9.
7Ibid., *Paradise Lost*, bk. 10, lines 638-39, 253.
nature, the task of chapter 4 will be to examine Bernard Ramm’s concept of nature on these points.
CHAPTER IV

THE CONCEPT OF NATURE IN THE WRITINGS OF

BERNARD L. RAMM

Background and Publications of Ramm

Bernard Lawrence Ramm was born in a tent outside Butte, Montana, August 1, 1916. He was the seventh child of poor Swiss immigrants. As a young child, reared in a Christian home and at the insistence of his mother, he attended a Presbyterian Sunday School where he learned to love creation and its Creator. His family moved to Seattle when he was only three. A little later he became friends with the son of a Russian immigrant engineer who introduced the boys to atomic theory, relativity theory, and chemistry.

Ramm attributed his enduring interest in science to this early exposure which led him to determine to pursue a career in the sciences, but a spiritual conversion altered this goal:

My scientific interest stems from days of early youth. One of my


2Vanhoozer, 290.
playmates was the son of a Russian engineer who had to flee Russia at the
time of the revolution. The father followed along with his son's studies.
Evenings, Saturdays, and Sundays were frequently spent in working
through the homework with the boy. I sat in on many of these sessions,
and although much went over my head, I did imbibe a deep interest in
physical science, and the name of Einstein had a halo around it standing
for the holiest in science. . . . Because of these conversations I purposed to
spend my life in the science. . . . However, in the summer between high
school and college I was converted to Jesus Christ and this made a radical
difference in every dimension of my life.1

The conversion experience noted above occurred in the summer of 1934 at the age
of seventeen, which was just two months before his freshman year at the University of
Washington, at a boys’ summer camp where he was led to Christ by his brother John
Bernard.2 Ramm writes of this experience as follows:

The writer himself experienced this power of the gospel to change life. He
was a typical high school graduate with a mind stocked with what
practically all high school graduates have when they leave high school—a
profound respect for the sciences, a hope for a newer and better
civilization, a toleration and mild respect for religion, a delight in sports
and entertainment, and a desire “to make good” in the world. Then the
gospel came to him. In one three-minute period his entire life perspective
and basic personality were changed. He experienced the inflowing grace
and transforming power of the grace of God. In a few moments he
received a new philosophy, a new theology, a new heart, and a new life.3

He planned to major in the physical sciences at the university. Ramm studied
chemistry, physiology, and evolution in his freshman year. By his sophomore year, he
felt called to the ministry and changed his major to speech so that he would be better
prepared to stand in a pulpit without “stammering.” He also changed his minor to
philosophy.4

1 Ramm, *The Christian View of Science and Scripture*, [7-8].
of the Truthfulness of the Christian Faith for Conservative Protestants* (Chicago: Moody
Press, 1953), This work was published in a paperback edition by Moody Press in 1978,
220-21.
4 Vanhoozer, 290.
Ramm graduated from the University of Washington in 1938 with a B.A. He then attended Eastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Philadelphia, completing a B.D. in 1941. During his final seminary year, while pastoring a church in New York City, he began graduate studies in philosophy at the University of Pennsylvania. While in the seminary in Philadelphia, he won the Middler's Scholarship Award and the Church History Prize.¹

Ramm served two brief pastorates on the West Coast in the early 1940s, his last appointment was a short stint as a pastor of Lake Street Baptist Church in Glendale, California, before launching his academic career. First, he became a professor of biblical languages at the Los Angeles Baptist Theological Seminary (1943-1944), and then was named chair of the Department of Philosophy and Apologetics at the Bible Institute of Los Angeles (Biola University) from 1944 to 1950.²

For much of the 1940s Ramm was both a student and a teacher. In 1948 he was a mid-year lecturer at Western Baptist Theological Seminary, when he delivered the talks that eventually became his first published work, Problems in Christian Apologetics (1949).³ This book launched his theological career and made his initial mark upon evangelical theology.⁴

During these years he completed his formal graduate studies in philosophy at the University of Southern California, where he focused on the philosophy of science. While studying there, Ramm writes:

Here my early appetite for science asserted itself and I found myself much

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¹Ibid.


³Bernard Ramm, Problems in Christian Apologetics (Portland, OR: Western Baptist Theological Seminary, 1949).

⁴Vanhoozer, 290.
interested in the philosophy of science. Lectures on the cosmology of Descartes played a special role in this reawakening process. I had two seminars in philosophy of science from Dr. Bures (a student of Feigl of the Vienna Circle) who later went to the faculty of the California Institute of Technology.1


At his home in Modesto, California, in 1979, Ramm admitted his interest in the philosophy of science in an interview with Walter Hearn, editor of the Newsletter of the American Scientific Affiliation, for a special issue to mark the twenty-fifth anniversary of the publication of The Christian View of Science and Scripture. He confessed that,

Yes, and I had been interested in the philosophy of science, so that my Master’s thesis had been on the philosophy of science of James Jeans and Arthur S. Eddington. They were hot copy then, but have rather lost out in the last few years. My doctoral dissertation was on whether there were any philosophical implications in the so-called “new physics” or Einsteinian physics. To do that I had to get very deeply into philosophy of science as well as modern scientific theory.3

In 1951, Ramm moved to St. Paul where he joined the faculty of Bethel College and Seminary. He remained there until 1954 when he moved to Baylor University, where he published his second important book, The Christian View of Science and Scripture.4

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1Ramm, The Christian View of Science and Scripture, [8].


3Hearn, 180.

Ramm admits that, "feeling that the evangelical cause was being led down the wrong street with reference to science, I published The Christian View of Science and Scripture (1954)." He further explains how he came to write this classic book on science and Scripture:

The beginning of the book was a course at Biola [Bible Institute of Los Angeles, now Biola College] on Christianity and science. The professor took a job at another school and the course ended up in my lap. I taught it three or four years before I moved to another school. By then I had all that material and didn't want it to go to waste. So I put a lot of hard work into the material and polished it off as a book. I had to do an awful lot of tracking down of certain kinds of information. I found out after I left Biola that one of the best sources of historical books in biology was back at USC in a special library of the biology department.

In an interview with Ramm, David Miller notes that Ramm describes his theological pilgrimage and education as "a continuous upward spiral" from fundamentalism to a broader perspective of Christianity. For the first four years of his Christian life he was strongly influenced by friends from Dallas Theological Seminary. He thought of himself as a fundamentalist-premillennial dispensationalist. Furthermore, Ramm told Miller: "He became discontent with fundamentalism during graduate studies because he had gained a 'measure of sophistication' and had even become 'unsure of evangelicalism.'" Ramm fell into company with such emerging "new evangelicals" as E.

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See his review of The Christian View of Science and Scripture, by Bernard Ramm, in Journal of the American Scientific Affiliation 31 (December 1979): 191. Robert O. Culver said that Ramm's theology is of the caliber of Archibald Alexander Hodge, Louis Gaussen, and Benjamin Breckenridge Warfield. Then he stated: "Bernard Ramm, B.D., M.A., Ph.D., is a fundamentalist... There has not been one like him among us for quite a while and we might not get another right away." Review of The Christian View of Science and Scripture, by Bernard Ramm, in Journal of the American Scientific Affiliation 7 (December 1955): 8.


2 Hearn, 179.

3 Miller, 4.

4 Ibid., 5-6. This statement is based on Miller's interview with Bernard Ramm.
J. Carnell and Carl F. H. Henry. By the mid-1950s Ramm was a leading figure in the nascent evangelical movement.1

During Ramm’s years at Bethel College and Seminary in St. Paul (1951-54) and as director of graduate studies in religion at Baylor University (1954-59), he began a daily reading of Barth’s *Church Dogmatics* and his other writings. Ramm felt that Karl Barth was the best contemporary theologian to relate historic, reformed theology to modern, biblical criticism. In 1957, Ramm chose to spend a sabbatical year continuing his theological education at the University of Basel, Switzerland. He studied there under his mentor, Karl Barth, a Swiss neo-orthodox. From the influence of Barth and from his individual study of two twentieth-century theologians—the Dutch Calvinist Abraham Kuyper and P. T. Forsyth—Ramm’s “upward spiral” accelerated away from “narrow American Evangelicalism” and fundamentalism and moved rapidly toward reformed theology and an ecumenical perspective of historical theology.2

Kevin J. Vanhoozer, Ramm’s biographer, describes his transformation and theological development, during and after 1957, as a result of his personal encounter with Barth:

Ramm came with a list of questions and took notes on Barth’s replies. These literary and personal encounters with Barth materially changed some of the ways in which Ramm thought, lectured, and wrote about theology. The first material change stemmed from Barth’s exhortation to be fearless in theology—if God’s word is in Scripture, who can stand against it? In a flash of insight, Ramm took this exhortation to heart and grasped its implications. It helped liberate him from the fortress mentality of fundamentalism which continued doggedly to resist the siege of modern learning. His apologetic strategy had to be revised; referring to his work prior to 1957, he spoke of “the futility and intellectual bankruptcy of my

1See the unsigned article, “Is Evangelical Theology Changing?” *Christian Life* (March 1956): 16-19. This article is the first to introduce the new evangelical theology.

2Ramm became a Christian at the dawn of the evangelical movement which was becoming distinct from the fundamentalism of the 1940s. This was the time of the last years of the fundamentalist-modernist debate. These were dominated by a disastrous debate of the literalistic understanding of the Bible versus a critical view, and of a supernaturalistic view of the world versus a naturalistic view (Vanhoozer, 290).
former strategy.”

Ramm, reflecting on his early Christian life, admits that it was tempting “to live one’s theological life within the confines of a small fort with very high walls.”

Apparently after 1957, and throughout most of his career, he broke down the “high walls” around the “fundamentalist’s fortress mentality” as he embraced the “theological disease” of the modernism he had sought to avoid earlier as a young Christian fundamentalist.

Ramm is credited with seeking “to bring evangelical theology into the spheres of free and open discourse with the modern world.” Vanhoozer explains: “From the onset, he [Ramm] was committed to giving intellectual respectability to conservative orthodox theology, rather than simply pulling up the drawbridge and refusing to dialogue with the modern world, as was the tendency of the fundamentalists.”

After his study at Basel, Switzerland, Ramm taught at the Near East School of Theology. From 1959 to 1986 he continued to teach evangelical and ecumenical theology at a number of parochial schools, especially Baptist institutions. Listed in chronological


2Ramm, “Helps from Karl Barth,” 121.

3Vanhoozer, 290-291.

4Ibid., 291.

5Ibid.

6Wesley H. Brown, “Tributes to Bernard Ramm,” in Perspectives on Theology in the Contemporary World: Essays in Honour of Bernard Ramm, ed. Stanley J. Grenz (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1990), 10. He says, “One should not underestimate the impact of Dr. Ramm’s teaching ministry which helped shape a whole generation of pastors and colleges, and seminary teachers. Biola University (then a college), Bethel College, California Baptist Theological Seminary, Eastern Baptist Theological Seminary, Baylor University, and American Baptist Seminary of the West all benefitted by his classroom gifts. For many years he taught in a special summer program sponsored by Fuller Theological Seminary for the leaders of Young Life, held at Hope College in Michigan. Earlier, while in southern California, he taught a large group of college students at the first Presbyterian church of Hollywood during the time of Henrietta Mears’s influential leadership” (ibid.).
order, Ramm taught at California Baptist Theological Seminary (1959-1974), Covina, California (which is now called the American Baptist Seminary of the West at Berkeley, California); Eastern Baptist Theological Seminary (1974-77), Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; and last, as a Pearl Rawlings Hamilton Professor of Christian Theology at the American Baptist Seminary of the West (1978-86). During the time he taught at California Baptist Theological Seminary, he also gave the Clarence Edward Macartney Lectures at Whitworth College in Spokane, Washington (1961-62), which were published as *The Christian College in the Twentieth Century* (1963). That same year he was an American Baptist delegate to the Faith and Order Conference in Montreal, Canada. In addition to holding professorships in theology, philosophy, or ethics in the above seminaries, he taught summer courses at the Young Life Institute in Fountain Valley, Colorado (1955-1978). Interspersed throughout his teaching career at the three above-mentioned seminaries, he taught classes at the Mennonite Biblical Seminary, Fresno, California; Simpson College in Modesto, California; and gave extension courses for Fuller Theological Seminary. The American Association of Theological Schools awarded Ramm a scholarship to teach at the Haigazain Evangelical College in Beirut, Lebanon, from September 1966 to May 1967. He has worked with World Vision teams in India, Indonesia, Japan, and Argentina. He was a member of the President's Board of Associates of Bethel College and Seminary; a member of the Council of Reference, Regent College, Vancouver, British Columbia; a member of the American Academy of Religion; and an Honorary Fellow of the American Scientific Affiliation. Ramm pastored churches in New York City; Seattle, Washington; and Glendale, California; and served as theologian in residence at the First Baptist Church of Modesto, California, in his career. He retired at the age of seventy, on December 31, 1986, from the American

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Baptist Seminary of the West. The occasion was marked by dinners and a special commendation at the 1987 commencement. Ramm died on August 11, 1992, at his home in Laguna Hills, California, from complications of Parkinson’s disease. He was seventy-six years old.¹

Ramm has authored at least eighteen published books, as well as some textbooks, four unpublished manuscripts, and numerous articles.² Ramm’s works are in the fields of apologetics, hermeneutics, theology, and ethics. He helped shape the intellectual contours of American evangelicalism in the wake of the fundamentalist-modernist split. His books, including textbooks, for over a generation represent the best of evangelical thinking on the relationship between science and theology, apologetics, and hermeneutics. He also helped shape evangelical opinion as consulting editor of and frequent contributor to *Eternity* and *Christianity Today*.³

Ramm also penned major works in historical theology, contemporary biblical theology, and systematic theology. Ramm writes about this as follows:

> I’ve had about three central interests in theology. One is historical theology, because we can’t understand where we are until we know where we came from. I’ve spent a lot of time in contemporary theology, because theological students need an orientation of the jungle they’re going into. And then I’ve always worked on what I think is evangelical theology, or the best evangelical theology.⁴

*The Evangelical Heritage* is his key historical work. *Special Revelation and the Word of God* and *The Pattern of Religious Authority* are his major writings in contemporary theology. Ramm’s systematic theology is revealed in “An Outline to Evangelical

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¹Miller, 5-7. See also Kalthoff, 608-705; Bube, 178.


³Hearn, 179.

⁴Ibid., 182.
Theology.” Several of his books have been translated into other languages. *His Way Out, Special Revelation and the Word of God* and *A Handbook of Contemporary Theology* have been published in Spanish. *Protestant Biblical Interpretation* has been published in Japanese, Chinese, Yugoslavian, and Korean, and *Protestant Christian Evidences* has also been printed in Korean. Most of Ramm’s articles have been published in *Eternity, Christianity Today*, and the *Journal of the American Scientific Affiliation*. Some of his earliest writings were printed in *Foundations, The King's Business*, and the *Watchman-Examiner*.

Ramm is clearly one of the foremost American evangelical theologians of the twentieth century. According to Kevin Vanhoozer: “Only Carl F. H. Henry’s works are comparable in quantity and quality” with the writings of Ramm. Ramm’s thought and writings continue to be discussed by evangelical theologians. In November 1990, the evangelical theology division of the American Academy of Religion devoted a session of discussion to the theme “Bernard Ramm and the Continuing Agenda of Evangelical Theology.” The papers presented during the session focused on the relationship between science and theology and on the nature of his theological method. A month later, the National Association of Baptist Professors of Religion published a *festschrift* both to honor Ramm’s thought and to assess its abiding significance. In recognition of his theological contributions, the editor of *Journal of the American Scientific Affiliation* honored Ramm with an issue entitled, “A Bernard Ramm *Festschrift.*”

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1See Bibliography for a list of Ramm’s writings.

2Miller, 5-7.

3Vanhoozer, 293.

4Ibid.


6Bube, 178.
especially revered by the *American Scientific Affiliation*, which made him an Honorary Fellow, even if he was not a scientist. Its membership, which was limited to evangelical scientists, accepted him into their fraternity. Ralph Winter, then adjunct professor of the Historical Development of the Christian Movement at the Fuller Theological Seminary, wrote of Ramm’s distinguished writing career and as a noted theologian for the evangelical cause: “One wonders if any other evangelical theologian alive today has as successfully combined an abundant output with consistently thorough foundational scholarship.”

Wesley H. Brown, of the First Baptist Church, Bakersfield, California, in “Tribute to Ramm” states that the legacy of Bernard Ramm’s writing is one of the most important and influential among evangelical theologians of this century. One cannot help but be impressed by the range of topics and issues which he addressed across the past forty-five years, always from a perspective of deep Christian commitment and a genuine love for the Scriptures. He was and is an evangelical to the core, and has written with intellectual integrity and theological depth that brought wide respect in evangelical circles and beyond.

We shall consider Ramm’s hermeneutics in the next section.

Hermeneutics of Bernard Ramm: Broad Concordism

Bernard Ramm, perhaps the leading exponent of evangelical broad concordism, also called “moderate concordism,” describes his approach as follows:

1 Ralph Winter, review of *The Evangelical Heritage*, by Bernard Ramm, *Christianity Today* (April 1, 1976), 36.

2 Brown, 9. He further adds, “Bernard Ramm’s reading and writings reveal an extraordinary grasp of theology, history, philosophy, biblical studies, science and literature. His *Protestant Biblical Interpretation* is still among the best sources in hermeneutics. For years he has been a member of the American Scientific Affiliation and has kept a dialogue with thoughtful Christians whose scientific research and writing stimulated his own reflection. He appreciates great literature. At a retirement dinner in his honor, he remarked that one of his favored team-teaching experiences was a class on “The Bible and Literature” which he taught with William Herzog II (ibid.).

3 Ramm, *The Christian View of Science and Scripture*, 226. Karl W. Giberson and Donald A. Yerxa define concordism as “assumption that the biblical texts, specifically the

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By moderate concordism we mean that geology and Genesis tell in broad outline the same story. Both agree that the earth was once in what may be called a chaotic condition. Both agree that certain cosmical conditions had to be realized before life could begin, e.g., the need for light, dry land, separation of waters and atmosphere. Both agree that the simple is first and the complex later. Both agree that the higher animals and man were the last to appear. The time element is not stated in the Genesis record and must be learned from the geological record. Both agree that man is the latest and highest of all forms of life.

Ramm warns against what he calls "the very obvious mistake of the extreme Fundamentalist." He claims that a strict creationist "makes his entire theological system . . . hang on sudden creation." Ramm worries that in a strict concordist model "one bone from a fossil pit can potentially bring the whole edifice down." He says:

"The very obvious mistake of the extreme Fundamentalist is that he equates divine causation with sudden creation and his thinking is brittle right at this point. He makes his entire theological system—the Deity of Christ, original sin, atonement, resurrection—hang on sudden creation, and one bone from a fossil pit can potentially bring the whole edifice down."

Ramm emphasizes that not all evangelicals believe in recent and sudden creationism, as advocated by such strict concordists as Morris and other young-earth creationists discussed in the previous chapter. Ramm states that: "In research for this book [The Christian View of Science and Scripture] I discovered that there are two traditions in first chapters of Genesis, are scientifically accurate and can be brought into agreement or 'concord' with science by correct (often creative) interpretation. The idea is that Scientific knowledge can determine exactly what the Bible texts mean, when such texts admit of a variety of interpretations" (165).

1Ramm, The Christian View of Science and Scripture, 226.

2Ibid., 254.

3Ibid.

4Ibid.

5Ibid. Ramm proposes that "there is only one sure approach to evolution and biology and that is through a well defined Christian philosophy of biology" (ibid., 254-55). Ramm further suggests that "our philosophy of nature is directly related to our philosophy of biology" (ibid., 256).
Bible and Science both stemming from the developments of the nineteenth century.”¹ He explains that the sudden creationism of the fundamentalist stems from “the ignoble tradition which has taken a most unwholesome attitude toward science, and has used arguments and procedures not in the better traditions of established scholarship.”²

Ramm calls upon the evangelicals to follow “a noble tradition in Bible and science, and this is the tradition of the great and learned evangelical Christians who have been patient, genuine, and kind and who have taken great care to learn the facts of science and scripture.”³ These evangelicals are indeed the forerunners of the moderate concordism. But in the twentieth century, Ramm laments: “Unfortunately the noble tradition which was in ascendency in the closing years of the nineteenth century has not been the major tradition in evangelicalism.”⁴ He claims: “Both a narrow evangelical Biblicism, and the Plymouth Brethren theology, buried the noble tradition. The sad result has been that in spite of stout affirmations that true science and the Bible agree and do not conflict, science has repudiated the ignoble tradition.”⁵

Ramm admits that “moderate concordism differs from strict concordism” in several ways. First, it differs on the definition of the word yom, whether it means a literal twenty-four-hour day or a period of time. Second, it differs on the nature of days, whether they are completely chronological in order or are in part topical or logical.⁶

¹Ibid., [9].
²Ibid.
⁴Ramm, The Christian View of Science and Scripture, [9].
⁵Ibid.
⁶Ibid., 226.
Third, as Ramm puts it, moderate concordism differs in “the degree to which the Genesis account is to be harmonized with the geological record.”

There is no doubt that the geological record plays a crucial part in broad or moderate concordism. Ramm proposes that geology and theology must marry. He states,

The truth about the geological record can only be settled with the combination of geology and theology. If Genesis is completely silent about secondary causes, and if geology is ignorant about first causes, then it is only as we bring the first causes and secondary causes together that we will get the truth for the full understanding of the geologic record. The theologian knows that God is creator, but that fact does not tell him how and when. The geologist knows the how and when, but the Who is a mystery to him.

Ramm recommends that under the auspices of moderate concordism, “the Christian geologist, and the geologically minded theologian alone can put together the Who of theology and the what of geology, and can show the connectedness between primary causation and secondary causation.” By so doing, Ramm acknowledges the evangelicals can go “back to the noble tradition of the closing years of the nineteenth century.”

Ramm indicates that “if we believe in the divine inspiration of the Scriptures and in the pictorial-day interpretation of Genesis, and in the general truthfulness of modern geology, we are then driven to the theories of moderate concordism and progressive creationism.” In other words, Ramm admits that the divine inspiration of the Scriptures, pictorial-day interpretation of Genesis, and modern geology are the major components of moderate concordism and progressive creationism.

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1 Ibid., 213.
2 Ibid., 226.
3 Ibid., 226-27. Ramm suggests that the results of such an attempt would result in “progressive creationism.”
4 Ibid., [10].
5 Ibid.
The New Hermeneutic

Ramm claims that “the new hermeneutic is new in the sense that it departs from traditional hermeneutics.”¹ He explains that “whereas the traditional hermeneutics was concerned with the detailed principles of interpretation, the new hermeneutic looks upon this as merely a special problem within the much wider activity of interpretation.”² Ramm notes, “The new hermeneutic is a development in continental theology after World War II, emerging from the hermeneutics of Rudolph Bultmann.”³ In order to understand the new hermeneutic, it is important to understand one of Ramm’s mentor’s, viz., Rudolph Bultmann.

For Ramm, “Bultmann is dedicated to the convictions that science (broadly conceived) and only science can settle matter of facts.”⁴ He explains: “No thing in the Bible is acceptable that goes contrary to the scientific understanding of that thing.”⁵ Science becomes the driving force in the new hermeneutic and it is “anti-supernaturalism.”⁶ According to Ramm, Bultmann “incorporates into his hermeneutics a thoroughgoing anti-supernaturalism.”⁷ He concludes: “Therefore our hermeneutics demands that the interpreter locate such myths, discard the form that the myth takes because it is prescientific, and yet retain the religious intention of the myth.”⁸

² Ibid.
³ Ibid., 140.
⁴ Ibid.
⁵ Ibid.
⁶ Ibid.
⁷ Ibid.
⁸ Ibid.

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“believes that Bultmann represents the continuity of the Reformation.”

In his classical work *Protestant Biblical Interpretation*, Ramm presents a “system of hermeneutics which most generally characterizes conservative Protestantism.” He advocates a literal and grammatical interpretation of the Bible, in step with the sixteenth-century reformers who supported the historical-grammatical method. However, in his 1954 work *The Christian View of Science and Scripture*, Ramm changes his hermeneutical methodology in order to harmonize Gen 1-11 (which he regards as a myth) with the evolutionary theory in line with the new hermeneutic. He bends his hermeneutical rules to accommodate modern science and geology as noted earlier. Ramm transposes the Genesis creation “days” into nonliteral periods of time or epochs as required by the new geology. He then assumes a metaphorical interpretation of Gen 1, where the creation account is understood as a “metaphor” or a story, and not a straightforward record of events of creation.

For Ramm, the problem of science requires a shift in the interpretation methodology. He asserts: “If we accept the divine inspiration of a Book which was written several centuries before the discoveries of modern science we are faced with the very acute problem of relating its statements about creation to those of modern science.” On these matters, Ramm asks, “What canons of interpretation should we follow in regard

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1Ibid. Ramm claims Bultmann “differs from the liberalism of the nineteenth century which discarded myth and all” (ibid.).


3Ibid., 119-127.

4Ibid., 344.

5Ibid., 222.

6Ibid., 209.
to this important and knotty question?"1

Ramm suggests that the tension between science and Scripture could be reduced if the interpreter would give due attention to the special hermeneutic rules that are relevant to matters of science in Scripture. His 1954 book is an excellent reference source for various interpretations regarding the relation of science to the Bible.2 It discusses the various theories of creationism and their proponents. As an alternative to a fiat and recent creation, Ramm proposes progressive creationism:

In summary, we accept progressive creationism which teaches that over million of years of geologic history God has been fiatly creating higher and higher forms of life. . . . It accepts the a priori of Divine Creation and the inspired account, but it turns over the million odd empirical details to science and does not try to preempt too much for theology.3

In The Christian View of Science and Scripture, Ramm urges contemporary evangelicals to return to the tradition of late nineteenth-century conservative, evangelical scholars who diligently and carefully tried to harmonize science with Scripture. He praises J. W. Dawson, John Pye Smith, Hugh Miller, Asa Gray, James Dwight Dana, James Orr, and F. Bettex in this regard and regrets the abandonment of science to materialists who ignore the Bible.4 He criticizes "hyper-orthodox" interpretations which he claims "have made a virtue of disagreeing with science."5 He refers to this approach by strict concordists as naive, unscientific, and self-defeating. He admonishes evangelicals "to escape so much of the brittle thinking of extreme fundamentalism on biological matters."6 The Bible is neither full of scientific errors, he says, nor filled with

1Ibid.
2Ibid., 60.
3Ibid., 256.
4Ibid., [9].
5Ibid., 29.
6Ibid., 256.
modern scientific predictions and theories. Ramm neither minces words nor
compromises his position. Instead he denounces the "hyperorthodoxy" and "narrow
bibliolatry"\(^1\) of the fundamentalists, on the one hand, and gives affirmations of a "careful,
reserved, open minded"\(^2\) evangelicalism, on the other. He could not be satisfied by
simply exposing "the brittle thinking of extreme fundamentalism."\(^3\) Therefore, in *The
Christian View of Science and Scripture*, he claims that he carefully presents a positive
scheme by which fundamentalists might take seriously the day's best science without
compromising their evangelical faith.\(^4\) Ramm appeals to the fundamentalists to change
their hermeneutical methodology of Gen 1-11 and particularly in matters of science in
order to harmonize creation account and modern science. By so doing, Ramm claims the
evangelicals are able to accommodate an ancient earth and death before the Fall.\(^5\)

Richard Wright was pursuing a Ph.D. in biology at Harvard when *The Christian
View of Science and Scripture* appeared. His response demonstrates the significance of
Ramm's book for young evangelical scholars immersed in "the days' best science:"
"Ramm's analysis helped me to avoid the kind of schizoid thinking that can so readily
separate science from faith, and often can prove destructive to one or both. Indeed, I was
encouraged to think that there was the potential for reconciling evolutionary theory with

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\(^1\)The term "narrow bibliolatry" appears in the preface to the British edition of
Ramm's book. The terms "hyperorthodox" and "hyperorthodoxy" appear throughout the
text. The original manuscript had used the terms "fundamentalist" and "fundamentalism."

\(^2\)Ibid.

\(^3\)Ibid., 256.

\(^4\)Ibid. Ramm's *The Christian View of Science and Scripture* grew from nearly two
decades of reflection upon the ways to relate modern science to his evangelical faith. The
book stands as a collection of material that he had drawn together as professor of an
undergraduate class at Biola, in the late 1940s, on a course on science and Christianity.
The book was 'dedicated to Alton Everest, genial, kind, Christian man of science and a
man of God.' Ibid., 5, 10.

\(^5\)Ibid., 348.
Christian doctrine.”¹ Evangelical theologians concurred. Harold J. Ockenga, the president of Fuller Seminary, observed that the book “should be collateral reading for every high school and college student.” He further stated, “here all obscurity is banished and fundamentalism is faced with a competent critic who still embraces an authoritative Bible.”² If these scholars such as Wright, Ockenga, and Alton Everest perceived the book as “a breath of fresh air” and credited Ramm with nailing “a list of new criteria to the church door right under Luther’s,”³ others denounced it as “dangerously slipshod and inaccurate,”⁴ proclaiming it to be “a desperately bad book.”⁵

Events a decade later, following the appearance of The Christian View of Science and Scripture, would indeed disturb some ASA members.⁶ If Ramm’s book and its reception signaled a movement away from the anti-evolutionism of the ASA’s earliest years, and a movement toward a progressive creationism that was prepared to engage with the day’s best science, this did not mean mid-century evangelical scientists had really come to terms with evolution. However, they had warmed toward the task. The Darwin Centennial was just around the corner; Ramm had thrust “theistic evolution” before everyone; and important ASA members were disposed to consider it:


³Everest, 187.

⁴James O. Buswell, “Review of Ramm” Journal of the American Scientific Affiliation 7 (December 1955): 6. In Walter Hearn’s interview with Bernard Ramm and Alta Ramm, Ramm’s wife recalls “sharp . . . totally biased and unfair criticism” that her husband initially received, characterized the “first 50 letters” as “vicious and dogmatic, coming through like bullets with hostility.” Within a month of its publication, however, Ramm began to receive “very thoughtful . . . fine letters” (180).


⁶Kalthoff, 626.
Twenty-five years later the ASA was still disposed to perpetuate consideration of Ramm's book and to pay tribute to the man behind this "pivotal event" in the Affiliation's history. The December 1979 issue of the _Journal of the American Scientific Affiliation_ celebrated Ramm and his book. This special issue of the journal, entitled _A Bernard Ramm Festschrift_, included a cover photograph of the first edition of _The Christian View of Science and Scripture_ along with personal reminiscences, literature review, reflections, and responses from specific fields. Moreover, the December 1979/January 1980 issue of the _ASA Newsletter_ included "A Reminder: Ramm's Book Available Thru ASA Office" with the endorsement that "despite its age, it represents one of the best books on the subject."

Mark Kalthoff comments on what would be a turning point in the history of ASA. He says:

The 1957 annual meeting, scheduled for late August on the campus of Gordon College near Boston, would be the site for certain ASAers to begin their public discussion of theistic evolution. The transformation from anti-evolutionism to progressive creationism had taken the better part of a decade. The move toward theistic evolution, for those willing to make it, would not take as long.²

Ramm's book, for some reason, united some ASA evangelicals by proclaiming publicly what "a good many had been saying in small circles for ten years or more."³ But, at the same time it caused division, for like a lightening rod, the book and its author drew the fire of contempt from reactionary and scientifically "unlearned" fundamentalists who read it as evidence that pro-Ramm "evangelicals are confused, very confused, on [Bible-science] matters."⁴ In a defining moment, ASA leaders came to the defense of _The Christian View of Science and Scripture_ and argued that the book was pivotal for evangelicals concerned with the relation between science and Christian faith. The book, according to Kalthoff, was "a turning point in the history of ASA."²

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¹Ibid. Robert Berry suggests, "In 1944 the America Scientific Affiliation was formed, to explore the relationship between science and the Christian faith. Initially it supported a literal interpretation of the Genesis creation accounts but it gradually moved to a less literal (albeit no less avowedly Christian) stance. Then in 1961 a major event in 'Creationist' history took place with the publication of _The Genesis Flood_, written by a theologian, John Whitcomb, and a hydraulic engineer Henry Morris. It was explicitly apologetic" (142).

²Kalthoff, 626.

³Ibid., 612.

⁴Ibid.
whose objective was “to call evangelicalism back to the noble tradition of the closing years of the nineteenth century,” resulted in a polarized leadership and camp; composed of strict evangelical concordists or “fundamentalists” versus moderates or broad evangelical concordists.

Ramm leaves no room for doubt about who belongs to the “two traditions in Bible and Science” that has shaped the twentieth-century discussions. In the final pages of *The Christian View of Science and Scripture*, Ramm included “A Classified Bibliography” that distinguishes between “Books of Outstanding Merit or of Great Historical Significance” and “Fundamentalist Works of Limited Worth Due to Improper Spirit or Lack of Scientific or Philosophic, or Biblical Orientation.” Predictably, books by Harry Rimmer, Henry Morris, Allen Higley, and George McCready Price, among others, fell in the latter category.2

**Ramm’s Hermeneutics in *The Christian View of Science and Scripture***

Ramm implies that science should be the driving force in the interpretation of the creation account. He notes that because the idea of creation is complex, an interpreter needs science to unravel the complex idea. In other words, Ramm claims that in order for an interpreter to unravel the creation account, he needs not be “woefully ignorant of the simplest facts of science.” He suggests that evangelicals need “a well-developed

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2. Ibid., 355ff.

3. Ibid., 22. John MacArthur alleges: “In practice, however, he [Hugh Ross] and other progressive creationists have made scientific theories a superior authority, because they employ those theories as a rule by which they interpret the statements of the Bible. Current scientific theory has thus become an interpretive grid through which progressive creationists read and explain Scripture” (62).

philosophy of science or philosophy of biology.”

Therefore, Ramm suggests, “the big problems of science and biology must be argued in terms of a broad philosophy of science.”

He warns, “the evangelicals by fighting [science] on such a narrow strip simply could not compete with the scientists who were spending their lifetime routing out matters of fact.” Ramm “affirms that the Bible never contradicts ‘true science.’” So, he concludes, “it was impossible to settle the complex problems of Bible and science, theological and empirical fact, without a well-developed Christian theism and philosophy of science.”

Ramm argues that “Genesis 1 records the broad outline of the successive creative acts of God in bringing the universe through the various stages from chaos to man.” He indicates that the Genesis account may need the empirical backing of science. He concludes that Gen 1 “being a very general sketch it leaves considerable room for the empirical determination of various facts. A multitude of biological facts now generally accepted by the biologists would remain unchanged.”

For Ramm, the primary cause for his emergence in the front ranks of the evangelical movement was the publication of The Christian View of Science and Scripture in 1954. The book represents the dramatic shift from obscurantist leanings of the older fundamentalism in terms of its views of science. If the older conservatives rejected all evolutionary theory out of hand, simply because it was seen a priori in

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1Ibid., 22.
2Ibid.
3Ibid.
4Ibid., 42.
5Ibid., 22.
6Ibid., 271.
7Ibid., 271-2.
conflict with Scripture, Ramm was willing to find whatever common ground could be discovered between biblical and scientific truth. Ramm saw obscurantism as the fatal danger of the older fundamentalism. He hoped that the new evangelicals would replace the obscurantism of the past with an open and yet faithful scholarship. He writes that “I shall defend the thesis that obscurantism, far from being essential to the evangelical position, is positively not a part of its essence. Further, it is impossible for an evangelical who truly understands his positions to be an obscurantist.”

In the first chapter of *The Christian View of Science and Scripture*, entitled “The Imperative Necessity of a Harmony of Christianity and Science,” Ramm sets the tone and draws the lines of his argument. He does not see any conflict between science and theology, since “both science and theology deal with the same universe.” He explains that “the goal of science is to understand what is included in the concept of Nature, and the goal of theology is to understand what is included under the concept of God.” Ramm accuses the fundamentalists of “hyperorthodoxy,” heaping them with the lion’s share of blame because he thinks this approach creates disharmony due to its “exaggerated sense of what loyalty to the Bible means.” Ramm further argues that “the hyperorthodox have made a virtue of disagreeing with science.” He is concerned that they “have increased the gap between Christianity and the scientists, have embittered the scientists, and have done little to provide a working theory of any creative dimension for the rapprochement

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1 Bernard Ramm, “Are We Obscurantists?” *Christianity Today*, 18 February 1957, 14. This article was published in the first year of *Christianity Today*. It indicates Ramm’s energetic commitment to an open and engaged mode of scholarship.


3 Ibid.

4 Ibid., 29.

5 Ibid.
of science and evangelicalism."¹ Ramm calls upon the evangelicals to articulate "a positive and successful reconciliation."² He explains that "we must be as ready to hear the voice of science as we are of Scripture on common matters."³ Ramm laments that the lack of harmony between science and the Bible in evangelical circles is due to the fact that too many hold loyalties either to the Bible or to modern science, and that too few retain proper loyalty to both science and the Bible.

In contrast to neo-orthodoxy, religious modernism, and hyperorthodoxy (the first two refusing to take the science of the Bible seriously and the latter refusing to take science seriously) we defend a position which asserts that a positive relationship must exist between science and Christianity. It is as foolish to write off science with the hyperorthodox as it is to write off the Bible with the religious liberals and neo-orthodox. The truth must be a conjunction of the two.⁴

The broad evangelical concordists, led by Ramm, encourage adjusting one's hermeneutics to accommodate both modern science and the Bible, to rehabilitate the noble tradition of learned evangelicals who have taken great care to learn the facts of science and Scripture. Ramm takes pains to show that this noble tradition has been buried by fundamentalist bibliolatry as a reflex product of fear rather than faith.⁵

Ramm suggests that God wrote both the Bible and book of nature.⁶ For Ramm, the fundamentalist who insists that Scripture is right and science is wrong "makes the words of God and the work of God clash,"⁷ for the two books of God must ultimately tell the same story. He says: "God cannot contradict His speech in Nature by His speech in

¹Ibid., 31.
²Ibid., 32.
³Ibid.
⁴Ibid., 32-33.
⁵Ibid., [9].
⁶Ibid., 30. Vanhoozer agrees with Ramm and wonders if God wrote both books: "Why then should we tear asunder what God has put together?" Vanhoozer, 294.
⁷Ramm, The Christian View of Science and Scripture, 23.
Scripture. If the Author of Nature and Scripture are the same God, then the two books of God must eventually recite the same story." Ramm concludes, "therefore, in place of resentment or suspicion or villification toward science and scientists, we must have a spirit of respect and gratitude. In place of a narrow hyper-dogmatic attitude toward science we are to be careful, reserved, open minded."

For Ramm, both science and Scripture deserve equal treatment. He claims: "We are to pay due respect to both science and Scripture. Neither adoration of one nor bigoted condemnation of the other is correct." He argues that both science and Scripture must have a place on the table. Ramm contends that "we must be as ready to hear the voice of science as we are of Scripture on common matters." He explains: "The spirit of mutual respect for both science and Scripture preserves us from any charge of being anti-scientific or blindly dogmatic or religiously bigoted; and from being gullible, or credulous or superstitious in our religious beliefs as they pertain to Nature."

Ramm further suggests that science may serve a complementary role to Scripture. He indicates, "To this extent science has opened up the secrets and meanings of Nature, the creation of God." Ramm explains: "To set theology against science is simply to oppose Creation to Revelation, and Nature to Redemption. Yet, it is the uniform testimony of Scripture that the God and Christ of redemption are the God and Christ of creation." The Christian View of Science and Scripture is an impassioned plea to

\[1\] Ibid., 32.
\[2\] Ibid.
\[3\] Ibid.
\[4\] Ibid.
\[5\] Ibid.
\[6\] Ibid., 30.
\[7\] Ibid.
evangelicals for an approach that creates harmony between modern evolutionary science and the Bible.

Concerning hermeneutics, Ramm insists "that the Genesis account is neither literal science nor ancient mythology, but a purified, non-postulational literary vehicle for conveying the revelation of God." He notes, "We do not assert that the Bible uses scientific language." For him, Genesis is not even about geology, but theology. Ramm explains: "The theological importance of Genesis is that God is Creator, that God created all—not the specific order of creation." Its intent is to prohibit idolatrous views of the universe and to evoke from human beings the worship that belongs to God the Creator. The six days are not to be construed as chronological, as if each paragraph in Gen 1 corresponds to a geological epoch. Instead they are pictorial and theological. Ramm suggests that "creation was revealed in six days, not performed in six days. We believe that the six days are pictorial-revelatory days, not literal days nor age-days. The days are means of communicating to man the great fact that God is Creator, and that He is Creator of all." Ramm argues that this is not to relegate theology to the back seat of cosmological discussion. On the contrary, both geology and theology have something to contribute: Genesis is about the first cause, and geology is about the secondary causes which God used to form the earth.

On the subject of whether God literally and personally created Adam and Eve, Ramm suggests that "God does not have a literal mouth to breathe through as recorded in

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1 Ibid., 320.
3 Ramm, The Christian View of Science and Scripture, 223.
4 Ibid., 222.
5 Ibid., 296.
Genesis 2.¹ He thinks: “The entire account is metaphorical. But being metaphorical does not mean the account is non-historical but that it is mythological.”² He explains that “the mythological is history under a particular literary form.”³ In the next section, I considers Ramm’s hermeneutics in regard to biblical language.

**Biblical Language with Reference to Natural Things**

In chapter 3 of *The Christian View of Science and Scripture*, Ramm outlines his hermeneutics of regarding the meaning of biblical words in relation to what today we would call scientific matters. He argues that the biblical language is popular, phenomenal, non-postulational and not scientific. The following are several important principles highlighted by Ramm.

The language of the Bible on natural matter is popular, not scientific

Ramm makes the assertion in the above title because he claims that “popular understanding of the word is usually very different from the technical understanding.”⁴ He explains: “By popular, we mean what the etymology of the word implies, ‘of the people.’ Popular language is the language in which people converse.”⁵ Ramm indicates that the popular language “is the language of the market place, of social gatherings, and of a chance conversation. It is that basic vocabulary and style which the masses use to carry on their daily communication.”⁶

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¹Ibid., 324.
²Ibid.
³Ibid.
⁴Ibid., 65.
⁵Ibid., 66.
⁶Ibid.
Concerning the natural matter or what we would call today scientific matters, Ramm explains: “By scientific we mean that jargon developed in the history of science around the various sciences which enables men of that science to communicate more accurately, conveniently and economically.”¹ He adds: “Hence scientists use their terms without lengthy definitions of the terms each time they are used. Their fellow scientists know exactly what the terms mean.”²

According to Ramm, “both languages [popular and scientific] serve their purpose.”³ He gives an example of a scientist who “writes his essay for his technical journal in the jargon of his speciality, and this jargon is a most valuable tool for the communication of his ideas.”⁴ But Ramm adds that “when he chats with his neighbor as they meet in some social gathering the scientist prudently recourses to the vocabulary of popular speech.”⁵ He concludes: “The Bible is a book for all peoples of all ages. Its terms with reference to Nature must be popular.”⁶

The language of the Bible is phenomenal

Ramm claims: “By phenomenal we mean ‘pertaining to appearance.’ The Bible uses a language that is not only popular but restricted to the apparent.”⁷ He gives an example of a popular expression that is often used in Christian circles; “from every corner

¹Ibid.
²Ibid.
³Ibid.
⁴Ibid.
⁵Ibid.
⁶Ibid.
⁷Ibid., 67.
of the earth.” Ramm states: “Such expressions are neither scientific nor anti-scientific, but the popular and phenomenal expressions of daily conversation.”

Another example Ramm gives is what he “considers the language of Genesis 1.” He explains: “Astronomically, it speaks of the earth, the sun, the moon, and the stars. It does not mention asteroids, comets, Nebulae or planets.” Ramm indicates that “the astronomical classification of Genesis 1 is phenomenal. It is restricted to that which greets the eye as one gazes heavenward.” Therefore he concludes that “the same is true of the biological and botanical terms of Genesis 1. It speaks of fish, fowl, cattle, and birds; of grass, herbs, and fruits trees. It does not classify amphibians or sea-going mammals. Genesis 1 is the classification of the unsophisticated common man.”

The language of the Bible is non-postulational with references to natural things

Ramm points out that “by this we mean that the Bible does not theorize as to the actual nature of things.” He indicates: “Contrary to the erratic interpretation of Hebrews 11:4, there is no theory of matter in the Bible.” Ramm gives an example in Gen 1 by suggesting: “Although it has been proposed that the word ‘moved’ in Genesis 1:2 suggests the undulatory theory of light this must be judged as fantastic exegesis.”
For Ramm, “the Bible is silent as to the ‘inmost constitution of visible things’ to use the wording of the Biblical Commission of Leo XIII. Nor is there a theory of astronomy taught in the Bible.”\(^1\) He suggests:

Genesis 1 does not defend Aristotle or Ptolemy or Copernicus or Newton or Einstein or Milne. It does not decide between Newton’s theory of Universal gravitation or Einstein’s geometrical field theory of gravitation.\(^2\)

The Bible is singularly lacking in any definite theorizing about astronomy, geology, physics, chemistry, Zoology, and botany. These matters are dealt with according to popular and phenomenal terms and are free from scientific postulation.\(^3\)

In other words, the Bible and the Genesis account are devoid of any scientific postulation or theory. The language of the Bible on natural matter is therefore popular and is meant for all people. Ramm does not expect the Bible to explain the natural things or visible things in nature. He seems to imply that science should offer explanations where the Bible is silent.

The language of the Bible employs the terminology of the prevailing culture

Ramm says: “This is one of the most important problems of Christianity and science though it is one of the least discussed.”\(^4\) He asks two questions in this regard: “Does the Bible speak the language of science, or does it speak in terms of ancient cultures? Does the Bible speak truth in literal terms when it speaks of things scientific, or does it speak theological truth in the garb of ancient cultural modes?”\(^5\)

\(^1\)Ibid.

\(^2\)Ibid.

\(^3\)Ibid., 69-70.

\(^4\)Ibid., 70.

\(^5\)Ibid.
Ramm shows there are two extreme positions which he states "are wrong."¹

These positions are listed as follows:

The position of the radical critic or modernist is wrong who imagines that the Bible is filled with errors and mistakes of these ancient cultures, and so scientifically the Bible must be considered as filled with blunders. The hyperorthodox is wrong who expects the Bible to contain modern science. In that the Bible is inspired the modernist is wrong, because the restraint of the Holy Spirit upon the writers of the Bible preserved them from the errors of their day. In that inspiration came through the mold of the Hebrew culture, the hyperorthodox is wrong.²

Concerning the nature of the language, Ramm suggests: "It will be admitted by all that the Bible came to us in human languages written by human beings and employing familiar human concepts and symbols."³ He explains that "language cannot be disassociated from culture, for language and culture are profoundly intertwined. If God spoke through the Hebrew and Greek languages, He also spoke in terms of the cultures in which these languages were embedded."⁴ Ramm concludes: "We believe that the true position is that the revelation of God came in and through the Biblical languages and their accompanying culture."⁵

Ramm states that the tension between science and Scripture could be reduced if the evangelical interpreter would give due attention to the special hermeneutic rules that are relevant to matters of science in Scripture. He therefore poses the question, "What canons of interpretation should we follow in regard to this important and knotty question?"⁶

¹Ibid.
²Ibid., 70-1.
³Ibid., 71.
⁴Ibid.
⁵Ibid.
⁶Ramm, Protestant Biblical Interpretation, 209.
Ramm's Five Rules for the Interpreter

First, Ramm insists that the interpreter should realize “that the Bible does not use scientific language.”¹ The Bible was written in the “popular and phenomenal expression of daily conversation [which was] neither scientific nor anti-scientific,”² and the language of the Bible is heavily conditioned by the cultures from which it emerged. Second, the language of Scripture is phenomenal or “pertaining to appearances.”³ In other words, the vocabulary of the Bible concerning “astronomy, botany, zoology, and geology is restricted . . . to terms of description and observation.”⁴ However, for Ramm, “the Bible uses a language that is not only popular but restricted to the apparent.”⁵ Third, the revelation that is presented in Scripture is culturally conditioned to the mind-set of the times of the writer. Ramm explains: “The Bible uses the terms and expressions of the times of its writers. Any revelation must be so accommodated to the human mind.”⁶ For this reason, the interpreter must not seek such scientific data from the Bible as the modern relativity theory. Fourth, the Bible does not attempt to anticipate modern science. Ramm concludes, “To claim that the Bible is a book filled with anticipations of modern Science does not seem in accord with the cultural conditioning of any revelation, and to declare all its statements about nature as invalid does not seem to accord with its inspiration.”⁷ Ramm condemns “hyperorthodoxy” which “expects the Bible to contain Modern

¹Ibid., 210.
²Ramm, The Christian View of Science and Scripture, 67.
³Ibid., 60.
⁴Ramm, Protestant Biblical Interpretation, 201.
⁵Ramm, The Christian View of Science and Scriptures, 67.
⁶Ramm, Protestant Biblical Interpretation, 211.
⁷Ibid., 209.
Science.” It is not proper, therefore, to seek numerous correlations between science and Scripture, such as “to find the automobile in Nah 1, or the airplane in Isaiah 60, or atomic theory in Hebrews 11:3 or atomic energy in 2 Peter 3.” Ramm warns: “All such efforts to extract modern scientific theories out of Scripture eventually do more harm than good.” Fifth, the interpreter must bear “in mind that Gen 1 is in outline form.” The theologian cannot dictate to the scientists the empirical details about which Gen 1 is actually silent. Ramm explains, “It is the province of the sciences to fill in the details of what is in outline form in the Bible.” He cautions that “trying to read too much specific detail into this sketch can cause needless conflict with science. It is always problematic to go from the ‘let there be’ of Genesis to the modus operandi.” Therefore Ramm indicates, “No interpretation of Genesis 1 is more mature than science which guides it. [Therefore] to attempt to interpret the scientific elements of Genesis 1 without science is to attempt the impossible.” In the next section, Ramm’s assessment of the biblical view of nature will be considered.

Ramm Outlines Concepts Foundational to an Assessment of His Views Regarding the Three Epochs of Nature

The Biblical View of Nature

According to Ramm, “one of the mistakes of the unbelievers and of the religious

1Ibid., 209-12. See Miller, 170-87; and Ramm, The Christian View of Science and Scriptures, 65-80.

2Ramm, Protestant Biblical Interpretation, 212.

3Ibid.

4Ibid.

5Ibid.

6Ibid.

7Ibid., 213.
liberal in criticizing the Bible is a failure to sympathetically understand the Biblical view of Nature.”\(^1\) He explains, “Governed by anti-supernatural beliefs, and convinced that Israel’s religion was an emergence from surrounding religious beliefs, they identify the Biblical view of Nature with the beliefs of the surrounding peoples.”\(^2\) Ramm suggests nothing would be further from the truth. He asserts that “there is a chaste, wholesome, refreshing view of Nature in the Bible that is richly theistic.”\(^3\) Ramm further suggests: “If men like Pascal, Kierkegaard and Barth had reflected more sympathetically with the Biblical view of Nature they would not have defended a type of theism which so negates the strong Nature-theism of the Old Testament.”\(^4\)

Ramm outlines a six-point biblical view of nature:

1. Ramm claims that “the first feature of the Biblical views of Nature is that it is a very frank creationism. God is the Almighty Creator of heaven and earth.”\(^5\) He explains: “Therefore, Nature exists fundamentally for spiritual purposes, and is capable of teleological explanation.”\(^6\)

2. Ramm indicates: “The Biblical view of Nature also clearly maintains that the Universe is maintained by the providence of God. Biblical theism is unfriendly to deism and pantheism.”\(^7\) He explains: “It refuses to identify God with his work and it refuses to bar God from his works. God is world ground of all things to Biblical theism, and He

\(^1\) Ibid., 80.
\(^2\) Ibid.
\(^3\) Ibid.
\(^4\) Ibid.
\(^5\) Ibid.
\(^6\) Ibid.
\(^7\) Ibid., 84.
sustains not only the physical order but the moral and spiritual orders too." Ramm suggests that “God’s providence is his working all things to their destined goal,” in the sense that “the God of the Bible is not manacled to the causal laws, nor is He a prisoner in his own creation.”

3. Ramm notes: “In keeping with the consistent creationism of the Bible is the constant prohibition of the Bible of any worship of any part of the creation.” He indicates that “this is forbidden by the first verse of the Bible. The worship of the created is forbidden by the first verse of the Bible. The worship of the created is forbidden in the Ten Commandments which prohibits any material representation of God.”

4. According to Ramm, “the Bible clearly teaches that the regularity of Nature is the constancy of God, and the laws of Nature are the laws of God.” He explains that “this is in keeping with the powerful, penetrating, direct creationism of the Bible.”

5. Ramm indicates that, “the Biblical outlook on Nature is that Nature is temporal. This is an assertion of both fact and value.” He explains: “It is factual in that it asserts that the universe was created by God in the past, and will be concluded by God in the future.” In other words, he claims: “The fiat creation of Genesis 1:1 precludes its eternal

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"Ibid.
"Ibid.
"Ibid.
"Ibid., 85.
"Ibid.
"Ibid.
"Ibid.
"Ibid., 92.
"Ibid."
duration in time past, and the clear affirmations of Revelation 21 and 22 tell of its end in the future.”

6. Lastly, Ramm contends that: “the Scriptures consider Nature a realm of probation and judgments. God did not say that creation was perfect, but that it was good.” He explains that “in Scripture it is heaven which stands for perfection, the earth is the scene of man’s probationary existence, and it is good but not heavenly perfect.” In the next section, Ramm assesses biblical cosmology.

Ramm Assesses Biblical Cosmology

For Ramm, “Biblical cosmology is in the language of antiquity and not of modern science, nor is it filled with anticipations which the future microscope and telescope will reveal.” For Ramm, this means that “[t]he references of the writers of the Bible to natural things are popular, non-postulational, and in terms of the culture in which the writers wrote.” As noted earlier, Ramm indicates: “This principle applies directly to Biblical cosmology. The language of the Bible with reference to cosmological matters is in terms of the prevailing culture.” He condemns and rejects extreme views of biblical cosmology:

We do not agree with over-zealous Fundamentalists who try to find Einsteinian and modern astro-physical concepts buried in Hebrew words and expressions. We also disagree with the religious liberals who object to Biblical cosmology because it is not scientific. We object to the Fundamentalists because it was not the intention of inspiration to anticipate modern science, and we object to the

1 ibid.
2 ibid.
3 ibid.
4 ibid., 96.
5 ibid.
6 ibid.
modernist because he sees too much in what is to us a truism.¹

According to Ramm, "the cosmology of the Bible is not systematized and is not postulational."² He explains: "It is neither for nor against any of the current and ancient theories of the universe except where they might be polytheistic or in conflict with basic Christian metaphysics."³ Ramm claims that "the Bible does not support Aristotle or Ptolemy or Copernicus or Descartes or Newton or Einstein or Milne."⁴ But he suggests: "Certainly, the Bible works as a negative criteria in telling us that dualisms and pantheisms and materialism are wrong, but it gives us no positive cosmology."⁵

Ramm Outlines the Concept of Christian Philosophy of Nature

Ramm suggests: "By a Christian philosophy of Nature we mean a broad, comprehensive method and system of the interpretation of Nature receiving its orientation from Christian theology."⁶ He contends that such a concept: "would correspond to a philosophy of sciences adopted by a naturalist or a materialist."⁷ He notes further: "We prefer a larger concept than philosophy of biology or philosophy of science, and that is why we call it, a philosophy of Nature."⁸ Ramm claims a Christian philosophy of nature will involve three things as listed below:

(i) It will involve the Biblical data about God and Nature or Creation. (ii) It will involve elements from the philosophy of science. It will be a larger task than

¹Ibid.
²Ibid., 97.
³Ibid.
⁴Ibid.
⁵Ibid.
⁶Ibid., 102.
⁷Ibid.
⁸Ibid.
setting forth the Biblical view of Nature for it must relate itself to the larger
problems of philosophy of science. (iii) It will concern itself with the reliable data
of the sciences. It will willingly face the data of the sciences as the data which
must be worked into a Christian philosophy of Science. It is not only a matter of
facing facts, but it is absolutely necessary to be acquainted with facts to be able to
form any sort of intelligent Christian Philosophy of Nature.¹

In other words, a Christian philosophy of nature includes an interaction of both Biblical
and scientific data. For Ramm, science gets a priority since its data as he alleges is more
reliable and factual. He indicates his willingness to work “with the reliable data of the
sciences” to formulate “a Christian philosophy of Science.”²

The Necessity of a Philosophy of Nature

According to Ramm, “If there is to be a way of intelligent rapprochement between
Christianity and science there must be clearly delineated a Christian Philosophy of
Nature.”³ He observes that “[t]his is not a luxury but a necessity. Too many books on
Bible and science have been written completely naive on this issue.”⁴

Ramm suggests: “An effort to set forth a Christian philosophy of Nature is
therefore imperative.”⁵ He gives three reasons for formulating a Christian philosophy of
nature:

1. The approach of the Bible to Nature is essentially religious and theological. The
Bible tells us emphatically that God created, but is silent as to how God created. It
informs us that the stars, and the flowers, and the animals, and the trees, and man
are creatures of God, but how God produced them is nowhere a matter of clear
affirmation in Scripture. . . . For the construction of a philosophy of Nature we
need more data about nature than that which we have in Sacred Scripture.⁶

¹Ibid., 103.
²Ibid.
³Ibid.
⁴Ibid.
⁵Ibid.
⁶Ibid., 104.
2. Science, rich in empirical findings, is unable to deal with the large problems of
epistemology, metaphysics, and theology. If science is a Goliath on the how of
Nature it is a Mephibosheth on the why of Nature. . . . A Christian philosophy of
Nature, from our vantage point, is the discipline which can provide the solutions
for the problems which science raises but cannot solve.¹

3. In agreement with Shields we believe that the domains of Bible and science
need the umpirage of a philosophy of Nature. A Christian philosophy of Nature
will incorporate into its structure all that the Scriptures say of God and creation. It
will acquaint itself with the study of the philosophy of science in its various
departments. It will learn all it can of the empirical findings of science.²

After considering the elements of a Christian philosophy of nature, the three epochs of
nature as understood by Ramm will be described.

Elements of a Christian Philosophy of Nature

Ramm claims: “The Christian commences with precisely the Christian
perspective. In Christian theology and Christian philosophy he finds his first great
affirmation for a Christian philosophy of Nature.”³ He suggests three elements of a
Christian philosophy of nature:

1. God is world ground to Nature. God is not only the Creator and Author of
Being, but He has imparted to creatures their nature or manner of being and their
goodness. Whatever is necessary for the existence of each level of Nature, God
supplies.⁴

2. The Spirit of God in Nature. The Spirit of God is the immanental member of
the Godhead in creation and preservation. The Spirit of God is God’s innermost
touch of Nature seeing that it complies with his will, and imparting to Nature the
spiritual energies the material world needs for its preservation.⁵

3. Progressive creation is the means whereby God as world ground and the Spirit
of God as World Entelechy bring to pass the divine will in Nature. We believe

¹Ibid.
²Ibid., 104-5.
³Ibid.
⁴Ibid., 105-6.
⁵Ibid., 109.
that the fundamental pattern of creation is progressive creation.\textsuperscript{1}

In other words, Ramm suggests that a Christian philosophy of nature describes God’s work in creating and preserving the nature. Although the Bible tells us God is the creator, it is silent on how the world was created. Ramm indicates that the pattern of creation is progressive creationism which explains how God created the cosmos. He insists: “Progressive creation according to Law seems to make the most sense out of the numerous facts of Nature.”\textsuperscript{2}

In the next section and in light of Ramm’s hermeneutics and philosophy of nature discussed above, we consider Ramm’s position about the original state of nature.

\textit{Natura Originalis}

\textbf{Scientific Protology: Big Bang Evolutionary Cosmology}

Ramm harmonizes the origin of the earth and solar system with the Genesis account by means of broad concordism. This model incorporates some of the elements of the well-accepted big bang theory of the galaxies. The big bang theory pictures the universe as expanding from a super dense state that exploded about thirteen billion years ago. The earth and the planets are seen as natural products of a cloud of interstellar gas and dust that cooled down during the process of expansion.\textsuperscript{3}

Ramm does not appear to be comfortable with the big bang theory of the universe as we know it today.\textsuperscript{4} He has some doubts and claims “the Big Bang theory [is] picking up what I gather is experimental verification.”\textsuperscript{5} The big bang theory holds that all

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{1}Ibid., 112-15.
\item \textsuperscript{2}Ibid., 112.
\item \textsuperscript{3}Pun, 261-62.
\item \textsuperscript{4}Hearn, 181.
\item \textsuperscript{5}Ibid.
\end{itemize}
galaxies are rushing uniformly away from one another as the result of a primordial explosion that took place thirteen to twenty billion years ago. Actually, cosmologists feel that the expansion may not be so uniform after all. The so-called big bang model offers a universe created in a smooth, featureless condition, out of which a highly structured universe is nevertheless supposed to have happened. Ramm describes naturalistic scientific protology:

The origin of life on naturalistic premises is that life emerged through some fortunate situation in some primeval pool of water. It was not a sudden passage from the inorganic to the organic, but it was through a series of ever increasing complex combinations, with many borderline combinations that would be half chemical and half living. Finally, true protoplasm emerged possessing the required properties to be defined as living.

Ramm, however, does not seem to be excited about such theory. Regarding the "Big Bang," he admits that "the 'Big Bang' theory has picked up new prestige. But I've talked to scientists who don't believe anything, and I find that they are not impressed with that kind of reasoning." Concerning the scientists' response to the big bang theory, Ramm asserts that "their basic response is 'yes, there's a crook in the road, and it appears that yes, there's a God who is doing this, but we're going to do some more experiments and ten years from now we won't look at it that way.'" He adds: "So we'll just sweat this one out until we find out the answer later on."

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2 Ibid. One of the dominating astronomical discoveries of the 20th century was the realization that the galaxies of the universe all seem to be moving away from the earth. In fact they are moving away, not just from the earth, but from one another—that is, the universe seems to be expanding. Hence, scientists conclude that the universe must once, very long ago, have been an extremely compact, super-dense, super-small concentration of matter.

3 Ramm, *The Christian View of Science and Scripture*, 256.

4 Hearn, 181.

5 Ibid.

6 Ibid.
Although he never embraced the theory, Ramm warns that experimental verification of the big bang theory will not convince the scientists to believe in God:

What I had in mind is this: sometimes Christians think that if you come to the place where we are now, with the Big Bang theory picking up what I gather is experimental verification, with discovering the ‘hisses of the original electrons’—or whatever the new findings amount to—they think all scientists should capitulate, that they are forced to believe in God. But scientists can be tough characters. They don’t capitulate that easily.¹

The proponents of big bang theories of the origin of the universe have usually worked from the assumption that the universe, at the moment of origin, was isotropic and homogeneous, and, ironically, the cosmos suddenly came into existence, sometime between thirteen and twenty billion years ago, by a primordial explosion of an infinitesimal particle of “space/time,” which evolved into everything else.² It is believed that in the universe life forms evolved into being after the hot primordial soup cooled, and it coalesced in the familiar kinds of matter that we see today—the protons and neutrons found in stars, planets, and human bodies.³

Many evolutionary astronomers and cosmologists are raising serious doubts about this theory, in spite of the fact that big bang cosmology is probably as widely believed as any theory of the origin of the universe in the history of Western civilization.⁴

Genesis Protology of Nature: Interpreted as Progressive Creation

Ramm proposes progressive creationism as an alternative approach to a literal interpretation of Gen 1 and the origin of nature. According to Ramm, Genesis tells about the creator. He explains: “[The] view of Genesis is that Nature is the creation of a

¹Ibid.


³Ibid.

powerful, wise, and good God,"¹ while science tells how creation was done. Geoffrey Burbridge gives a scientific explanation of origins as follows: "The scientific view of Nature is the effort to find out the precise causes or factors or processes which brought Nature to her present state."² For Ramm warns that the "religious-only theory would assert that the theologian who tries to derive science from Genesis is as much in error as the scientist who sees nothing of God in Nature."³

Ramm interprets the six days of creation in Gen 1 in nonliteral ways, in order to harmonize the long ages called for by modern geology with the time implications of the Genesis creation account. He states categorically: "With reference to the six days of creation, we reject the literal interpretation because by no means can the history of the earth be dated at 4000 B.C., or even 40,000 B.C."⁴ Even though, from a methodological point of view, the Bible does not demand interpreting the Genesis "day" of creation in a nonliteral manner, a new worldview of uniformitarianism and its concepts of origins long embraced by Ramm and other broad concordists requires long periods of time.⁵

Ramm describes the dilemma of the evangelicals and offers a solution. He suggests that "Conservative Christianity is caught between the embarrassment of simple fiat creationism which is indigestible to modern science, and evolutionism which is indigestible to much of Fundamentalism."⁶ Ramm admits: "It is the conviction of at least

¹Ramm, The Christian View of Science and Scripture, 178.
²Ibid.
³Ibid.
⁴Ramm, The Christian View of Science and Scripture, 220. John H. Sailhamer claims: "With the development of the science of geology, the idea that the earth as we know it today could have been created in a single week of twenty-four-hour days was increasingly difficult to maintain. Geologists spoke of vastly long periods during which the earth was formed" (207).
⁵Ramm, The Christian View of Science and Scripture, 222.
⁶Ibid, 117.
this one evangelical that the only way out of the impasse is through some form of progressive creationism which we have imperfectly sketched here."1 For example, Ramm argues: "If we believe in the divine inspiration of the Scriptures and in the pictorial-day interpretation of Genesis, and in the general truthfulness of modern [science], we are then driven to the theories of moderate concordism and progressive creationism."2

However, Ramm is mute on whether one day represents a million years or on how long a pictorial day is supposed to be. When Ramm weds his understanding of modern science and Scripture, the picture of creation that emerged is something like this:

Almighty God is Creator, World Ground, and Omnipotent Sustainer. In his mind the entire plan of creation was formed with man as the climax. Over the millions of years of geologic history the earth [wa]s prepared for man's dwelling, or as it has been put by others, the cosmos was pregnant with man... From time to time the great creative acts, de novo, took place. The complexity of animal forms increased. Finally, when every river had cut its intended course, when every mountain was in it proposed place, when every animal was on the earth according to blueprint, then he whom all creation anticipated is made, MAN, in whom alone is the breath of God. This is not theistic evolution which calls for creation from within with no acts de nova. It is progressive creationism.3

Ramm not only rejects the strict concordism, but he also rejects theistic evolution. In The Christian View of Science and Scripture's final chapter on "biology" and "anthropology," Ramm appears constrained to discuss theistic evolution as he details his blueprint for an evangelical assessment of evolution. In so doing, he opens the door widely enough for those with the inclination to walk through and embrace theistic evolution.4 Theistic evolution is the evangelical version of the Darwin evolution.

Theistic evolution holds that God created the world and all life, using the process of

1Ibid.
2Ibid., 226-27.
3Ramm, The Christian View of Science and Scripture, 227-28. Eve and Harrold: "Progressive creationists also concede that there are inconsistencies within Genesis itself (for example, plants are created the day before the sun). Some interpret Noah's flood as a regional rather than a worldwide deluge" (48).
4See Ramm, The Christian View of Science and Scripture, 280-93.
evolution and natural selection.¹

Ramm, who coined the term “progressive creationism,” makes an effort to make his theory different from theistic evolution and other theories of creation and the origin of the universe; namely, fiat creationism and naturalistic evolution. Progressive creationism seeks to evade the uniformitarianism inherent in theistic and naturalistic evolution while keeping its idea of progress and development. According to progressive creation,² God intervenes at special points. In order to account for the missing links between major groups of living organisms from a biological point of view, Ramm’s system requires uncommon “vertical radiation” by God to introduce life forms de novo. The “vertical radiation” is a fiat creation which brings into existence these new life forms. By contrast, there may be much “horizontal radiation,” a procedure that gives rise to several species taking place by naturalistic means.³ Ramm concludes: “In progressive creationism there may be much horizontal radiation. The amount is to be determined by the geological record and biological experimentation. But there is no vertical radiation. Vertical radiation is only by fiat creation.”⁴

In short, while making the most complete case for progressive creation, Ramm assesses theistic evolution as well; however, his argument in favor of progressive creationism does not necessarily stand as an argument against theistic evolution. Theistic evolution, just like progressive creation, seeks to explain the problems of origins in the

¹Walter J. Veith, a scientist, suggests that “theistic evolution proposes that God, directs the process of evolution and helps it along when it comes to the difficult barriers” (The Genesis Conflicts: Putting the Pieces Together [Delta, British Columbia: Amazing Discoveries, 2002], 13).

²Walter Veith is more precise in his definition. He claims “Progressive creation proposes that God created numerous times and that these creation episodes were spread over languages” (13). Veith denounces progressive creationism and suggests that “Scripture does not support this theory with its Day-Age concept” (ibid.).


⁴Ibid., 272.
light of modern science while retaining belief in God as creator and in other traditional biblical teachings. Therefore, the model is very appealing to evangelical scholarship. Ramm, like other evangelical theologians, suggests that evolution could have been adopted into both Catholic and Protestant theology without disrupting either. He maintains that the accusations that evolution is anti-Christian and that theistic evolution is not a “respectable” position are very difficult to maintain. For Ramm, evolution is not contrary to Christian metaphysics. He claims that “evolution is not metaphysically incompatible with Christianity.” Statements of this nature pave the way for the evangelicals’ growing comfort with the evolutionary theory.

Ramm prefers progressive creation as “the fundamental pattern of creation to fiat creationism, theistic evolution, or naturalistic evolution,” for it makes “the most sense out of the numerous facts of Nature” and at the same time remains true to the strictures of the Bible. He indicates that his theory of progressive creationism “is a more comprehensive theory than the theory of evolution.” He states, “Progressive creationism endeavors to explain much that the theory of evolution tries to explain, and many of the things that the theory of evolution leaves unexplained.” Furthermore, Ramm adds that this position finds support in the theological tradition of Augustine.

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1Ibid., 292-93 (Ramm’s emphasis). Leo Strobel concurs: “Not everyone, however, believes that Darwinian evolutionary theory and God are incompatible. There are some scientists and theologians who see no conflict between believing in the doctrines of Darwin and the doctrines of Christianity” (The Case for a Creator: A Journalist Investigates Scientific Evidence That Points Toward God [Grand Rapid: Zondervan, 2004], 21).

2Terreros, 97-105.

3Ramm, The Christian View of Science and Scripture, 106.

4Ibid., 271.

5Ibid.

6Ibid., 22.
According to Ramm, a part of the original nature was Paradise or the Garden of Eden. He indicates: “Man was not created in Paradise, but created and then placed there to know the marvelous place he was to inhabit.”\(^1\) He admits: “Determining the location of the Garden of Eden is not easy as no precise geographical phenomenon can be found which answers to the Genesis description.”\(^2\) Though he accepts existence of such a place, Ramm explains: “The second chapter of Genesis states that a certain territory is staked out, as it were, for man, with certain animals making it a Paradise. How large the territory was we do not know, but it was an oasis for man. His days of probation were spent here.”\(^3\) He is also quick to add concerning the Paradise, “The animals that Adam named were not the thousands of the world, but those in this staked-off territory. The purpose of calling these creatures to Adam was to prove that no animal could be the helpmate to man.”\(^4\) There is some indirect allusion to some kind of communication between God, animals, and man. Apparently, for Ramm, “ideal conditions existed only in the Garden. There was disease and death and bloodshed in Nature long before man sinned.”\(^5\) He claims: “We presume it was sheltered existence from the necessary violence of the system of Nature.”\(^6\) He further explains: “Outside of the Garden of Eden were death, disease,

\(^1\) Ibid., 95.
\(^2\) Ibid., 331.
\(^3\) Ibid., 333.
\(^4\) Ibid.
\(^5\) Ibid., 334. Evangelical scholar Donald G. Bloesch concurs: “We definitely admit the idea that death and corruption were already in the world prior to the creation of our first parents, but this does not necessarily imply that there was a geographical area (the garden of Eden) that was immune from the curse of death” (Essentials of Evangelical Theology, vol. 1, God, Authority and Salvation [San Francisco, CA: Harper & Row, 1978], 117, n. 54).

\(^6\) Ramm, The Christian View of Science and Scripture, 95. Richard H. Bube claims: “Death, animal aggression, accident, fire, flood and freezing, etc. have extended back far beyond the time in which one could reasonably place the days of the first man” (“Original Sin as Natural Evil: A Speculative Model,” Journal of the American Scientific...
weeds, thistles, thorns, carnivores, deadly serpents, and intemperate weather. To think otherwise is to run counter to an immense avalanche of fact.\textsuperscript{1}

Ramm suggests that, for man, the Garden of Eden provided “the protective shelter of his Paradise”\textsuperscript{2} against the forces of evil outside of the Garden. He explains:

Part of the blessedness of man was that he was spared all of these things in his Paradise, and part of the judgment of man was that he had to forsake such a Paradise and enter the World as it was outside of the Garden, where thistles grew and weeds were abundant and where wild animals roamed and where life was only possible by the sweat of man’s brow.\textsuperscript{3}

Ramm indicates that at one time man was expelled from the Garden. He claims that man’s “expulsion from the Garden back into the general system of Nature was a great judgment.”\textsuperscript{4} He explains, “The tiger, the thistle, the storm, and the plague are now problems directly in the lap of man. The imperfections of being in Nature now become part of the judgment upon man.”\textsuperscript{5} He appears mute about the tree of life and face-to-face communion with God in the original nature. However, as a broad concordist Ramm still has some form of a Garden of Eden which is denied in Theistic evolution.

\textsuperscript{1}Ramm, \textit{The Christian View of Science and Scripture}, 335. Arthur H. Lewis claims: “Many distinctive qualities of the garden emphasize its superiority to the rest of nature outside: the abundance of water, the edible plants and fruit-trees, the non-violent behavior of the animals, the absence of thorns and thistles, the stewardship apart from toilsome labor” (“The Localization of the Garden of Eden,” \textit{Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society} 11 [Fall 1968]: 172). Other scholars who believe that ideal conditions existed only within the Garden of Eden include: John C. Munday, Arthur Lewis, Edward Hitchcock, Brian P. Sutherland, and Davies A. Young.


\textsuperscript{3}Ramm, \textit{The Christian View of Science and Scripture}, 335.

\textsuperscript{4}Ibid., 95.

\textsuperscript{5}Ibid.
Natura Continua: Ramm’s Assessment of Contemporary Nature

Introduction

On the current status of nature, Ramm holds that the world in its present condition “must contain all possible range of goodness”¹ but is “the best creation when seen as a whole.”² He also explains that evil and corruption are a part of a perfect creation: “The system of creation or the perfection of the universe requires that which is corruptible and that which can fail in its goodness.”³ These claims regarding the contemporary status of nature lean toward the Leibnizian philosophical school of thought. Ramm also suggests: “The conditions among the present cursed Nature tell us what sort of curse fell on the first creation.”⁴ Ramm and other leading, broad evangelical concordists question the thesis of a sin-death causal connection in the following sense. They believe that death and corruption already existed in the world before the creation of our first parents, Adam and Eve. In other words, death preceded the Edenic experience and the Fall.

For this reason, Ramm can state that “God did not say that creation was perfect, but that it was good. In Scripture it is heaven which stands for perfection. The earth is the scene of man’s probationary existence, and it is good but not heavenly perfect.”⁵ He adds: “Creation is a system which involves features, and necessarily so, which appear to us as dysteleological (diseases, storms, tornadoes, etc.).”⁶

¹Ibid., 93-94.
²Ibid., 94.
³Ibid.
⁴Ibid., 199.
⁵Ibid., 93.
⁶Ibid.
The Nature of the Fall and Its Effects Upon Nature

Ramm defines the Fall as “the event in which man, created good and in the image of God, forsook the command of God under temptation and suffered the loss of his original, created state, thus he fell into sin, depravity, and guilt.”\(^1\) He associates the Fall with “the origin of sin in the universe [and] consequent[ly] to the origin of evil.”\(^2\) Ramm advocates a doctrine of a pre-human angelic rebellion “where evil became sin,” meaning that with the possibility of evil came the possibility of sin.\(^3\)

Ramm begins to unpack the effect of the Fall as follows:

In summary, the Fall brought about a judgment of condemnation upon man. The summit of this condemnation is death. But man’s life is an existence unto death and therefore all of man’s life stands under this shadow. Natural evils are the divine mean in terms of secondary causes which bring the divine judgments to pass. Therefore human life is life under natural evils.\(^4\)

In the narrative of the Fall presented in Gen 3:16-19,\(^5\) Ramm explains that with the Fall of man, there are now consequences that will befall mankind:

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\(^3\) Ibid. Ramm further noted that “not all evil is sin for a man may accidentally lose an arm or a leg which is evil but not sin” (ibid.).

\(^4\) Ramm, “The Fall and Natural Evil,” 32. Walter J. Veith suggests a biblical account: “After the Fall, according to the Genesis account, the ground was cursed, and plants and animals were transformed. Some plants were to bring forth thorns and thistles, and it is to be presumed that changes in seasons could have brought about deciduous trees in order to cope with the new conditions” (263).

\(^5\) See Miller, 118. Ramm suggests four ways that Gen 3 has been interpreted. (1) Bultmann suggests “A radical view that the text is a myth and contains no significant truth.” (2) Strict concordists (i.e., Henry Morris) suggest that the “literal view claims that the record is an exact transcript of what happened” (Morris, *Many Infallible Proofs*, 164). (3) Kierkegaard, Brunner, and Barth suggest “the mythological psychological view which maintains that the text is in the form of a myth or saga, or legend, which does not depict history per se, but it does set forth the conditions under which man historically exists.” (4) James Orr suggests “the symbolic view that says that Genesis 3 is a report of authentic history but in an oriental, allegorical and symbolic form.” Ramm, “The Fall and Natural Evil,” 21.
The judgments of God for breaking his good commandment and eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil are narrated in this passage. The judgment upon the woman is that childbearing shall be in suffering and pain. . . . The bearing of children is the joy of the woman, and yet this deepest joy is to be fraught with the most painful sorrows.1

Ramm indicates that “with reference to the woman we seem forced to say that all the natural evils associated with child-bearing (chemical and glandular upsets) and childbirth (difficulties in delivery) are natural evils for the woman resulting from the Fall.”2 Ramm suggests that the Fall really devastated the present nature. He claims that on the account of the Fall “the creation was subjected by a divine sentence (hupetage) to futility (mataiotes). But this judgment of futility is solely the fault of man. Because man sinned, creation cannot fulfill its original telos, which was to be man’s wonderful habitat.”3

In what he calls “man’s judgment,”4 Ramm states that sin’s consequences are twofold. First, man’s work would become laborious, with the Fall and the earth cursed. He explains: “Gaining his livelihood will not be the easy task it was in the Edenic Garden but will be rough, strenuous, and difficult.”5 Ramm indicates: “The earth is cursed, and the thistle and the thorn take over. When man comes to his time to eat he shall still have the sweat of his hard labor on his brow.”6 Concerning this judgment: “The first punishment ‘strikes at the innermost nerve of (man’s) life: his work, his activity, and provision of sustenance.’”7 Second, Ramm points out the other consequence of man’s sin:

1Ramm, “The Fall and Natural Evil,” 22.
2Ibid., 23.
3Ramm, Them He Glorified, 107.
4Ibid., 22-23.
5Ibid., 23.
6Ibid.
7Ibid.
His second judgment is that he shall return to dust. The redemptive word has been spoken (Gen 3:15), and common grace shall moderate the judgment of man, yet man will always be under pressure for his daily food, and he shall return to the dust from which he came.¹

Although Ramm does not seem to believe in a literal and historic tree of life on the earth, he concludes that "the second [judgment] represents the denial of access to the tree of life, i.e., immortality."² Thus, the tree may be just a symbol of immortality. He further indicates that the second judgment leads to death, the fate of all fatal catastrophes and diseases or natural evils which stem from the Fall:

The second judgment is that man is to return to dust. Again we must conjecture and say that all the means which produce death are the secondary cause whereby God brings to pass his judgment upon man of death. This means all the diseases of the body that destroy vital organs are natural evils. This means that all events which more dramatically take men's lives such as storms, floods, lightning, earthquakes, are natural evils stemming from the Fall.³

However, Ramm implies that death, diseases, suffering, and natural evils may have existed before man's existence and the Fall, outside "the protective shelter of his Paradise."⁴ He is more categorical in assuring us that death prevailed in the world ever since animals were introduced. Ramm claims "animals died before the fall of man. Only in man's case is death the wages of sin."⁵ He is quick to point out that two other things must be said at this point. First, this does not mean that such things did not exist prior to man's existence. The forest fire has been in existence

¹Ibid.

²Ibid.

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid., 23-24. Paul K. Jewett denies that there is any scriptural claim to a cause-effect relation between the sin of Adam and the entrance of death in the world. He suggests: "But it must be remembered that Scripture does not say, nor do Christians believe, that sin and death are related as cause and effect—except in certain obvious instances of sins of intemperance (chain smoking causes lung cancer which causes death, etc.)" ("Original Sin and the Fall of Man," Southwestern Journal of Theology 19 [Fall 1976]: 26).

⁵Ramm, The Christian View of Science and Scripture, 216.
all the millions of years there have been forests. But it does mean that man is thrust out of the protective shelter of his Paradise and now has an existence within the threat of such events. In that these events destroy human values and human life they are natural evils. Second, this does not mean that man is not to protect himself from such natural evils. Redemption is the reversal of judgment. Therefore, in the spirit of redemption as revealed in the cross, mankind seeks to lessen the threats of natural evil by controlling fires, storms, floods, and plagues. Older theologians argued that man had no right to forestall God’s judgment. But this was reading only of the judgment of God without seeing how the cross calls for a total re-evaluation of the problem of natural evils.  

Ramm suggests that natural evils are not divine judgments upon sin, but may have existed prior to man’s existence. He further argues that, after the Fall and as a result of divine judgment, now man became exposed to natural evils, outside of “the protective shelter of his Paradise” or, as earlier stated, the Edenic garden. He asserts that redemption seeks to solve the problem of natural evils and the judgment of condemnation brought about by the Fall.  

Thus, Ramm rejects a literal interpretation of Gen 3, arguing that it fails to distinguish the historical event from the cultural analogy used by the writer to convey the essence of the event. He claims that “the difficulty with the literal view is that it is contrary to the analogy of history. The historical record does not represent God revealing his will in this manner. The future is always cast in the grid of the culture of the prophet who is making the prediction.” Ramm indicates that “Genesis 3 is prophecy in reverse and therefore the backward look of the prophet is through his own cultural grid.” Ramm concludes that the literal view of Gen 3 is “an exact transcript of what happened.

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1 Ramm, “The Fall and Natural Evil,” 24.
2 Ibid.
3 See Miller, 118.
4 Ramm, “The Fall and Natural Evil,” 22.
5 Ibid.
writer had in the events revealed to him exactly what happened, and he reported it as if he were there in person."

Ramm also rebuffs a radical view of Gen 3 advocated by Bultmann who suggests that the text "is a piece of ancient legend or mythology. It is the kind of story we expect from pre-philosophical and pre-scientific peoples. There is no truth in the record that should cause us to pause and reflect seriously upon it." He states that for Bultmann, the account of the Fall is a legend or myth and contains no truth. Ramm states that this view "depreciates the Scriptures." He dismisses the mythological-psychological view by Kierkegaard, Brunner, Niebuhr, and Barth, who maintain that Gen 3 "is in the form of a myth or, according to Barth, in the form of saga or legend. The substance of the account is the depravity of man. It is not history per se but sets forth the conditions under which man historically exists." Ramm states that, "the difficulty with the [mythological-psychological view] is that it does not harmonize with Romans 5:12f., and I Cor 15:21f., both of which represent a Christ-Adam parallel and the Fall as a single act of a single man."

Ramm appears to find some value in the perspectives present in J. S. Whale’s Christian Doctrine (1941) who, he claims, represents a "more recent attitude toward the Fall." Whale writes: "The idea of a Fall from an original state of perfection is really a

1Ibid., 21.
2Ibid.
3Ibid.
4Miller, 118.
5Ramm, “The Fall and Natural Evil,” 21.
6Ibid., 22.
7Ramm, The Christian View of Science and Scripture, 343.
limiting conception, a theological Grensbegriff. It is not a scientific statement about the
dawn of history.1 He suggests that "the Fall is symbolism, necessary to the intellect, but
inconceivable by the imagination. It involves no scientific description of absolute
beginnings. Eden is on no map, and Adam’s fall fits no historical calendar."2

Ramm is attracted to the symbolic view of interpretation of Gen 3 advocated by
James Orr, a Scottish Reformed theologian. This school of interpretation says that Gen 3
is a report of "authentic history but in an oriental, allegorical, symbolic form."3 Ramm
contends that this view "attempts to do justice to the historical demands of the New
Testament and [at the same time recognizes] the historical-literary problem of the
recording events of which there were no official observers present at the time of the
events."4

Ramm’s interpretation of Gen 3 indicates that while the Fall is expressed
biblically in concrete language, the account needs to be interpreted in a “symbolic”
manner. According to Ramm, the Fall is a “theological truth” written by “symbolism” as

University Press, 1941). Whale further suggests: "Moses is not nearer to the Fall than we
are because he lived three thousand year before our time. The Fall refers not to some
datable aboriginal calamity in the historic past of humanity, but to a dimension of human
experience which is always present—namely, that we who have been created for
fellowship with God repudiate if continually; and that the whole of mankind does this
along with us. Every man is his own ‘Adam,’ and the status perfectionis is not a period of
history, but our ‘memory’ of a divinely intended quality of life, given to us along with our
consciousness of guilt. It is, to quote Althaus, ‘nicht historischer sondern wesentlicher
Art’; that is, it describes the quality rather than the history of man’s first disobedience.
Man’s tragic apostasy from God is not something which happened once for all a long
time ago. It is true in every moment of existence. If you believe in the Creation, you must
go on to believe in the Fall. The symbolism of the one is a necessary complement to the
symbolism of the other” (ibid.).

2Ramm, The Christian View of Science and Scripture, 343.


4Ibid., 22.
“the instrument of inspiration.”¹ In other words, “the language of theological symbolism [is] not of literal prose.”² By inference Ramm’s concurrence with James Orr’s understanding of creation can also characterize the way he views the entrance of sin. He explains the Fall is “then prescientific and in theological symbolism which is the garment divine inspiration chose to reveal these truths for their more ready comprehension by the masses of untutored Christians.”³

The Origin of Death in Nature

Bernard Ramm is perhaps the first outstanding contemporary evangelical scholar to reopen the discussion on the concept of death before the Fall that was so prominent in the nineteenth century.⁴ Ramm argues that God originally intended death for His lower created order. He writes that “unless a very large number of certain forms of life are consumed, e.g., insects and fish, the earth would be shortly overpopulated with them.”⁵ Apparently, death is thus perceived as an indispensable factor in preserving the balance of nature and the happiness of life. A number of other evangelical broad concordists picture death as a divine institution, rather than as a result of human sin. Their common underlying assumption is that death is essentially good and not evil.⁶

²Ibid.
³Ibid.
⁴James R. Moore remarks: “As for evolutionists who wish to be more intelligent Christians, they would do well to read again the ancients. Which is not to say that Christian evolutionists in the nineteenth century provided all the answers for Christian Neo-Darwinism in the twentieth, but that almost every contemporary issue was confronted or anticipated before 1900.” James R. Moore, “Evolutionary Theory and Christian Faith: A Bibliographic Guide to the Post-Darwinism Controversies,” *Christian Scholar’s Review* 4 (1975): 230.
⁵Ramm, *The Christian View of Science and Scripture*, 335.
⁶Other broad evangelical concordists such as John C. Munday, a professor of Natural Sciences at Regent University in Virginia; Arthur H. Lewis; Davis A. Young; and
Ramm’s suggestion, based on Paul’s statement in Rom 5:12, is that the belief that all death came from man’s sin and that by sin, death entered the world, “is all an imposition on the record.” He rejects the assumption that before the sin of Adam there was no death anywhere in the world and that all creatures were vegetarian. Ramm explains:

Ideal conditions existed only in the Garden. There were disease and death and bloodshed in Nature long before man sinned. . . . We cannot attribute all this death, disease, and bloodshed to the full to the fall of Satan. Certainly the Scriptures do not teach that death entered the world through Satan! The above quote indicates in clear fashion that in Ramm’s view, ideal and utopian conditions existed only within the confines of the Garden of Eden. More precisely he says: “Outside of the Garden of Eden were death, disease, weeds, thistles, thorns, carnivores, deadly serpents, and intemperate weather.” In commenting on Augustine’s understanding of nature, Ramm implies for himself that outside the Paradise, there was an “entire system of Nature [that] involves tigers and lions, storms and high tides, diseases

Edward Hitchcock all support the notion of death before the fall and the sin of Adam. Of these authors, Hitchcock is the earliest, see Edward Hitchcock, The Religion of Geology and Its Connected Sciences (London: James Blackwood & Co., 1851).

1 Ramm, The Christian View of Science and Scripture, 334.

2 Ibid. On the basis of the assumption that “Life can live only on life” (ibid., 335), Ramm argued that we are not to believe that the lion, the tiger, the ant-eater, and the shark were all vegetarians till Adam fell, and that the teeth of the big cats were all for vegetarian purposes only (ibid., 335). The idea of the existence of ideal conditions only within the Garden of Eden, with the presence of death outside of it, had earlier been suggested by the middle of the nineteenth century by Edward Hitchcock.

3 Ibid., 334. Arthur Lewis concurs with Ramm, “Many distinctive qualities of the Garden emphasize its superiority to the rest of nature outside: the abundance of water, the edible plant and fruit trees, the non-violent behavior of stewardship apart from toilsome labour” (172). According to this statement, death reigned among a series of unpleasant natural factors outside the only privileged and exempted spot on the planet—the Garden of Eden.

4 Ramm, The Christian View of Science and Scripture, 335.
and parasites."1 Ramm claims: "Man was not created in Paradise, but created and then placed there to know the marvelous place he was to inhabit."

However, Ramm is cautious: "We cannot speculate too freely as to the nature of that existence, but we presume it was a sheltered existence from the necessary violences of the system of Nature."3 Ramm concludes that as for Man, "his expulsion from the Garden back into the general system of Nature was a great judgement."4

In Rom 5:12-21, Ramm admits that the passage discusses death as a result of the Fall, and "has been called the most difficult theological passage in the New Testament."5 Nevertheless, he states,

for our purposes [Rom 5: 12-21] represents the clearest discussion of the Fall and its consequences that we have in the New Testament. The passage does not state Adam’s condition prior to the Fall. However, in stating what happened, it presupposes a state of sinlessness and freedom from death (perhaps a state of conditional immortality). Theologians use the expression “original righteousness” or “state of integrity” (status integritatis), but these are not biblical terms. In the emphasis upon death in the text the condition prior to the Fall must at least have held open for man the possibility of immortality, perhaps in the form of continuously eating the fruit of the tree of life.6

Ramm further considers the results of the Fall outlined in this passage (Rom 5:12-21). He claims that "the results of the Fall are also stated: sin enters the world (v. 12), and all men are made sinners (v. 19). Because men are sinners, judgment and condemnation come upon them. The essence of this condemnation is death."7 Ramm adds: "Paul speaks of death spreading (v. 12), of death reigning (vv. 14,17), of many dying (v. 15), and

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1Ibid., 95.
2Ibid.
3Ibid.
4Ibid.
6Ibid.
7Ibid.
finally of sin reigning by death (v. 21)." In other words, according to Ramm, only the
death of animals existed in "the entire system of Nature" prior to man’s Fall. Hence, the
Fall brought sin into the world, and only man’s death.

Ramm contends that death has caused havoc to the present nature. He claims:
"No happy union has been formed of friends or family or associates that has not finally
been dissolved by death." He explores the various circumstances that sometimes may
lead to death in contemporary nature. For example, Ramm claims "sometimes it has been
the rough hand of accident: other times it has been the exhausting slow course of
disease." He concludes, "The sun never sets without some family gathering at the
graveside of a loved one with all the uncontrollable feelings, the massive lump in the
throat, the torrent of tears, the horrible vacant feeling, that dreadful vacuum created by the
loss of a loved one."

Ramm observes death has not even spared the Christian Church and her great
thinkers. He states: "Death has also worked its dreary work in the history of the Christian
Church. It silenced the voice of a Spurgeon as it stilled the pen of Augustine. It put more
than one missionary into an early grave." Ramm narrates that death "eventually breaks
the strength of the most valiant. It brings low the worthy pastor, the dedicated Christian
scholar, the seemingly tireless Christian layworker." The present nature as "the groaning

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1 Ibid.
2 Ramm, The Christian View of Science and Scripture, 95.
3 Bernard L. Ramm, Them He Glorified: A Systematic Study of the Doctrine of
   Glorification (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1963), 131.
4 Ibid.
5 Ibid.
6 Ibid.
7 Ibid.
creation" will be considered in the next section.

Present Nature as "the Groaning Creation"

Ramm admits that "there is no precise historical proof of the Fall of man outside of the Bible." But, he suggests, apparently "the curse fell upon the man, the woman, and the serpent" after the Fall. Not only were the human beings affected by the Fall but Ramm "describes the effects of sin upon animals and nature."

The groaning creation, Ramm asserts, is a result of the judgment of God that has been placed on the "present cosmos." A Christian has not been spared either; he "lives his life within this judged cosmos." Apparently, nothing in nature is spared. In other words, the present status of nature is in some sense a cursed nature.

In Rom 8:18-26, Ramm claims that "Paul speaks of the connection of the Fall to man and the cosmos." Apparently the Fall affected the fate of all creation involved in the fortunes of humanity:

In verse 20 Paul speaks of the creation’s being subjected to futility, frustration, disappointment (mataiotes). Most of the commentators agree that this futility is the judgment of God expressed in the cursing of the earth in Genesis 3:17-18. The opposite of the curse (mataiotes) is perfection (teleios). The original creation had a goal (telos) and if this telos went its course unhindered it would have brought the creation to its perfection (teleios). But something intervened and prevented the creation achieving its telos and that was the Fall. Under the order of God (hupetage) the creation was placed under a curse. Being under a curse the creation could not realize its telos and therefore suffered frustration. At the present time it groans and agonizes (v. 22) while awaiting a day of deliverance when it can enter into its teleios.

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1Ramm, The Christian View of Science and Scripture, 334.

2Ibid.


4Ibid.

5Ibid., 24.

6Ibid., 25.
In other words, Ramm argues that the original creation had a purpose and a destiny. But the Fall put the entire creation and the cosmos in disarray. The creation now groans after it was subjected to a curse after the Fall, and awaits redemption.

In Rom 8:23, Ramm claims “the Christian also groans (v. 23), for the Christian lives in the cosmos which is under the judgment of God. Therefore the Christian suffers frustration, disappointment, and futility (i.e. mataiotes), and some of this futility is natural evil.”

It appears that in the present nature the Christian joins the rest of cosmos in groaning under the curse of sin. Ramm explains how Christians groan: “Paul says that Christians are undergoing sufferings (pathemata). These pathemata are contrasted with future glory and future freedom.” Ramm claims: “These Pathemata must be all the things which the Christian suffers in the life of the flesh in this judged cosmos. And in that they are cosmic pathemata some of them must certainly be natural evils.”

Concerning suffering in the present nature, Ramm concludes, “Paul is speaking of the effects of the Fall upon the cosmos.” The present sufferings (pathemata), futility (mataiotes), and the bondage (douleia) experienced by all creation or cosmos, due to the Fall, are contrasted with future glory and liberty.

The life of a Christian, according to Ramm, is full of “tears of human existence. The human race has cried over a thousand things.” He explains: “The history of the human race is the history of tragedy upon tragedy, calamity upon calamity, heartache upon heartache, plague upon plague, disappointment upon disappointment, evil upon

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1 Ibid.
2 Ibid.
3 Ibid.
5 Ramm, Them He Glorified, 130.
Ramm indicates: “God’s own people have had their share of heartache and tears.”

But he claims: “When the curtain finally drops upon the course of human history it will close upon a humanity filled with far more tears than joy, with far more heartaches than happiness.”

“The Groaning Creation,” according to Ramm, seems to be the phenomenon outside the paradise or the Garden of Eden.

Outside of the Garden of Eden were death, disease, weeds, thistles, thorns, carnivores, deadly serpents, and intemperate weather. To think otherwise is to run counter to an immense avalanche of fact. Part of the blessedness of man was that he was spared all that he had to forsake such a Paradise and enter the world as it was outside of the Garden, where thistles grew and weeds were abundant and where wild animals roared, and where life was only possible by the sweat of man’s brow.

Ramm implies that the geologic column, fossils, and dinosaurs make “an immense avalanche of fact” which depict the conditions outside the Garden or Paradise prior to Adam’s sin. Apparently, death and suffering were the dominant features outside the Garden. He suggests that the geologic column not only indicates million of years of animal death but an on-going process. Ramm claims, “With reference to fossils, the process of fossilization is going on right now under identical conditions of past geologic time. This means that fossilization is an ordinary process of Nature.”

Ramm wonders: “Are we to believe that the lion and tiger, the ant-eater and the sharp claws of the big cats and the magnificent array of teeth in a lion’s mouth were for

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1 Ibid.
2 Ibid.
3 Ibid.
4 Ramm, The Christian View of Science and Scripture, 335.
5 Ibid.
6 Ibid., 209.
vegetarian purposes only?"\(^1\) Obviously not. He admits these "carnivorous animals and
fish keep the balance of Nature."\(^2\) Ramm explains that "the forest fire has been in
existence all the million of years there have been forests"\(^3\) prior to man’s existence. No
wonder Ramm allows the possibility for the presence of animal death prior to Man’s sin
and the Fall. The role of Satan will be discussed next.

The Role of Satan in Nature

Unlike Morris, a strict concordist who holds Satan responsible for sin, evil, and
death in nature, Ramm states that "certainly the Scriptures do not teach that death entered
the world through Satan!"\(^4\) not even "by reason of the sin and fall of Satan."\(^5\) He explains
that "even if the Satan-fall interpretation is a possibility, there is nothing in all the Bible
to warrant our placing this fall at Genesis 1: 2."\(^6\)

Ramm is cautious about the ontological status of Satan. He admits there is "an
elaborate theory of angelology and demonology derived from Isaiah 14 and Ezekiel 28,"
but warns if "inserted here in the Genesis account we judge as erratic exegesis."\(^7\) Ramm
agrees that "an angelic fall is a matter of revelation and this we do not argue."\(^8\) But he is
willing to debate "interpret[ing] Isaiah 14 and Ezekiel 28 as descriptions of the fall of

\(^1\)Ibid., 335.
\(^2\)Ibid.
\(^3\)Ramm, "The Fall and Natural Evil," 24.
\(^4\)Ibid., 335.
\(^5\)Ibid.
\(^6\)Ibid., 205.
\(^7\)Ibid.
\(^8\)Ibid.
Satan and his angels”¹ as often argued by the strict concordists.

Ramm claims: “Not all commentators are at all agreed that these two passages [Isa 14 and Eze 28] refer to Satan.”² He explains: “Certainly, if conservative and scientific exegesis still considers the Satanic-fall interpretation of these passages as highly improbable, it is not the best procedure for gap theorists to make such a prominent use of them in their interpretation of Genesis.”³ Ramm states categorically: “But to interpret Isaiah 14 and Ezekiel 28 as descriptions of the fall of Satan and his angels we must seriously debate. Even if this could be demonstrated, it would yet be insufficient warrant to insert them in the Genesis account.”⁴ He is also open to “some who do see truth beyond the mere record throw the meaning into the future as predictions of anti-Christ, not backward to Satan’s fall.”⁵

The Question of the Genesis Flood and Present Nature

Ramm’s nonliteral approach to the Genesis account and his uniformitarian geology influence how he interprets the Flood. He admits that the Flood is “one of the sharpest centers of controversy in the history of the warfare of theology and science.”⁶ Modern geology indeed influences how Ramm understands the Flood. He wonders: “Can

¹Ibid.
²Ibid.
³Ibid.
⁴Ibid.
⁵Ibid.
⁶Ibid., 232. Davis A. Young alleges: “Whitcomb and Morris are among the few evangelical writers to acknowledge the existence of anthropological arguments against a universal flood, although they vigorously disagree with them. Ramm had argued against an anthropologically universal flood on the grounds of the problems raised by the presence of human beings in North America prior to the flood and on the grounds that the various races could not all have descended from the three sons of Noah” (The Biblical Flood: A Case Study of the Church’s Response to Extrapribiblical Evidence [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995], 258-9).
the flood of Noah be the source of harmonizing Scripture with geological science?"1

Ramm proposes a local Mesopotamian flood instead of a universal Flood. He indicates that the Flood was anthropologically local, affecting only a small part of the human race although "men were to be found outside of the Mesopotamian area long before the flood."2 He claims: "Although many Christian still believe in the universal flood, most of the recent conservative scholarship of the church defends a local flood."3 He asserts that "those who defend a local flood believe that the time of the flood was sometime prior to 4000 B.C."4

Ramm emphatically states: "There is no known geological data to support those who defend a universal flood."5 He wonders: "A local flood could come and go and leave no trace after a few thousand years, but could a universal flood be a traceless flood?"6 Ramm dismisses the idea of a universal flood and concludes: "The flood was local to Mesopotamian valley."7

Ramm, after rejecting Price’s Flood geology and a universal Flood, alleges that uniformitarianism “has been wrongly attacked by Fundamentalists.”8 He further alleges:

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1Ramm, *The Christian View of Science and Scripture*, 179.
2Ibid., 239.
3Ibid., 238.
4Ibid.
5Ibid., 243. David Young argues that although leading evangelical scholars discarded the notion of a universal and a geologically significant biblical flood or the Noachian deluge over a century ago, in fundamentalist circles, the biblical flood is the central piece of scientific creation (*Creation and Flood* [Grand Rapids: Bakers, 1977]).
7Ibid.
8Ibid. John Sailhamer suggests: “Creationism interprets the biblical account of creation literally. God created the universe in six days. He created man on the sixth day. The universe is quite young, approximately ten thousand years old. The present condition of the earth—which gives the appearance of being much older—reflects the catastrophic
“Confusing evolutionary biology with geological continuity the Fundamentalists have felt it necessary to believe in catastrophism in geology or discontinuity. To the contrary, the entire roll call of earth sciences is built on the uniformitarian principle.”¹ In other words, Ramm suggests the entire notion of flood geology and catastrophism is a result of the Fundamentalists or strict concordists confusing evolutionary biology with what he calls “geological continuity” or uniformitarianism.² Though Ramm may have some reservations with the entire dogma of evolutionary biology, he completely embraces conventional geology. He suggests that, indeed, geology complements the Genesis account. For example, he claims: “The time element is not stated in the Genesis record and must be learned from the geological record.”³ Although Ramm further implies “that geology and Genesis tell in broad outline the same story,” he recommends a “combination of geology and theology” and “put[ing] together the Who of theology and the what of geology” in developing a Christian philosophy of nature.⁴ He concludes that the Fundamentalists support a flood geology because they are inadequately versed in the philosophy of science and blindly opposed to uniformitarianism in geology.⁵

Ramm’s hermeneutical approach and methodology allow a harmonization of the biblical doctrine of the Flood with the uniformitarian theories of geology. The result of such an endeavor is that the Genesis Flood is a local—flood instead of a universal aqueous catastrophe. In the next section the future of nature will be considered.

¹Ramm, The Christian View of Science and Scripture, 183-4.

²Ibid.

³Ibid., 226.

⁴Ibid.

⁵Ibid., 184. Davis Young claims that for many evangelicals “scientific evidence consistently indicated that no universal deluge had taken place” (The Biblical Flood, 201).
Natura Nova

Scientific Eschatology

As noted in chapter 3, science predicts a gloomy future for the universe. The universe itself eventually will decay or collapse, ending in cosmic futility.¹ But how does Ramm characterize the future state of nature? Ramm suggests that "the Scriptures teach the advent of Christ in His incarnation and also a future advent of Christ [at Parousia] in his final triumph over sin."²

From the scripture, Ramm identifies two central signs of the return of Christ. These signs are "the spread of the gospel around the world and the apostate condition of mankind."³ In this regard he sheds light and compares the return of Christ with His second coming:

Unfortunately, the true nature of the return of Christ is confused by the speculations about the second coming, which turns it into some kind of political event like any other political event even in human history, only bigger and more dramatic. On the contrary the second coming of Christ is unimaginable to us in that it is the event which ends time and begins eternity, and therefore it is an event beyond all human analogy.

The central verse which serves as a guide to framing the Christian understanding of the return of Christ is Hebrews 9:28: ‘So Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many will appear a second time, not to deal with sin but to save

¹Polkinghorne and Welker, 17.

²Miller, 133. Miller a colleague of Ramm suggests that Ramm argues that “the essential purpose of the return of Christ is not to celebrate the end of time and history dramatically, but it is to consummate redemption by revealing his power and glory (Matt 26:64), resurrecting the bodies of the believers (1 Thess 4:12-18), and beginning the judgment against the ungodly (Matt 25:31-41)” (ibid.).

³Ramm, “An Outline of Evangelical Theology,” 6-7. Miller observes the following concerning Ramm’s eschatological view: “While admitting that there are evidences of these signs within the modern society, Ramm cautions that no Christian is wise enough to say responsibly what hour or which events are the prophetic hours and events. The California Baptist emphatically says that the times and seasons are in God’s hands (Acts 1:7). The Christian is, however, to look with expectancy for the return of Christ. This hope is ‘not the kind of expectancy wherewith we wait for the milk or the mailman to put in his appearance.’ Instead, it is a life with an eschatological attitude—a moving from the ‘not yet’ to the ‘here now.’ Ramm claims that this eschatological attitude is much different than the date-setting mentality” (Miller, 133-4).
those who are eagerly waiting for Him."¹

According to Ramm, the return of Christ denotes that He will return as a Savior and deliverer. While the second coming has some political connotation, it describes a more dramatic and unimaginable event that closes one chapter and opens another. For Ramm, this time Christ comes to bring to an abrupt end to the present age and usher in a new order where "all things will be made new—the new heaven, the new earth, the New Jerusalem, and the new conditions."² Ramm pictures this great triumph of Christ in the New Jerusalem as the final consummation of nature, from which "all the natural evils of this sinful life are forever debarred."³

Ramm describes his eschatological view as follows:

The reign of Christ is universal and cosmic in that the cosmic order is recreated (Revelation 19-20). Although Christians may differ over the details of eschatology, they all unite in affirming that the human story is not over until there is a new heaven, a new earth, and a new Jerusalem. The reason for this is that human history begins in a cosmic way with creation. Adam and Eve were related to their cosmos in the first creation. We are therefore related to the cosmos in our eternal state.⁴

For Ramm, the present cosmos or nature will be recreated to reflect the original creation or the first creation, particularly of the Edenic condition. This dramatic event constitutes the final consummation of nature and a new cosmic order of a new heaven, earth, and Jerusalem. He concludes that "the eschatological and the apocalyptic materials about the future is the ‘unpacking’ of what God has done, is doing, and will do."⁵


²Ramm, "The Fall and Natural Evil," 31.

³Ibid., 32.

⁴Ramm, *An Evangelical Christology*, 102. He further added, "Both the Apostles’ Creed and the Nicene Creed affirm the return of Christ. The latter reads ‘and will come again with glory to judge the living and the dead. His kingdom shall have no end’" (ibid.).

⁵Ibid., 104.
Nature and the Consummation

A key verse for Ramm concerning consummation and the kind of future nature which will be present is Rev 21:1. He suggests: “In this verse John writes that he saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and earth had passed away.” Ramm claims that “world-renewal was a great rabbinic theme.” He explains: “And coincident with the great dramatic conclusion of world history recorded in the latter chapters of the book of Revelation is the new heaven and the new earth as the cosmic renewal necessary for the New Jerusalem.”

For Ramm, “the word new is itself an eschatological word. The culmination of redemption is to bring into existence the new, so that the theme of eschatology could well be that given in Revelation 21:5, ‘Behold, I make all things new.’” According to Ramm, this text can be interpreted to mean that “man’s soul, his body, his environment, and his cosmos” will be glorified. It is apparent that consummation will affect not only man but nature, too. Ramm indicates: “In the glorification of the Christian comes the renewal of the cosmos and so the heartfelt longing of the cosmos is for the glorification of the sons of God.” Indeed, Christ’s second advent is His final triumph over sin and will consummate the universe redeemed by His power and glory.

What does Ramm think about the fate of death in *Natura Nova*? He claims that at *Parousia*, a new reign will usher in “an existence free from all pain, death, and

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2Ibid.
3Ibid.
4Ibid.
5Ibid., 110.
6Ibid., 108.
mourning,” an experience of complete “happiness, bliss, joy, and glory with surcease.”

This assertion by Ramm implies that predation will not be a part of nature in the new creation.

According to Ramm “just as sin represents the disturbance of the harmonies of man, redemption calls for the restoration of these harmonies.”

Apparently for Ramm, “the Edenic picture is a picture of harmony. Man is in harmony with himself. He is in harmony with woman, his helpmeet. He is in harmony with his cosmos as it manifests itself in the garden.”

He goes back to the book of Genesis to unravel the drama. Ramm asserts “The Scriptures commence the creation-account with the creation of the heavens and earth, its sea, plant, and animal populations, and conclude it with the creation of man, who is made its Lord. They present us with a cosmos related to man and not a cosmos in itself.”

He concludes, “There is, then, a close bond between man and creation.”

According to Ramm, the cosmos must also be restored. He contends, “There must be a healing of the cosmos. Consequently new heavens and earth are promised. But there must also be the healing of society, and this takes the form of the New Jerusalem.”

For Ramm, “the present depressing conditions of suffering, bondage, and weakness will end at the glorification of the believer.” He claims: “This coming glory contrasts radically with our present sufferings, in fact so much so that our present sufferings are to be counted as nothing (cf. II Cor 4: 17, ‘For this slight momentary

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1 Ibid.
2 Ibid., 105.
3 Ibid., 104.
4 Ibid.
5 Ibid.
6 Ibid.
7 Ibid., 107.
affliction is preparing us for an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison.

Ramm suggests that “in the glorification of the Christian comes the renewal of the cosmos . . . part of the process of glorification is the glorification of the cosmos.” In other words, glorification brings about a world-renewal that leads to a new heavens and a new earth “and according to Paul setting free from bondage into the glorious liberty of the children of God.” He concludes: “The process of glorification is not complete until the believer enters into a state of glorious existence within the New Jerusalem.”

The New Eschatological Eternal Order

Ramm contrasts the “former things” and the “new” as he ponders about the future of nature. The passing away of the “former things” and a new beginning of “all things made new” marks a new eschatological eternal order. He says:

Commentators on Revelation frequently point out the numbers of elements of the book of Genesis repeated in the book of Revelation. If the first of Genesis records the great tragedy of man, the end of Revelation records man’s share in the great triumph of God. The theme of Revelation is in 21:5, “Behold I make all things new.” This is said in contrast to 21:4 which speaks of “the former things.” The “former things” represents the old age, the sinful age, the age of man’s fallenness and depravity, the state of man’s unregeneracy. It represents the cosmos and humanity in its fallen and therefore cursed condition. The word new in Revelation is a strong eschatological word. In the End-Time all things will be made new—the new heaven, the new earth, the New Jerusalem, and the new conditions.

In what Ramm calls a “new eschatological eternal order,” all the “former things” that came as a result of the Fall will be abolished and eliminated. He refers to the present

1Ibid.
2Ibid., 108.
3Ibid.
4Ibid., 116.
6Ibid.
7Ibid.

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nature as dominated by external tragedies and a life of tears, of mourning, and of crying. He insists that all of these must give way to a new eternal order. Ramm asserts that for a new dispensation to come, the “former things” must pass away. He says, “the new cannot come until the former passes away. The former represents the conditions brought to pass by the Fall.” This is certainly a discontinuity from “former things” to a new “eternal order.” No wonder Ramm suggests, “The theme of Revelation is in 21:5, ‘Behold I make all things new.’”

Ramm also contrasts the present life of suffering and the life after resurrection or glorification. He indicates that “Paul speaks of the sufferings that are now and the glory that shall be (Rom. 8:18). Part of the glory that shall be is the redemption of the body, by which Paul means its resurrection (v. 23).” Ramm claims: “Our present bodies are perishable, capable of disease and death (phthora). The resurrection body is incorruptible, immortal, and immune to all powers of decay and destruction (aphtharsia).” He explains first, “Our present bodies are bodies that are dishonored, disgraced, and humiliated (atimia). The resurrection body is a body of glory, of supreme divine approval (doxa).” Second, Ramm says, “Our present bodies are bodies of moral and spiritual weakness unable to respond to the divine will (asthenia). The resurrection body is able perfectly to respond to the divine will, for it is characterized by power (dunamis).”

1Ibid.
2Ibid.
3Ramm, Them He Glorified, 100. Ramm suggests that “the resurrection body may be equated with the glorification of the body” (ibid., 103). He adds, “This glorification is no process, no matter of growth, but occurs suddenly, dramatically, at the end-time (1 Cor. 15:52)” (ibid.).
4Ibid., 103.
5Ibid.
6Ibid.
bodies are made for life on this planet under present conditions (*psuchikon*). Our risen bodies are eschatological bodies, enlivened by the Holy Spirit (*pneumatikon*), and thus fitted for the New Jerusalem."¹

The "former things" may not be listed in the book of Revelation, but Ramm describes them as "those things most painful to the human heart."² He explains:

Revelation 21:4 mentions tears, death, mourning, crying, and pain. All of these are the most disagreeable things of the Fall, and God will abolish them before he establishes his new eschatological eternal order. Tears are the subjective response to external tragedy, as are mourning and crying. That which spells out these external tragedies is nothing but the tragic history of the race. Life under the Fall is a life of tears, of mourning, and of crying (*krauge*), not the usual word for crying but the shout from intense agony). We can reasonably infer here that natural evils, whatever they have been, have had their part in the tears, death, and crying of the human race.³

Ramm is very categorical about pain in the New Jerusalem. He states: "There shall be no more pain (*ponos*)."⁴ According to him, pain in animals obviously existed millions of years before the Fall. But pain came to human beings due to the Fall and its curse. According to Ramm it will not exist in the new order and the final consummation of nature.

However in the word pain (*ponos*) we have something else. Pain is one of the conditions which marks out life under the curse, and therefore pain cannot exist in the New Jerusalem. Here is where natural evil certainly touches us. Human existence is a life of pain—the decayed tooth, the arthritic joint, the diseased organ, the disturbed digestive track, the tumor, the cancer, the infection, the broken bone, the bruise, the sprain. Pain is not viewed here in its beneficial aspect of *reporting* injury but rather in the evils which fall upon man and cause pain. Thus, pain is considered one of the great natural evils resulting from the Fall.⁵

In other words, according to Ramm, pain will cease to exist in the New Jerusalem. He

¹Ibid.


³Ibid.

⁴Ibid., 132.

⁵Ramm, “The Fall and Natural Evil,” 31-2.
claims that “Human life is a life of pain”\(^1\) and human pain did not exist from the beginning.

Ramm laments that pain has dominated the human race, and man has been rendered very helpless.

How the human race has suffered from pain. Not a second of the clock ticks without millions of human beings enduring pain. Some of it is emotional or mental, some of it is spiritual, but most of it is physical. There is the pounding pain of the headache, the sharp pain of a toothache, the slow gnawing pain of some deep organic disorder. There is the relentless pain from arthritis and the merciless pain of cancer. Although perhaps a few persons have gone through life virtually free from pain, most of the millions of the earth have suffered not one pain but many pains. Even though we know that pain is a signal from the body that something is wrong, this knowledge makes the pain no easier to bear. And what pains might be ahead of us from atomic radiation?\(^2\)

To Ramm, pain has brought untold suffering to the human race, and represents a cursed condition. It stands in the category of the “former things” which will be forever debarred from the New Jerusalem. He says, “But when the New Jerusalem comes into being pain has had its last day. The aching tooth has been a pocket of fire for the last time. The last cancer will have brought its hapless victim to the grave. The deep-seated aches of the bones are forever gone. Pain shall be no more!”\(^3\)

Concerning the New Jerusalem, Ramm indicates: “The first habitat of man was a garden, but his final habitat is a city.”\(^4\) He claims, “The concept of the New Jerusalem corresponds to the concept of the new heavens and the new earth. Man’s soul, his body, his environment and his cosmos form one nexus.”\(^5\) For Ramm, the New Jerusalem is the final destiny of the redeemed. He suggests, “Redemption is not final until it has worked

\(^1\)Ibid.


\(^3\)Ibid., 133.

\(^4\)Ibid., 108.

\(^5\)Ibid., 110.
its effect in the entire nexus. If man's redeemed soul calls for a redeemed body, the
redeemed body calls for a redeemed environment." He further explains: "Thus the
Scriptural revelation concludes when the book of Revelation portrays a new cosmos and a
New Jerusalem. It is within this glorified city that the glorified saints will exist
eternally." He concludes: "The paradise of God is the New Jerusalem, which thus
represents an environment of perfection created by the divine power." Ramm states:
"Thus glorification is not only an entering into a perfected and glorious environment but
it is also the full partaking of the fullness of life in that environment represented in our
text by eating of the tree of life in the paradise of God."

According to Ramm, the New Jerusalem "is called a new city (Rev. 21:2). It has
already been noted that new is a great eschatological word for both the entire New
Testament and especially the book of Revelation." He explains: "It is the city which
fulfills the promise; it is the realized city; it is the final city; and it is the glorified city." He
further claims, "Furthermore, it is the city which comes down from heaven (Rev.
21:2). This speaks of its origin. It is not a city made by man, like Babylon, nor an earthly
Jerusalem 'retooled' for eternity." But, Ramm contends, "it is a city whose architect,
contractor, and builder is God; it is therefore distinct from the glorified earthly Jerusalem
for which the Jews hoped. It comes down to earth!" He concludes, "Eternity is no

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1 Ibid.
2 Ibid.
3 Ibid., 122.
4 Ibid.
5 Ibid., 113.
6 Ibid.
7 Ibid., 113-4.
8 Ibid., 114.
Platonic existence in heaven but existence in a city on this earth (which has undergone its own glorification)."\textsuperscript{1} Ramm is quick to add: "Such is the New Jerusalem, the eternal home of man and the eternal tabernacle of God. It is the glorified environment and glorified society which corresponds to the glorified soul and glorified body of the redeemed."\textsuperscript{2}

Ramm underscores the fact that "the New Jerusalem is the eternal home of the redeemed, in which city the Triune God lives in unbroken communion with the redeemed."\textsuperscript{3} He explains that the New Jerusalem will be a home like no other. Ramm indicates that "the entire description of it is one of glory. Glorified saints live in a glorious city in glorious existence surrounded by the new cosmos."\textsuperscript{4}

Certain things attributed to the New Jerusalem are indeed a replica of Edenic conditions. Ramm asserts: "The millennial conditions in the future tell us from what state the world originally fell."\textsuperscript{5} He explains: "The millennium with its docile animals tells us how peaceful the original creation was; and the present ferocity of animals informs us of the depraved condition of the brutes after the fall of Satan."\textsuperscript{6} Ramm suggests: "Revelation 2:7 says: 'To him who conquers I will grant to eat of the tree of

\textsuperscript{1}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{2}Ibid., 115. David Miller explores Ramm's description of a New Jerusalem, a place where the glorified saints will exist eternally, and never experience any more pain: "Ramm describes existence in the new Jerusalem as 'a glorious life in a prepared place and in perfect fellowship with Jesus Christ' (John 14:2-3). It will be a life 'in the eternal love of Christ' (Rom. 8:38-39) and 'in the fullness of knowledge' (1 Cor. 13:10-13). Ramm also says that heaven will be gloriously lived 'in the fullness of the blessing of the kingdom of God.' The life of this kingdom will be one of righteousness, peace, and joy (Rom 14:17)' (Miller, 137-8).

\textsuperscript{3}Ramm, \textit{Them He Glorified}, 113.

\textsuperscript{4}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{5}Ramm, \textit{The Christian View of Science and Scripture}, 199.

\textsuperscript{6}Ibid.
life, which is in the paradise of God.' Part of the late Jewish hope expressed in apocalyptic and rabbinic literature was that the glorious age of the Messiah would be a restoration of Edenic (Urzeit) conditions.\(^1\) He claims: "It was the Jewish hope that the Messiah would open the door of paradise, remove the sword which threatened Adam, and give the fruit of the tree of life to the saints. John boldly applies this role to Christ. Christ gives the right to the tree of life."\(^2\)

According to Ramm, there will be some continuity and also discontinuity in the future of nature: Continuity in the sense that the 'future' nature will be a reflection of the 'original' nature in Eden,\(^3\) discontinuity in the sense that the "former things" will come to an abrupt end as they come to pass and they will be no more. He claims: "In a summary statement John says that the former things have passed away. The former things are the things of the old heaven, the old earth, the old existence. This is the existence of hunger and thirst, of pain and death. But that order is gone forever."\(^4\) Thereafter there will be a brand–new beginning of a new nature.

As noted earlier, it appears that predation and death will not exist anymore in the eternal future state of nature. Ramm suggests: "Nothing, absolutely nothing, can exist in the New Jerusalem to cause pain. Upon the resurrection body shall rest the blush of eternal youth, with its wonderful gift of eternal health."\(^5\) He concludes, "All things are made new! Apocalyptically new! Messianically new! Eschatologically new! In this eternal newness there is no more room for tears or death or mourning or crying or pain. These things have all passed away and they are replaced by the eternal joys of the New

\(^{1}\text{Ramm, Them He Glorified, 121.}\)
\(^{2}\text{Ibid., 122.}\)
\(^{3}\text{Ramm, The Christian View of Science and Scripture, 199.}\)
\(^{4}\text{Ramm, Them He Glorified, 133.}\)
\(^{5}\text{Ibid.}\)
Thus, for Ramm, death is the last enemy to be conquered. In the New Jerusalem, death is defeated and is no more. Ramm contends: “Now comes the great announcement! Death shall be no more! It has claimed its last victim. The final funeral has been held. In Emmanuel’s land there shall be no funeral parlors or graveyards. There shall only be the glorious triumph of life, so glorious and so triumphant that death be no more!” He wonders, “Can a more gladsome word be said to humanity than this? Death shall be no more.” Ramm indicates, “Nothing has pursued humanity more relentlessly and more successfully than death. The word itself stands for a thousand heartaches and a million miseries.” Apparently with death defeated, Ramm claims, “There shall be no more mourning. . . . Whatever the cause of mourning, from causes of human existence or from causes of spiritual concern, the days of mourning are ended when the New Jerusalem comes down from heaven.” He explains: “Nothing shall happen in its eternal history that shall ever cause one of the redeemed to mourn. Nothing in the past shall rise up and in its remembrance cause one of the redeemed to mourn. If laughter is the antonym of mourning then heaven shall be filled with the ring of eternal laughter.”

There is another glad word according to Ramm: “There shall be no more crying (krauge).” He explains, “Nothing that has caused agony shall ever again cause the human throat to burst forth in an agonizing cry. And nothing shall ever happen in the

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1Ibid.
2Ibid., 131.
3Ibid.
4Ibid.
5Ibid., 132.
6Ibid.
7Ibid.
Eternal City that shall cause a saint to cry. Those that mourn shall be comforted, and those, too, who have cried shall be comforted, and that with the eternal consolations of the New Jerusalem. Ramm claims, “Eternity cannot begin until the tears of the redeemed are wiped away, i.e., until all that has hurt, wounded, and cut has been mollified by the divine benevolence. . . . God himself shall wipe away every tear!” He indicates, for God, “this is a task too personal, a care too deep to trust to anybody but himself. The positive side of the wiping away of all tears is entering into a state of perfect, eternal felicity.”

The final vision of the future of nature for Ramm “ends with the redeemed in a state of eternal glory living through age after age of eternity reigning with God and the lamb, knowing an existence free from all pain, death, and mourning, and knowing an existence only of happiness, bliss, joy, and glory without surcease.” He further describes this vision as it unfolds in the Bible: “The curtain of revelation drops with the final vision of glorification. The glorified shall reign for ever and ever. It is a reign! That is, it is a condition of complete glorification. It is a condition of perfect sharing in the wonder of God. And it is eternal. It will last for ever and ever.” He concludes: “The need of lamp by night and the sun by day belongs to the old order. But in the new order, the eschatological order, the order of glorification, God’s glory is light of the New Jerusalem.”

According to Ramm, all who will live in the New Jerusalem are conquerors. He

1Ibid.
2Ibid., 130.
3Ibid., 131.
4Ibid., 136.
5Ibid.
6Ibid.
claims: "The conqueror will receive three names: the name of God, the name of the New Jerusalem, and the name of Christ. Basically the giving of new names goes with the new order and the new names signify full participation in the new order."¹ Ramm explains: "The names of God and of Christ signify the vested interest of God and Christ in the conqueror and therefore his complete unassailability. The name of the New Jerusalem indicates his unalterable citizenship in that final city of God."²

The three epochs of nature by Morris were examined in the chapter 3, and Ramm’s concepts have been examined in this chapter. This study will now turn its attention to a critical comparison and evaluation of the concepts of nature by Morris and Ramm. Their strengths and weaknesses will be noted in their treatment of the diachronic epochs or realms of nature.

¹Ibid., 126.
²Ibid.
CHAPTER V

A CRITICAL COMPARISON OF THE CONCEPTS OF NATURE AS ARTICULATED BY HENRY M. MORRIS AND BERNARD L. RAMM

Having already examined the concept of nature in the writings of Henry Morris and Bernard Ramm, this chapter critically compares and analyzes their views and offers a preliminary assessment of some of their positions. The chapter also focuses on similarities and differences in their views on hermeneutics, the authority of science in relation to Scripture, and on nature.

First Epoch: Natura Originalis

Response to Darwinian Evolution and Big Bang Theories

Morris and Ramm agree that Darwin's theories contradict the Bible and that there are internal conflicts in the concepts of materialistic evolution. Ramm states that the theory of evolution works with two contradictory assertions: (i) "Life comes only from life", and (ii) "life originally arose from the inorganic." Reflecting evangelicalism's struggle to understand Creation in light of Darwinian evolutionary theory, Morris and Ramm also attempt to harmonize the Bible with modern science. They also oppose a scientific protology that advocates a naturalistic big bang cosmology.

Morris states that the big bang theory contradicts both basic laws of science and

1Ramm, The Christian View of Science and Scripture, 268.
Scripture.\(^1\) For him, there is also no scientific evidence to support belief in evolution despite an entrenched scientific community that believes that the five-billion-year estimate for the age of the earth is completely reliable. Instead, he suggests that evolution is a matter of faith rather than science— that “the creation model of origins correlates far better with scientific data than the evolution model.”\(^2\)

Morris’s first scientific argument in support of this claim is that evolution does not appear to be occurring in the present time—that “no natural processes of evolutionary development from a simpler kind of organism to a more complex kind of organism can be observed operating today.”\(^3\) Furthermore, he claims that “all biologists know that biological processes today are not producing more highly developed kinds.”\(^4\) Morris demands that evolutionary theory should identify an observable biological process that “impels simple organisms to advance to complex organisms.”\(^5\) He concludes that since no such process can be “observed in the present” and “species remain the same species,”\(^6\) evolution must surrender its scientific status.

To support the scientific creationist belief that a careful examination of the fossil record reveals that transitional forms documenting the evolution of one species into

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\(^1\) Morris alleges that “the so-called big bang theory of origin of the cosmos, postulating a primeval explanation of the space/mass/time continuum as the start, beginning with a state of nothingness and then rapidly expanding into the present complex universe, contradicts both these basic laws as well as Scripture” (The Defender’s Study Bible, 3).

\(^2\) Morris and Morris, The Modern Creation Trilogy, 2:25.

\(^3\) Ibid., 2:30.

\(^4\) Ibid.

\(^5\) Ibid., 2:29.

\(^6\) Ibid.
another simply do not exist, Morris states that, despite the existence of many billions of fossil forms preserved in the sedimentary rocks of the earth's crust, "no true transitional fossil forms have yet been discovered."^1

Ramm also dismisses the big bang theory that explains the origin of the universe^2 and which claims that life originated in primeval water through complex chemical actions transmuting from the inorganic to the organic.^3

Scientific Protology

For Morris, the current geographical and biological phenomena of the world are best explained by scientific creationism, which for him is a body of theory built on a literal interpretation of Genesis as well as acceptance of the general inductive principles of Baconian science.^4 He suggests that literal creationism fits the scientific facts better than either Darwinian evolution or progressive creationism and teaches that the world was created in a period of six literal, contiguous, twenty-four-hour days that occurred approximately some ten thousand years ago, and that the resulting perfect world was ruined by a series of catastrophes.^5 He dismisses both progressive creationism and

^1Ibid., 2:56.

^2Ramm contends that "the 'Big Bang' theory has picked up new prestige. But I've talked to scientists who don't believe anything, and I find that they are not impressed with that kind of reasoning" (Hearn, "An Interview with Bernard Ramm and Alta Ramm," 181).

^3Ramm, The Christian View of Science and Scripture, 256.

^4Moore, Post-Darwinian Controversies, 203-04. He discusses the Baconian method of induction as a scientific approach first suggested by Sir Francis Bacon. For a discussion of the importance of the Baconian method to a strict creationist, see Prince, 80-86, 220-21.

Darwinism as unscientific because they are theories rather than fact.

Ramm also disagrees with conventional scientific protology and presents his own protology based on Genesis, asserting that God is the Creator of the universe and that he is revealed in nature. Ramm denounces Darwinism and the big bang theory because they do not mention the role of God in nature. For Ramm, God is the "world ground" to all beings.¹ He differs from Morris, however, by claiming that God created the universe by a progressive process of Creation that occurred over millions of years.

Philosophy of Nature

Morris's "creationist philosophy of nature" refutes evolution and embraces a young earth, the recent appearance of humanity, a global Flood, and twenty-four-hour Creation days.

Rejecting alternative approaches to the time periods in Gen 1, Ramm's "Christian Philosophy of Nature" suggests a "pictorial-day" interpretation.² Ramm rejects models of Creation based on literalistic interpretations of a recent six-day Creation.³ He espouses the antiquity of the earth and of humans,⁴ rejects a universal Flood, and adopts the local

¹Ramm insists that “God is at the beginning of Nature; at the end of Nature; above Nature; and in Nature. This is not a universe operating at the natural level or material level as if there were no God, but God is world ground to all of Nature. God as world ground means a spiritual universe, creation to consummation, heaven to earth, matter to spirit, animal to man, time to eternity. The how of Nature is supplied by science, but this how of Nature is but the manifestation of God who is in all things” (The Christian View of Science and Scripture, 108-09).

²Ibid., 218-26.

³Ramm contends that opinions advocated by Morris and other strict concordists are neither scientifically defensible nor hermeneutically sound.

⁴To the “Big Bang” scientists the universe is some eight to fifteen billion years old, and life on earth began some three and a half billion years ago. But for Ramm, “the universe is four billion years old” (The Christian View of Science and Scripture, 347).
Flood theory which limits the Noachian Flood to the Mesopotamian region.¹

Concordism and the Origin of Nature

Morris bases his protology of nature on a strict concordism that combines a literal interpretation of Genesis with science—that the Genesis account of God's Creation of nature and the biblical account of the Flood are scientifically factual and reliable.

Ramm bases his protology on a broad concordism that accepts the antiquity of the earth while maintaining the metaphorical integrity of Gen 1. He believes that God created matter and then directly created crucial 'types' or 'root-species' through occasional ex nihilo interventions or divinely caused events of vertical radiation: “Vertical radiation is only by fiat Creation. A root-species may give rise to several species by [naturally caused] horizontal radiation, through the process of the unraveling of gene potentialities or recombination. Horizontal radiation could account for much which now passes as evidence for the theory of evolution. The gaps in the geological record are gaps because vertical progress takes place only by creation.”² This model of a progressive creation allows God to intervene in the evolutionary process on occasion, thus bridging the gaps in the geological record. God does this active creating at various providential stages in history rather than merely being passively present within the evolutionary process.³

Ramm rejects the strict literal concordism of Morris and others, and affirms the earth's antiquity by offering evidence from geology. Neither Morris's literalist concordism nor Darwin's naturalistic evolution offers a satisfactory explanation for

¹For Ramm's criticism of a universal Flood and his defense of a local flood, see chapter IV of this dissertation.

²Ramm, The Christian View of Science and Scripture, 272.

³Ibid.
Ramm because the first fails to honor modern science and the second fails to honor Christian theism.1

The Second Epoch: Natura Continua

Present Nature as Marred by Sin

Both Ramm and Morris see contemporary nature as marred by sin, the divine curse, suffering, and death, and believe that present nature falls short of the original Creation which was declared to be “very good” (Gen 1:31 KJV) before the entrance of sin and the Fall.

For Morris, the sin of Adam, rebelling against the word of God, brought death into God’s previously ‘very good’ world,2 believing that the biblical record states that all things were created in six literal, twenty-four-hour days in an original condition of divine perfection. This original perfect Creation was cursed because of the entrance of sin into the world through the Fall of Adam. The resulting moral and spiritual deterioration eventually brought on the judgment of the great Flood.3

For Ramm, the current state of nature “is the best creation when seen as a whole,  

1Ibid., 172.

2Morris, Biblical Creationism, 226. He adds that “the Bible clearly teaches that suffering and death entered the world as a result of God’s curse thereon following man’s sin (Gen 2:17; 3: 17-19; Romans 5: 12; 8: 18-22; I Corinthians 15: 21; etc.)” (Henry Morris, Studies in The Bible and Science (Nutley, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1966), 71.

3Morris claims that “the Bible teaches plainly that sin and death entered this earth only as a result of Adam’s sin” (Studies in the Bible and Science, 31). He argues that “the fossil record, which includes both men and animals, speaks as eloquently of death in earlier times as the daily obituary columns do in modern times” (ibid.).
an entirety."¹ He also believes that death and corruption already existed in the world before the Creation of Adam and Eve,² and that death and corruption must then be integral aspects of a good creation in present nature.

Present Nature as Sustained by the Holy Spirit

Morris and Ramm agree that present nature is "groaning" and in "bondage," awaiting redemption and liberation in the future, but is also simultaneously being sustained by the work of the Holy Spirit. Morris believes that while God initiated Creation, it is the Spirit that preserves Creation even as "the originally perfect creation is now in a process of decay."³ In a departure from the common approach to theistic evolution, Ramm allows for intermittent acts of fiat Creation by God, with the Holy Spirit sustaining his work thereafter. In this view, nature depends on God for origin, character, and movement to a destined end.

In particular, Morris and Ramm each describe the importance of the role of the Holy Spirit in nature. Morris believes that the Holy Spirit was "the source of all God’s mighty work of creation" and is now "moving" in nature to sustain the created world.⁴ Ramm states that the Holy Spirit imparts spiritual energies by which he guides and

¹Ramm, The Christian View of Science and Scripture, 94.

²Ramm claims that "God did not say that creation was perfect, but that it was good. In Scripture it is heaven which stands for perfection. The earth is the scene of man’s probationary existence, and it is good but not heavenly perfect" (ibid., 93).


⁴Ibid. "The Spirit proceeds from the Father through the Son, to make applicable and effectual the will of God in creation. Thus, the Spirit was ‘moving’ in creation. Motion implies energy, resulting in the various physical phenomena of the creation" (ibid., 19).
sustains, bringing nature into compliance with God's will. He also believes that God relegates the work of Creation inside nature to the administrative power of the Holy Spirit, avoiding charges of pantheism and dualism through his belief that God creates by fiat, outside nature.

According to Ramm, the inner working of the Holy Spirit as "Divine Entelechy of Nature" brings the command of God to fulfillment in time. This means that the Holy Spirit works as the divine executor in the activity of the initial Creation as well as the administrator maintaining God's Creation—not originating the plans of God but executing them. This immanent work of the Holy Spirit is under the constant control of God, both as Creator and Divine Entelechy of Nature. Ramm cites Gen 1:2 describing the Spirit of God brooding over the watery abyss, indicating this immanent activity in nature.

Ramm describes the Holy Spirit's role in redemption as well as the exact limits of

1Ramm claims that "the Spirit of God is God's innermost touch on Nature seeing that it complies with His will, and imparting to Nature the spiritual energies the material world needs for its preservation" (The Christian View of Science and Scripture, 115).

2Ramm contends that "progressive creation is the means whereby God as world ground and the Spirit of God as World Entelechy bring to pass the divine will in Nature" (ibid., 115-16).

3Ibid., 144.

4Ramm uniquely and exclusively uses the term "Entelechy" in reference to the Holy Spirit in The Christian View of Science and Scripture; see 112-16.

5Ibid., 117. "The laws of Nature, under the direction of the Holy Spirit, actualize over a period of time and through the process, the plan of God. . . . The completed product is at the end of the process and not at the commencement" (ibid.).

6Ibid., 109. "the Spirit of God is the immanent member of the Godhead in creation and preservation. . . . The creative activity is assigned to the Spirit of God" (ibid.).

7Ibid., 110.
the Spirit in nature, rejecting any possible claims of pantheism.¹ According to him, the Holy Spirit is not a part of nature even as it works within it to maintain and sustain. The Holy Spirit is not continually doing the work of Creation or rearranging nature, yet it provides for the needs of the material world's preservation.²

For Ramm as well as Morris the Old Testament doctrine of the Spirit of God is the clue for discovering the hidden intelligence of nature. God, through the Holy Spirit, has an inward and invisible touch upon the Creation by which He sustains and preserves nature. Morris states: “The Spirit proceeds from the Father through the Son, to make applicable and effectual the will of God in Creation [for the preservation of nature.]”³

The Fall of Man

Even though Morris and Ramm generally agree that after the Fall the "Creation was made subject to vanity" (or "futility"), and now is "groaning and travailing together in pain" (Rom 8:20-22 NIV) awaiting redemption at Parousia, they disagree, however, on the consequences of that Fall.

Morris believes in a literal historic Fall which affected the entirety of nature. For Ramm, the consequences of the Fall affected only the confines of the Garden of Eden,

¹Ibid., 112. See also West, 74. Ramm argues: (1) The Holy Spirit cannot be related to Nature so as to become involved in pantheism; (2) The Holy Spirit does not efface the imperfections of creatures in their graduation of being and in their deficiency of goodness [e.g., He does not keep animals alive forever, nor prevent the leaves of trees from turning brown and falling off]; (3) The Holy Spirit does not rearrange what has been disordered [e.g., He does not stop a plague caused by an open sewer system]; (4) The Holy Spirit does not contravene that which is for the probationary experience of man; (5) The Holy Spirit does not do that which humans can do for ourselves [e.g., we must drink water, eat food, keep warm]. But the Spirit of God within these limits is the Divine Entelechy (Ramm, The Christian View of Science and Scripture, 102-17).

²Ramm, The Christian View of Science and Scripture, 115.

³Ibid., 19.
while outside "there were disease and death and bloodshed in nature long before man sinned."1 As a result of divine judgment, after the Fall man became exposed to natural evils that had long reigned on earth outside of "the protective shelter of his Paradise."2 This argument sharply contrasts to Morris's belief that there was no death on earth before the Fall, and that the death of animals and man came directly as a consequence of it.

Is Present Nature Good or Perfect?

Morris, representing the classic Christian view of nature, asserts that while nature is sustained voluntarily by God, the present condition of nature does not represent the perfect nature that existed at Creation. Ramm, although also agreeing that God voluntarily sustains nature, suggests that the present world with its decay and death represents the best possible Creation that could exist.

Morris notes that "the record of the six days of creation concludes with the statement by God that everything in His creation was 'very good' at the end of the sixth day (Gen 1:31)."3 Ramm notes that the Creation was never said to be perfect but only "good." Morris replies: "To be sure, Dr. Ramm seeks to evade the force of Gen 1:31 by

1Ibid., 334. Ramm believes that there was death among animals on the earth long before the Fall of man.

2Ramm, "The Fall and Natural Evil," 23-24. He claims that the "ideal conditions existed only in the Garden" (The Christian View of Science and Scripture, 334). Ramm contends that the assertion "that before Adam sinned there was no death anywhere in the world and that all creatures were vegetarians...is all imposition on the record" (ibid.).

3Morris, Creation and the Modern Christian, 44-45. He claims that "there is no way this could be harmonized with a worldwide fossil graveyard a mile deep all around the earth. In fact, the Bible makes it plain that death never even entered the world until Adam sinned (Rom 5:12; 1 Cor 15:21) and brought God's curse on the ground (Gen 3:17; Rom 8:20-22)" (Whitcomb and Morris, 471).

4"God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, it was very good" (KJV).
the rather dubious observation that "God did not say that creation was perfect, but that it was good." He further rejects what he calls a "reign of tooth and claw and death and destruction before the Fall of Adam" and wonders, "how can such an interpretation of the history of the animal kingdom be reconciled with the early chapters of Genesis?" Morris decries uniformitarian apologists who see animal death and millions of years of animal life on earth before the Fall as crucial aspects of the 'balance of nature' which now prevails in the earth. He also accuses Ramm of blaming God for the inherent evil in nature, being part of God’s original act of Creation. Ramm accedes that death is an essential feature of the present system of organized nature, and consequently, must have existed in the world before the Fall. He admits that although this assertion lacks biblical basis, it is a mainstream evangelical position. This dissertation suggests that Ramm’s idea here is similar to a Leibnitzian model of nature.

1Whitcomb and Morris, 471.

2Ibid., 455.

3Ibid.

4Morris claims that “uniformitarian paleontology . . . assumes that uncounted billions of animals had experienced natural or violent deaths before the Fall of Adam; that many important kinds of animals had long since become extinct by the time God created Adam to have dominion over every living creature; and that long ages before the Edenic curse giant flesh-eating monsters like Tyrannosaurus Rex roamed the earth, slashing their victims with ferocious dagger-like teeth and claws” (ibid., 454-55).

5Ramm insists that “the universe must contain all possible ranges of goodness. One of these grades of goodness is that it can fail in goodness. . . . The system of creation or the perfection of the universe requires that which is corruptible and that which can fail in its goodness. Creation is not the best in every single part for, as indicated, animals are not immortal. But this is the best creation when seen as a whole, an entirety. If there were nothing corruptible, or if there were no evil men, many good things would be missing in this universe. The lion lives because he can kill the ass and eat it. . . . Bacteria destroy the carrion of the earth for Nature’s own good, but unfortunately the same bacteria can kill a living creature” (The Christian View of Science and Scripture, 93-94).
Ramm does not acknowledge the theological problems Morris claims result from accepting the theory of such a chain of famine and death on the earth, unbroken from the time of Creation.1 According to Rom 5:12, death came to the world by the sin of one man; Morris argues that if man had not sinned he would not have died and death would not have been passed upon all men. And so it can be argued that the Fall of humanity, as taught by the Bible, cannot agree with an evolutionary worldview that depicts the world coming into existence already in the state associated with 'Fallen.'2

As Morris points out, standard evangelical theology holds that the work of Christ is an effective redemption only if a causal link between sin and death is present. For example, Murch, an evangelical scholar, states, "Christ endured the positive wrath of God, the pains of hell and death, and the second death in our place."3 In so doing Christ became in actuality "the lamb of God which taketh away the sins of the world."4

In some respects Ramm challenges the cause-effect connection between physiological death and sin by calling attention to the "fossils of humans and prehumans"5 as they are found in the geologic column. All of these humans and prehumans have died, been buried, and occasionally been fossilized, however, "the question arises if it is

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1See Terreros, 202. He argues that, in fact, theistic evolutionists have traditionally claimed that evolution is not hostile to religious faith and is indeed compatible to religious beliefs (ibid.).

2Ibid., 205. Terreros argues that the tragedy of the Fall of humanity into sin set in motion God's plan for the redemption of the human race. Redemption history begins with the sin of humankind, and evangelical soteriology is dependent on a literal Fall of man (ibid., 222).


4Ibid.

5Ibid.
possible to believe that biological death came to Adam and Eve some thousands of years ago and passed upon the present human species.\textsuperscript{1} Ramm thus questions the connection of the sin of Adam to animal death. For him, since “the Bible ascribes death from sin to man alone,”\textsuperscript{2} this allows for the presence of the death of animals in the world ages before sin. Ramm hypothesizes that present nature with its death and suffering “is the best creation when seen as a whole, as an entirety. If there was nothing corruptible, or if there were no evil men, many good things would be missing in the universe.”\textsuperscript{3} Thus, in a sense, Ramm believes that death and suffering are essential parts of nature. What is the origin of natural evil? What about the role of Satan in nature?

The Origin of Natural Evil and the Role of Satan

Although Morris and Ramm espouse a similar role for the Holy Spirit in nature, they disagree on the origin of the evil which affects contemporary nature. Morris suggests that natural evil had its origin in the Garden of Eden and the historic Fall of man.\textsuperscript{4} He says that God’s work of Creation which was “very good” is now in disorder and under the universal process of aging and death, and blames this effect on Satan for

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{1}Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{2}Ramm, \textit{The Christian View of Science and Scripture}, 209. He claims further that “the lion lives because he can kill the ass and eat it... Bacteria destroy the carrion of the earth for Nature’s own good” (ibid., 94).
\item \textsuperscript{3}Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{4}Morris claims that “when God’s six-day work of creation was complete, everything in the world was ‘very good’ (Gen 1:31). There was nothing out of order, no suffering, no pain, no sin and no death. Universal peace and harmony prevailed in all God’s creation” (Morris, \textit{Creation and the Modern Christian}, 59). He adds: “But this is not the way the world is now! In the physical realm, everything tends to run down and wear out. In the sphere of organic life, each animal is engaged in a perpetual struggle against other animals and against disease, as well as, the universal process of aging and death” (ibid.).
\end{itemize}
bringing evil into the universe after he was expelled from heaven.¹

Ramm disagrees with Morris that Satan is to blame for the origin of natural evil. He claims that, “to date, no explanation of evil and/or sin is satisfactory and that shall always be the case.”² He counters Morris, “even if the Satan-fall interpretation is a possibility, there is nothing in all the Bible to warrant our placing this fall at Gen 1:2.”³ According to him, there is no explanation of evil, and so nobody can take the responsibility or be blamed for it. He says that “certainly the Scriptures do not teach that death entered the world through Satan!”⁴ Ramm and Morris however, agree that natural evil has totally devastated nature.

The Effect of the Flood upon Present Nature

Morris and Ramm disagree concerning the Flood and its effects on contemporary nature. Morris, as a major proponent for the theory of a universal Flood, confronts Ramm for challenging the evangelical world, in The Christian View of Science and Scripture, to abandon its ‘hyperorthodox’ attitude toward uniformitarian science and to surrender the notion that the Flood was universal in either a geographical or anthropological sense.⁵ Ramm argues, with preference for scientific evidence, that the Flood could not have destroyed the entire human race except for Noah's family in the ark, as claimed by literal concordists such as Morris.⁶ He argues that the notion of a universal Flood is

¹Morris, The Defender's Study Bible, 878.
²Ramm, “Evil and/or Sin Inherently Irrational,” 173.
³Ramm, The Christian View of Science and Scripture, 205.
⁴Ibid., 334.
⁵Whitcomb and Morris, 36.
indefensible on both linguistic and anthropological grounds and against the belief that all men outside of the ark were destroyed.

Morris believes "that because of parallels between the Babylonian and Biblical Flood accounts, the Flood itself (and the judgment of Babel) could not have occurred before 10,000 B.C." Morris counters, however, that Ramm's argument that a universal Flood later than 10,000 B.C. requires a scenario that such a Flood that did not affect Indians of the Americas can only be true if the chronology is relative and scientific dating methods for early man are reliable. Morris denies that scientific dating methods are reliable.

Ramm argues that "the derivation of all races from Noah is only possible if one accepts a universal flood or a flood as universal as man. It is pious fiction to believe that Noah had a black son, a brown son, and a white son. The derivation of the Negro from Ham is indefensible linguistically and anthropologically... If the floods were local and the judgment of God restricted to the wicked population of the Mesopotamian valley there is no necessity of deriving all races from Noah's sons" (ibid.).

Ramm claims that "if the evidence is certain that the American Indian was in America around 8000 B.C. to 10,000 B.C., then a universal flood or a universal destruction of man, must be before that time, and due to Genesis and Babylonian parallels there is hardly an evangelical scholar who wishes to put the flood as early as 8,000 B.C. to 10,000 B.C" (ibid.).

Whitcomb and Morris, 42. "We found this premise to be true, not only because of the problem of accounting for the remarkable Babylonian Flood tradition as the end product of millenniums of purely oral transmission but, even more important, because of the impossibility of fitting the Biblical picture of postdiluvian civilization and the line of post-Babel patriarchs into such a chronological framework. Gen 11 can hardly be stretched to cover a period of eight to ten thousand years... If the Flood did not occur earlier than 10,000 B.C., are we to conclude with Dr. Ramm that North America and the American Indians were not affected by the Deluge? By no means, for we deny his first premise that scientific dating methods for early man are completely reliable and that the direct ancestors of American Indians were living in North America around 10,000 B.C. To be sure, the new radio carbon methods of determining the age of dead organic substances has been widely acclaimed in recent years, and many have insisted that dates obtained by this method are valid (within a certain margin of error) back to 70,000 years or more" (ibid., 42-43).
Ramm believes that only a part of the human race was destroyed by the Flood, and that the Flood was local anthropologically and geographically. He claims that it affected only the Mesopotamian area and thus only a small part of the human race.1 In response, Morris gives seven biblical arguments in favor of the global extent of the Flood and claims that the Bible strongly favors a universal Flood.2 He doubts that a local

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1Ramm, *The Christian View of Science and Scripture*, 239.

2Morris's arguments in favor of a global Flood are: (1) *The depth of the Flood.* The high mountains had been covered with water, [since] the Flood water must seek its own level. (2) *The duration of the Flood.* A careful study of the Genesis data reveals that the Flood lasted for 371 days, or a little over a year. That the Flood continued for more than a year is entirely in keeping with the doctrine of its universality, but cannot properly be reconciled with the local-flood theory. (3) *The geology of the Flood.* These geological phenomena were not confined to a single day. In fact, the Scriptures state that this breaking up "the fountains of the great deep" continued for a period of five months; for it was not until after the 150 days had passed that "the fountains of the deep . . . were stopped" [Gen 8:2]. Such vast and prolonged geologic upheavals in the oceanic depths cannot be reconciled with the theory that the Flood was merely a local inundation in some part of the Near East. Instead, this biblical information gives substantial support to the concept of a geographically universal deluge. (4) *The size of the ark.* The Scriptures do not suggest that Noah and his three sons had to construct the ark with the help of hired men. The sheer massiveness of the ark staggers the imagination. For Noah to have built a vessel of such magnitude simply for the purpose of escaping a local Flood is inconceivable. (5) *The need for an ark.* Not only would an ark of such gigantic proportions have been unnecessary for a local Flood, but there would have been no need for an ark at all! How much more sensible it would have been for God merely to have warned Noah of the coming destruction, so that he could move to an area that would not have been affected by the Flood. (6) *Testimony of the apostle Peter.* For even as "the world that then was" perished by water, so "the heavens that now are, and the earth" protected as they are, by God's eternal promise, from another aqueous cataclysm (Gen 9:11-19), have nevertheless, "been stored up for fire, being reserved against the Day of Judgment and destruction of ungodly men." (7) *The total destruction of a widely distributed human Race:* (a) The Bible teaches that all mankind [outside of the ark] perished in the Flood, and (b) the human race had spread far beyond the Near East, if not around the earth by the time of the Flood (Whitcomb and Morris, 1-17). Morris concludes that "the only possible explanation for the geologic column and fossil record, consistent with Scripture, must therefore be sought in terms of the Noachian Deluge. This tremendous worldwide cataclysm does provide a satisfactory framework within which to reinterpret these data. . . . If the Flood was really of the magnitude and intensity the Bible
Mesopotamian Flood could last for a little over a year and cause a massive and prolonged geological upheaval such as the breaking up of the fountains of the earth. He also wonders why a local Flood required an ark of such gigantic proportions as described in the Bible. Also, if the Flood were localized, with God’s forewarning a migration would have been a more effective method to deal with a localized Flood.

Ramm, however, points out that those who support the universal Flood interpretation “cannot demonstrate three of its most necessary propositions:\(^1\)

(I) *It cannot demonstrate that totality of language necessitates a universal flood.* Fifteen minutes with a Bible concordance will reveal many instances in which universality of language is used but only a partial quantity is meant.

(II) *The universality of flood traditions cannot be uncritically appealed to.* Flood stories are to be found widely distributed throughout the world, with such notable indicates, then the entire case for evolution collapses. Evolution depends entirely on the fossil record interpreted in terms of vast geologic ages\(^1\) (*Scientific Creationism*, 251).

\(^1\)Whitcomb and Morris, 1-17. Ramm says that “most of the recent conservative scholarship of the church defends a local flood” (*The Christian View of Science and Scripture*, 238). See also Rodney Lee Stilling, “The Diminishing Deluge: Noah’s Flood in Nineteenth-Century American Thought” (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Wisconsin, Madison), 1991. Ramm explains that “those who defend a local flood believe that the time of the flood was sometime prior to 4,000 B.C” (*The Christian View of Science and Scripture*, 238). Ramm suggests, “The waters were supplied by the rains from above and the ocean waters beneath. Some sort of geological phenomenon is indicated by the expression ‘and the fountains of the deep were broken up.’ This caused the ocean waters to creep up the Mesopotamian valley. The waters carried the ark up to the Ararat Range. . . . The purpose of the flood was to blot out the wicked civilization of Mesopotamia, and being a local flood of a short duration we would not expect to find any specific evidence for it, especially after the minimum of another six thousand years of weathering” (*The Christian View of Science and Scripture*, 238-39).

\(^2\)Ramm, *The Christian View of Science and Scripture*, 241. The local moderate flood theory, in one form or another, has been advocated by such moderate evangelical writers as Russell Mixter, Arthur Custance, Bernard Ramm, William LaSor, and many others. One of the best expositions is found in Ramm’s *The Christian View of Science and Scripture*, 229-49.
exceptions as . . . in Japan or Egypt and few in Africa.

(III) There is no known geological data to support those who defend a universal flood. A local flood could come and go and leave no trace after a few thousand years, but could a universal flood be a traceless flood? Any good book on the history of geology will indicate how theory after theory of identification of the flood with some geological phenomenon had to be given up, till today there is no remaining evidence for a universal flood. Thus, Ramm’s significant conclusion is that present geological nature bears no trace of a global flood.

Ramm also notes other problems in connection with a universal Flood, and says that "the flood is recorded as a natural-supernatural occurrence. It does not appear as a

1Ibid., 241-43.

2Ramm claims: “(I) There is the problem of the amount of water required by a universal flood. To cover the highest mountains would require eight times more water than we now have. It would have involved a great creation of water to have covered the entire globe, but no such creative act is hinted at in the Scriptures. (II) The mixing of the waters and the pressure of the waters would have been devastating. Many of the salt water fish and marine life would die in fresh water; and many of the fresh water fish and marine life would die in salt water. An entire marine creation would have been necessary if the waters of the earth were mixed, yet no such hint is given in the account. Furthermore, the pressure of the water six miles high (to cover the Himalayas) would crush to death the vast bulk of marine life. (III) Getting rid of such a vast amount of water would have been as miraculous as providing it. If the entire world were under six miles of water, there would be no place for the water to drain off. A local flow would readily account for this, but there is no answer if the entire world were under water. (IV) The astronomical disturbances caused by the increase of the mass of the earth, if there was one time a sheath of water six miles thick (from sea level), would have been significant, and could be detected by astronomers. (V) The final problem with the universal flood belief is the multitude of improbabilities connected with the animals. Again, it is not what God could do, but what seems most consistent with the record. How did the animals get from distant lands to the ark?” (ibid., 244-246). He explains that “the animals that came, prompted by divine instinct, were the animals of that region; they were preserved for the good of man after the flood. Man was destroyed within the boundaries of the flood; the record is mute about man in America or Africa or China. The types of vegetation destroyed quickly grew again over the wasted area, and other animals migrated back into the areas, so that after a period of time the damaging effects of the flood were obliterated” (ibid., 249).
pure and stupendous miracle." He admits, however, that "an examination of the references of the New Testament to the flood are not conclusive, one way or the other, but permit either a local or universal flood interpretation."

The Age of the Earth

Morris is a proponent for the idea that the earth is only some six to ten thousand years old. Ramm, however, supports an "old earth" model four billion years old. Despite their differences over when the earth was created, Morris and Ramm agree that man and the earth were divinely created.

Morris offers several reasons for his belief in a young earth, beginning with his own interpretation of biblical information relevant to the age of the earth. Morris notes the absence of written records prior to a few thousand years ago. "The much-maligned Usher [sic] chronology, however, may have been discarded too quickly. . . . Even today, there are no written records of early Man at about 2500 years before Christ. . . . The origin of human civilization is to be dated in terms of a few thousands of years rather than millions."

Ramm disagrees with Morris's assertion regarding Ussher's chronology. "The date of 4004 B.C [suggested by Ussher] was tagged on to the Bible well before the

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1Ibid., 243. Ramm argues that "the natural and the supernatural work side by side and hand in hand. If one wishes to retain a universal flood it must be understood that a series of stupendous miracles are required. Further, one cannot beg off with pious statements that God can do anything" (ibid.).

2Ibid., 249.

3Ibid., 347.

4Morris, Many Infallible Proofs, 290-91.
founding of the modern geological theory.”

He adds: “These dates of Ussher have been almost canonized as they have been printed in English Bibles as part of the sacred page for centuries.” He argues, however, that modern geology has made it an “impossible view which holds that creation was in one ordinary week about 4000 B.C. ” Ramm concludes that “substantial evidence admitted by men of Christian faith and scientific ability that the earth and the universe is at least four billion years old.”

Ramm acknowledges that “the majority of Christian people have believed that the world was created about 4000 B.C., in six literal days.” He says, however, that “such a view would be prompted by the simplicity of the record coupled with a complete ignorance of the data of science.” He contends that “most evangelical Christians have long ago given up the date of creation as 4000 B.C or so,” and “to the contrary, evangelicals in large numbers believe that the universe and the earth are as old as the reliable evidences of science say they are.” Ramm concludes his argument, “Evangelicals may (and many do) believe that the universe is four billion years old.”

By contrast, Morris as a strict “young earth” creationist follows a literal


2Ibid.

3Ibid., 175.

4Ibid., 175-76.

5Ibid., 173.

6Ibid.

7Ibid., 174.

8Ibid., 347.

9Ibid.
interpretation of the first eleven chapters of Genesis. On the basis of that literal
interpretation he concludes that the entire universe was created six thousand years ago.¹

The Third Epoch: Natura Nova

The Role of the Books of Genesis and Revelation Regarding Natura Nova

Morris and Ramm agree that the book of Genesis is the foundation and the book
of Revelation is the consummation of God’s plan for creating and redeeming the world.
Each man finds and interprets parallels in these two books.

Morris states that these books fit together as the book of “beginnings” and the
book of “unveilings,” depicting God as both Creator and Consummator of all things.²
Ramm notes that “commentators on Revelation frequently point out the number of
elements of the book of Genesis repeated in the book of Revelation.”³ He then explains
that “if the first of Genesis records the great tragedy of man, [then] the end of Revelation
records man’s share in the great triumph of God.”⁴ Ramm finds, however, that there is
some discontinuity between “former things” and all things made “new” in the new heaven

¹ Morris claims that “the Bible indicates that all things were created several
thousand years ago. Figures recorded in Gen 5 and 11, as derived from the standard
Massoretic text of the Old Testament, add up to a total of 1948 years from the creation of
Adam to the birth of Abraham. However, at least one generation may have been omitted
from these lists (compare Gen 11:12, 13 and Luke 3:35, 36). Since secular historians and
archaeologists agree that Abraham’s time, as described in Genesis, was sometime around
2000 B.C. the creation of the earth itself, according to Gen 1, took place only six days
earlier” (Many Infallible Proofs, 290).

² Morris, The Defender’s Study Bible, 1579.


⁴ Ibid.
and earth.¹

Morris suggests that the new earth will actually be the old earth renewed by purging and removing the impurities of sin itself as well as the effects of its consequences.² A key verse for Ramm concerning consummation is Rev 21: 5, “Behold, I make all things new.” He expects a new beginning for nature, after the current state of nature (its curse, decay and death) is brought to an abrupt end at Parousia. Ramm also emphasizes the earth made new, “All things are made new! Apocalyptically new! Messianically new! Eschatologically new! In this eternal newness there is no more room for tears or death or mourning or crying or pain.”³ He concludes, “These things have all passed away and they are replaced by eternal joys of the New Jerusalem.”⁴

Morris says that “the earth will some day be drastically changed and renovated. ‘The earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up’ (II Pet 3: 10).”⁵ It will be a fresh start for nature: “The earth and its atmospheric heavens will thus not be annihilated but will be completely purged by fire, cleansing it of all the age-long effects of sin, decay, and death, and enabling God to erect on its foundations a renewed earth which will exist forever in divine perfection.”⁶ Nature will be glorified and “equipped for

¹Ibid.

²Morris, The Defender's Study Bible, 1464. He claims that “actually the word ‘new’ here is not neos, meaning ‘novel’ or ‘young,’ but kainos, meaning ‘fresh’ or ‘renewed.’ That is, the new earth will be the old earth made new again by purging out all age-long evidences of sin and the curse, decay and death” (ibid.).

³Ramm, Them He Glorified, 133.

⁴Ibid.


⁶Ibid.
eternal life in the ages to come on the new earth and in the new heavens.”

Morris is specific concerning the fate of the present cosmos which is marred by sin and decay. It will be destroyed by fire after the millennium, possibly atomic disintegration (2 Pet 3:10-11; Rev 20:11). And then finally, after the last judgment and separation of Satan and all his followers from God forever in the lake of fire, God will establish the ‘new heavens and new earth’--the third and final and eternal cosmos (2 Pet 3:13; Rev 21:1). In this cosmos, ‘wherein dwelleth righteousness,’ the curse will be removed, entropy will be reversed, and there will be no more pain or death (Rev 21:4; 22:3). Morris adds, “Life spans will be long again, appetite will be herbivorous again, rains will be gentle again, storms will be absent again and the whole world will be habitable again.”

Ramm, in apparent agreement with Morris, adds: "Historically speaking it is almost unanimous in Christian theology that Christ will reign until all his enemies are

1Ibid. Morris states: “The earth and ‘all things’ will be ‘made new’ (Rev 21:5), purged of all the age-long effects of sin. ‘And there shall be no more curse’ (Rev 22:3). The heavenly city, New Jerusalem, will ‘descend out of heaven from God’ (Rev 21:10) and will then be established forever on the new earth” (ibid.). He adds: “A new heaven and earth will be established free from ‘all the age-long effects of the curse that have filled the earth with the scars of physical convulsions, disorders, decay, and death’” (ibid., 239).

2Morris claims that “at the end of the thousand years, the present cosmos will be destroyed by fire, possibly atomic disintegration (2 Peter 3: 10-11; Revelation 20;11). And then finally, after the last judgment and separation of Satan and all his followers from God forever in the lake of fire, God will establish the ‘new heavens and new earth’” (The Beginning of the World, 179-80).

3Morris, Creation and the Second Coming, 135. He insists that “this cosmos will be no less real than the present cosmos, but it will be a new (that is ‘renovated,’ cleansed by fire) earth with its atmospheric heavens” (The Beginning of the World, 179-80).
defeated, including death, the race's deadliest enemy.”¹ This annihilation of death, however, only pertains, in his view, to paradise.²

Discontinuity between Present and Future Nature

Morris and Ramm agree that there is a discontinuity between present and future nature because present nature will be purged and cleansed by fire before all things are remade.

Morris suggests that the present cosmos will be destroyed by fire, and that God will establish the “new heavens and new earth.”³ Ramm contrasts the “former things” of the present nature to the “all things made new” in the future nature.⁴ He says, “The word new in Revelation is a strong eschatological word. In the End-Time all things will be made new—the new heaven, the new earth, the New Jerusalem, and the new conditions.”⁵ This is certainly a discontinuity from the “former things” of the present nature to the

¹Ramm, An Evangelical Christology, 102.
²Ramm, The Christian View of Science and Scripture, 334.
³Morris, The Beginning of the World, 179-80. He explains further that “this cosmos will be no less real than the present cosmos, but it will be a new (that is ‘renovated,’ cleansed by fire) earth with its atmospheric heavens” (ibid.). “The new earth will be the old earth made new again by purging out all age-long evidences of sin and the curse, decay and death” (Morris, The Defender’s Study Bible, 1464).
⁴Ramm, “The Fall and Natural Evil,” 31. “The ‘former things’ represent the old age, the sinful age, the age of man’s fallenness and depravity, the state of man’s unregeneracy. It represents the cosmos and humanity in its fallen and therefore cursed condition” (ibid.). Ramm states that for a new dispensation to come, the “former things” must pass away. “The new cannot come until the former passes away. The former represents the conditions brought to pass by the fall” (ibid.).
⁵Ibid.
"new" things of the future nature.

Approaches to Eschatology and the Future Status of Nature

Ramm disagrees with Morris's premillennialist approach to eschatology and the future of nature—that "the only proper interpretation" of the reign of Christ during the millennium is "the fully literal approach." According to Morris, "premillennialism teaches that Christ's personal return to the earth in glory, as described in Rev 19, is followed by the literal binding of Satan in Hades and a literal-year reign of Christ and the resurrected saints on the earth." More specifically, Morris believes that Christ's second coming, like His first, will involve many events, including the rapture of his church, the seven-year tribulation period, and the glorious appearance of Christ on the earth to set up his millennial kingdom. According to Morris, Christ and his redeemed saints will reign in the millennial world for only a thousand years of peace and prosperity. The troubles of present nature, with its war and crime and overt sin, will not be allowed during the

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1Henry M. Morris, The Revelation Record: A Scientific and Devotional Commentary on the Book of Revelation (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House; San Diego: Creation-Life Pub., 1983), 406. He explains that "the book of Revelation, like all other books of the Bible, should be taken literally unless the context is clearly a figurative interpretation" (idem, Biblical Creationism, 204).

2Morris, The Revelation Record, 405. The other two approaches to eschatology are, namely, postmillennialism and amillennialism. Morris defines them as follows: "Postmillennialism, which takes a partially literal approach, teaches that there will be a literal period of Christian righteousness on the earth. Christ's reign, according to this teaching will be spiritual, through His church, which will have won the world to Him through its worldwide ministry of evangelism and teaching under His Great Commission. His personal return to earth will be at the end of the millennium, when the new earth is established. Amillennialism, which takes a fully spiritual approach [sic] equates the Millennial Age with the Church Age. Christ's Kingdom was established in a symbolic sense on the earth when Satan was defeated and bound by the Lord's substitutionary death, resurrection, and ascension, and with His personal return to earth scheduled at the end of this Church Age for a general judgment" (ibid., 405-06).

3Morris, History of Modern Creationism, 419.
millennium, but people will still experience death and will be born with inherited sinful nature only during this thousand years.\(^1\)

Ramm, while admitting that there is debate over the nature of the reign of Christ and its effects, says that "there is a tension of how spiritual or how literal the reign will be, giving rise to the well-worn terms of postmillennialism, premillennialism, and amillennialism."\(^2\) He maintains that "as much as one may try, it has been impossible to find a mediating and reconciling solution to these tensions. But we can at least join in one chorus of harmony by proclaiming that Christ will in his good time be Lord of Lords and King of Kings, and so completely fulfill what is meant by cosmic Christology."\(^3\)

In general, Ramm takes a "middle-of-the-road" approach to millennialism. He attempts to avoid making the future reign of Christ on earth spiritual as amillennialism does, not wishing to limit the cosmic dimensions of Christ's reign. But neither does he take a strictly literal approach, as Morris does, because Ramm believes this would describe the reign of Christ in too much of a materialized form.\(^4\)

Morris makes material assumptions about the nature of Christ's earthly kingdom,\(^5\) believing that during this time period most, if not all, of the changes that will occur in the

\(^1\)Morris, \textit{Creation and the Second Coming}, 133. He claims that "the millennial world, where Christ and His redeemed saints will reign for a thousand years, will again be a beautiful world of peace and prosperity, a world where war and crime and overt sin will not be allowed at all. Yet people will still be born in the flesh with their inherited sin natures, and will still be sinful inwardly, even if not outwardly, until they (just as people in every age) are born again spiritually through faith in the redemptive work of God. . . . Furthermore, there will still be death during the millennium" (ibid.).

\(^2\)Ramm, \textit{An Evangelical Christology}, 102.

\(^3\)Ibid.

\(^4\)Ibid.

renewal of the earth will be made. Morris acknowledges that his eschatological views “may seem paradoxical or even contradictory.”¹

Ramm’s vision of the future differs from that of Morris in that Christ is the focus of his eschatology. Ramm does not get bogged down with details as Morris does. Rather, Ramm is less concerned about rapture and the earthly millennium than his assertion of a “cosmic Christology.”² Ramm notes that “although Christians may differ over the details of eschatology, they all unite in affirming that the human story is not over until there is a new heaven, a new earth, and a new Jerusalem.”³

Final Phases of Eschatology and the Future Status of Nature

A further disagreement between Morris and Ramm concerns the phase(s) of Jesus’ return to earth. Morris believes that Jesus returns to earth in two phases, which he calls “the initial and terminal phases of His coming.”⁴ In the initial phase there will be rapture and all the living saints will “catch up” with Jesus in the clouds as the millennial era begins. The second phase occurs after the course of a thousand years when Jesus Christ will return to earth, and the earth and heavens will be made new again for eternity.⁵ For

¹Ibid., 168.
²Ramm, *An Evangelical Christology*, 102.
³Ibid.
⁴Morris, *The Bible Has the Answer*, 234.
⁵Ibid. Morris explains: “He will return to the earth in the very surface of the earth ‘in power and great glory’ to judge the nations and to establish His own great kingdom. This will take place several years after He has come to the earth’s atmosphere to ‘catch up’ to Himself, out of the earth, all those who have trusted in Him as their Lord and savior” (ibid.).
Ramm, there is only one phase in Jesus’ return to the earth—when he appears in glory as the Lord of Lords and King of Kings.

**Future Nature as a Mirror Image of Original Nature**

As articulated by Morris, before the Fall of man there were no existing elements of nature under the judgment of God. Nature was in its perfect state. He argues that in future nature God restores present nature to its original primeval and pure state, although some elements of nature such as the devil and the angels that followed him will be thrown into the “lake of fire” or “eternal hell,” where they will remain eternally under the continuing judgment of God. This belief reveals an inconsistency in his claim that future nature is a perfect mirror image of original nature, because these elements of original nature will be cast off.¹

Ramm’s view of future nature as a mirror image of original nature is more self-consistent. In his concept of original nature, death and suffering are essential aspects of a perfect nature. He argues that only the Garden of Eden in original nature was immunized to death and suffering before the Fall while outside “the protective shelter of Paradise” disease, death and bloodshed in nature existed long before man sinned.² In his future nature, only the paradise of new earth and heaven seems to be free from death, pain and suffering, while elsewhere the conditions of the present nature continue to exist, in

¹Morris, *The Defender’s Study Bible*, 1337.

particular the pain and suffering.¹

**Hermeneutics**

It is important to compare the hermeneutics of Morris and Ramm, because it will be argued that their hermeneutics play a regulatory role in shaping their differing concepts of nature. In this section their approaches to biblical hermeneutics will be examined.

**Scripture as the “Word of God”**

Morris and Ramm generally agree that Scripture, the Bible, is the inspired Word of God. For both, Scripture as the Word of God means that God took the first initiative to reveal Himself to man.² God desires man to know him, and this knowledge of God is placed within the form of a book called the Word of God.

Morris proclaims Scripture to be “the very Word of God.” Therefore, it is fully inspired, authoritative, and free from any error. Ramm agrees that Scripture is also the Word of God. He says that “the primary and basic need of hermeneutics [is] to ascertain what God has said in sacred Scripture; to determine the meaning of the Word of God.”³ He notes, “There is no profit to us if God has spoken and we do not know what He has said. Therefore it is our responsibility to determine the meaning of what God has given to

¹ Ramm is silent on the concept of hell. However, he argues that “the paradise of God is the New Jerusalem, which thus represents an environment of perfection created by divine power. . . . Thus glorification is not only an entering into a perfected and glorious environment but it is also the full partaking of the fullness of life in that environment represented in text by eating of the tree of life in the paradise of God” (*Them He Glorified*, 122). He further indicates that if one wishes to enter paradise must be “prepared to become immortal in a higher sense than possible to primitive man” (ibid.). It seems to this writer that Ramm implies that those outside the paradise of God or New Jerusalem will still be subject to death, pain and suffering possibly for eternity.


us in sacred Scripture.”¹ The field of hermeneutics identifies the rules which govern the interpretation of the Word of God. Ramm says that “there is an external principle (the inspired Scripture) and an internal principle (the witness of the Holy Spirit),”² which may seem to be why Ramm suggests views of revelation which fall between revelation as propositional and non-propositional.³

Scripture as Inerrant and Reliable

Morris categorically states that Scripture is inerrant and completely free of any errors. In his earlier writings, Ramm also speaks of the Bible as being “inerrant” and “infallible” in all matters that pertain to faith and morals.⁴ In later writings, however, he has softened somewhat on the question of inerrancy while maintaining the view that Scripture is a sacred and a reliable document.

Morris concurs with Ramm that the Scripture is a sacred text but he holds to a more conservative understanding of the “Word of God,” stating that Scripture “is the Word of God, literally inspired by the Holy Spirit, free from error of any sort, whether

¹Ibid. Ramm defines “hermeneutics [as] the science and arts of Biblical interpretation. It is a science because it is guided by rules within a system; and it is an art because the application of the rules is by skill, and not by mechanical imitation. . . . This is especially true for conservative Protestantism which looks on the Bible as sola fidei regula and not as just prima fidei regula. Sola fidei regula is the Reformation position that the Bible is the only authoritative voice of God to man” (ibid., 1).

²Ramm, The Pattern of Religious Authority, 29.

³Ramm, The Evangelical Heritage, xviii. In the foreword to this book, Vanhoozer, Ramm’s biographer, claims that “Ramm rejects the idea that biblical revelation is solely propositional, solely a matter of conveying information” (ibid., xxi). Vanhoozer explains, “Despite his reservations with the idea that revelation is solely propositional, it would be wrong to identify Ramm with those who hold a non-propositional view of revelation” (ibid., xix).

⁴Ibid., 68.
scientific, historical, or internal contradiction.” He fears that to deny the inerrancy of Scripture will produce a “domino effect” of denial concerning other crucial doctrines, destroying the Bible’s credibility in science, history and theology.

When Ramm says that Scripture is the word of God he means that “God himself is the ultimate origin” of Scripture. The Bible is about God and from God. He claims, “God takes the initiative in making Himself known; that God wills that man knows the truth about himself; that God intends that this will ultimately appear in the form of a book; that this book in some significant theological sense may be called the word of God.”

Ramm attempts to avoid Morris’s dilemma by preferring the term “infallible” as a description for the trustworthiness of the Scripture. Infallibility for him means that the Scripture will not mislead, deceive, or disappoint. He says that “Scripture is totally reliable and dependable for all the purposes God ordained for it.”

Ramm’s later approach to Scripture is more in line with the aims of the neo-evangelical movement, whereas Morris’s approach aligns with the hermeneutic principles of fundamentalists. Ramm argues that inspiration need not imply accuracy in scientific detail. In a shift from his earlier approach to Scripture in his Protestant Biblical Interpretation, his later hermeneutics embraces the principles of the historical critical method.

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1Morris, That You Might Believe (1946), 3.
4Ramm, The Book, 11. “The infallibility of Scripture means that it is totally dependable for all the things the Scripture was given for. Scripture does not fail when Scripture functions as Scripture” (ibid.).
5Ibid.
method.¹ In *The Christian View of Science and Scripture*, Ramm "challenged the fundamentalist assumption that a high view of Biblical inspiration implied that the Bible was a reliable source of scientific data,"² as it served as a model of neo-evangelical scholarship. By contrast, in an earlier view (1950) Ramm suggested that infallibility and inerrancy were synonymous, meaning that the Bible could not teach "any sort of error."³ Furthermore, he said that a strict view of inerrancy is of "the historic Protestant tradition."⁴

In Ramm's later writings, however, he rejects a definition of infallibility which makes it synonymous with inerrancy, meaning that Scripture is incapable of any sort of mistake. He now states that the term "infallibility" was used historically by the church to mean the "absolute reliability in the intention of the person or document."⁵ This means that biblical matters and present-day realities may be settled through scientific inquiry rather than the literal words of Scripture, as science may have answers the Bible does not. The term "inerrancy," Ramm claims, is not meaningful because it, like most high qualifiers, may imply Scripture is free from any errors. In this way, he leaves room for the words of Scripture to contain scientific error. But in theological matters Ramm maintains that Scripture is able to give a knowledge of salvation to man, teach, reprove, correct, and train the believers; and equip a man for godly service (2 Tim 3:15-17).

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⁴Ibid.

⁵Ramm, "An Outline of Evangelical Theology," 32.
Scripture as the Inspired Word of God

While Morris views Scripture not only as infallible and inerrant but also as the literally inspired Word of God, Ramm’s view of Scripture as the inspired Word of God deviates from that of his mentor Karl Barth, who attempted to eliminate inspiration from theological consideration by referring to Scripture as a pointer or a witness. But neither does Ramm agree with Morris and other fundamentalists who say that “the Word of God is literally inspired by the Holy Spirit, free from error of any sort.” He attempts to find a middle ground between these views, acknowledging divine inspiration and defining such inspiration not as ‘free from error of any sort’ but as functionally reliable, dependable, sufficient, adequate, and trustworthy.

Is Scripture a Book of Science?

While Ramm considers the Bible a book of religion and not a book of science, Morris proposes a new science that takes its name from one of his books: Creation Science. He defends the traditional interpretation of the Genesis account of Creation, claiming the Bible as a book of science as well as religion, explaining that the Bible is not a scientific textbook in terms of technical details, although he holds its objective accuracy in portions that deal with nature.

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1Morris, That You Might Believe (1946), 3.


3Ramm, The Christian View of Science and Scripture, 66.

4Morris insists that since his approach to Creation is science and not only religion, his theory of creation science should be taught in public schools along with evolution (Henry Morris, The Troubled Waters of Evolution [San Diego: Creation-Life, 1975], 9).

5Morris explains that “it is obvious, of course, that the Bible is not a scientific textbook in the sense of giving detailed technical descriptions and mathematical
Thus, Morris concedes that the Bible is not intended to be a scientific textbook in the technical sense, but maintains that it can still be a reliable book of science. If God is omnipotent and omniscient, he is certainly capable of speaking with full truth and insight when he speaks of all earthly things. Morris admits that it is likely that the men that God used to write the Bible held views of the universe that are outdated today, but if the Holy Spirit inspired their writings these mistaken ideas could not have contaminated the Scripture, since he would not allow "error of any sort."

As one such strict concordist, Morris believes that an unprejudiced examination of the evidence reveals that there are no scientific errors in the Bible. He suggests that numerous passages indicate a surprising knowledge of modern science, for example, formulations of natural phenomena. But this is not adequate reason for questioning the objective accuracy of those numerous portions of Scripture which do deal with natural phenomena and historical events" (ibid.).

1Morris, Studies in the Bible and Science, 21. He insists that “[the Bible] is not primarily a book of science, yet contains scores of modern scientific truths, and no scientific errors” (ibid.). Morris says. “If the book is God-given, it is unthinkable that it should contain scientific mistakes; either it is scientifically accurate wherever it happens to touch on some phase of science, or it is purely the product of human beings, and no better than any other book of ethics” (Henry Morris, The Bible and Modern Science [Chicago: Moody, 1968], 14).


3Ibid.

4Morris, That You Might Believe (1946), 3.

5Morris, Studies in the Bible and Science, 7. “As the Word of God, the Bible speaks authoritatively on every subject with which it deals, not only these subjects which are mainly moral and religious, but also those associated with the physical phenomena of the world in which we live” (ibid.).

Ramm rejects the notion that the Holy Spirit taught the writers of the Bible final science. Furthermore, he believes it to be futile to search the Bible in anticipation of finding support for science, as the strict concordists suggest.  

Interpretation of the Book of Genesis  

Morris and Ramm strongly disagree regarding how the Bible is to be interpreted, especially the book of Genesis. Morris asserts a literal interpretation of the book of Genesis, especially Gen 1-11, while Ramm concludes that Gen 1-11 is a myth and has no scientific character.  

Ramm maintains that the book of Genesis calls only for metaphorical interpretation, and that an interpreter must look to science for the actual data of man’s origin. He firmly believes that "true science and the Bible agree and do not conflict," and develops his own model of interpretation to accommodate both science and the Bible. As shown in this dissertation, Ramm calls this approach "progressive creationism,"  

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3Ibid., 344. He claims that “Genesis 1-11 is myth in the sense of prescientific explanation. The writer of Genesis was not childish nor immature, but was making profound observations on the nature of human existence. Here these chapters have an existential, not scientific character. The scholars who followed the evolutionary fallacy simply failed to understand the deeper truths of these earlier chapters” (ibid.).  

4Ramm contends that “we may believe that the biblical account is metaphorical and we must look to science for the actual data of man’s origin. We may accept the Genesis account as theologically true, but believe that this inspired truth is set forth in allegorical or figurative or metaphorical, or symbolical or mythical literary structure” (ibid., 317).  

5Ibid., 9.
basing it on a broad evangelical concordism which proposes a far looser interpretation of Gen 1 in order to accommodate science. Progressive creationism tries to avoid the arbitrariness of fiat Creationism while preserving the doctrine of the transcendence of God in Creation.¹

Ramm insists that the main purpose of the book of Genesis is theological and religious. He challenges interpreters of it to avoid the temptation to get too involved in the details of science and to concentrate on theological issues rather than scientific ones.² He argues that the Genesis Creation narrative is intended "to deny any view of Nature which denied the existence of God and a spiritual order. It sets limits and boundaries to science, but not highways and pathways."³

Ramm reviews and critiques the substance and history of each of eight approaches to the Genesis narrative that are attributed to fundamentalists or creationists. These include what he calls the "naive-literal view," the "religious-only theory," "flood geology," "successive catastrophes," "local creation" theory, the "pro-chronic/ideal time view," "creation-ruination/restitution theory" also known as "gap theory," and the "age-day/Divine-Day concordism."⁴ Having established the known categories, Ramm dismisses Morris as a 'naive literalist.' In response, Morris laments, "I'm more or less accustomed to this patronizing attitude by now. Fifty years ago in his famous book The

¹Ibid., 116. He claims that "progressive creation is the means whereby God as world ground and the Spirit of God as world Entelechy bring to pass the divine will in Nature" (ibid.). Ramm believes that progressive creationism gives the best accounting of all the facts of biology, geology, and scripture, stating, "Progressive creationism is that theory of the relationship of God's works and God's Holy Word which makes the most sense to the author" (ibid., 293).

²Ibid., 219.

³Ibid., 220.

⁴Ibid., 173-218.
Christian View of Science and Scripture, Ramm called me a 'naive literalist' in his evaluation of my first creationist book That You Might Believe.  

After finding each of these eight approaches wanting, for various reasons, Ramm finally offers as hermeneutically sound a theory that he calls the "pictorial day" interpretation of Genesis in which God had six days to reveal what He created.

Ramm thus accepts a topical arrangement of the Genesis account of Creation as opposed to a chronological arrangement, and concludes that his view of progressive creationism is the most acceptable and reasonable way of reconciling scientific data and hypotheses with the teachings of the Bible. In other words, for Ramm, scientific data are reconcilable and complementary to Scripture.

Summary of Morris and Ramm on Hermeneutics

This comparison of Morris and Ramm on hermeneutics shows that they share some points of agreement: (1) Scripture is the inspired word of God; (2) Scripture as the divinely inspired word of God is infallible in theological matters; (3) the canonical Scripture is the authentic word of God; (4) although Scripture speaks for itself, it may require interpretation; and (5) Scripture interprets Scripture.

On the other hand, Morris and Ramm show several points of contention.

1. Morris advocates a literalistic interpretation of Genesis; Ramm calls for a metaphorical and a non-literal interpretation and says that the inspired truth is set forth in an allegorical, figurative, metaphorical, symbolical, or mythical literary structure.

1Henry Morris, Defending the Faith: Upholding Biblical Christianity and the Genesis Record (Green Forest, AR: Master Books, 1999), 86-87.

2Ramm, The Christian View of Science and Scripture, 221.

3Ramm argues that "the theological content of the document is true--man is a creature of God, who sinned, and is in need of redemption; the account is prescientific and adapted for the understanding of the millions of peoples who would have little
2. Morris calls for a strict concordism whose basic tenets propose a recent, special
Creation of six twenty-four-hour days occurring six to ten thousand years ago, followed
by the Fall and curse of man, and a world-wide Flood. Ramm's broad concordism
proposes a progressive, continuous creation, an ancient earth billions of years old, and the
harmonization of Genesis and the geologic column.

3. Morris interprets the word yom (the Hebrew word for day) from Genesis as a
twenty-four-hour literal day while Ramm calls for a metaphorical and pictorial-day
interpretation of Genesis.\(^1\)

4. Morris argues that the Genesis account is theologically and historically true;
Ramm says that Gen 1-11 is a myth and the Creation account metaphorical, and believes
that one must look to science for actual data of man's origin.\(^2\)

The next section explores the view of Morris and Ramm concerning science in
relation to Scripture.

**Science in Relation to Scripture**

The Authority of Science and the Authority of Scripture

Morris outlines his beliefs regarding the authority of Scripture in relation to
science as follows: “The word of God must take first priority and secondly, the observed
facts of science. . . . The only truly satisfactory modern view is the simple, literal,
historical view of Genesis and science that is supported in this book.”\(^3\)

\(^1\)Ibid., 211.

\(^2\)Ibid., 334.

\(^3\)Morris, *Scientific Creationism*, 215. Scientific creationism teaches that one can see from the scientific evidence alone that evolution is faulty and that the world came
An example of how Morris subordinates science to Scripture is his teaching that the current geographical and biological phenomena of the world are best explained by a literal interpretation of Genesis. He believes that the questions of science must fit with biblical teachings, and thus he proposes his creationist theory. He concludes that this creationist theory fits the scientific facts better than evolutionary theory, thereby allowing him to reason that Scripture provides better models for accuracy and historicity than current scientific models. Morris also claims that the modern creationist movement appeals not only to evangelical fundamentalists but to thousands of scientists, Bible-believing pastors, and other Christians. He writes, “The modern creationist movement has not only enlisted thousands of scientists in its ranks but has been like a breath of fresh air to Bible-believing pastors and Christians generally.”

Ramm, however, goes a different route, affirming the authority of science in the interpretation of biblical materials concerning Creation and nature. Ramm, in *Christian View of Science and Scripture*, emphasizes the role of science in evangelical theology and hermeneutics. He finds it imperative for there to be harmony between science and

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2 Fernando Canale, in part one of a three part essay series, examines how the two enterprises, Christian theology and the empirical sciences, arrive at their conclusions. He “assesses the relationship between evolution and theology from a methodological perspective by outlining the rational basis and structure of the scientific method,” (66). Canale describes how Mario Bunge and Philip Kitcher, two philosophers of science, attempt to develop empirical research methodology that would apply both to theology and science as rational scientific enterprises based on different data and macro-hermeneutical presuppositions (“Evolution, Theology, and Method Part 1: Outline and Limit of Scientific Methodology,” *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 41 [2003]: 65-100).
Scripture. Ramm calls for twentieth-century evangelicals to return to the noble traditions of late nineteenth-century conservative scholars who learned the facts of science and Scripture with patience, care, and integrity, showing with great competence and training that these two can never conflict.1

Ramm describes how evangelicals have fought and lost battles in the defense of their interpretation of the Bible against the encroachment of twentieth-century science. He concludes that such a battle has been lost on too narrow a strip—depreciating, ridiculing, and damaging empirical data when they should have been developing a philosophy of science. Some evangelicals grossly over-simplify the complex questions of origins so that it is reduced to an either/or matter of fiat instantaneous creationism or atheistic evolution. By doing this, the evangelicals have forced themselves into a position where they have no recourse but to fight any development in any of the sciences, an untenable position in the attempt to harmonize Scripture and science.2

The Harmony of Science and Scripture

In search of harmony between science and Scripture, Ramm calls for evangelicals to “have a spirit of respect and gratitude. In place of a narrow hyper-dogmatic attitude toward science we are to be careful, reserved, open minded.”3 He outlines the problems confronting a harmony of science with Scripture in physics, astronomy, chemistry, 

1Ramm, *The Christian View of Science and Scripture*, [9]. “Unfortunately the noble tradition which was in ascendancy in the closing years of the nineteenth century has not been the major tradition in evangelicalism in the twentieth century. Both a narrow evangelical biblicism, and the Plymouth Brethren theology, buried the noble tradition” (ibid.).

2Ibid., 22-23.

3Ibid. Ramm adds: “We are to pay due respect to both science and Scripture. Neither adoration of one nor bigoted condemnation of the other is correct. We must be as ready to hear the voice of science as we are of Scripture on common matters” (ibid., 32).
zoology, biology, and botany. Ramm attempts to consolidate the gains made by the nineteenth-century evangelical scholars who were informed and competent in scientific matters, and suggests a base on which the twentieth-century evangelical can build a philosophy of science in a way that serves the cause of Christianity rather than functions as its nemesis and detractor.¹

Ramm asserts that “if we believe that the God of creation is the God of redemption, and that the God of redemption is the God of creation then we are committed to some very positive theory of harmonization between science and evangelicalism.”² He reasons that the God of science and nature is the same God of Scripture. He draws the logical conclusion that “if the Author of Nature and Scripture are the same God, then the two books of God must eventually recite the same story.”³ If that is the case, then “God cannot contradict his speech in Nature by his speech in Scripture.”⁴ He also suggests that no man of science has a proper reason for not becoming a Christian on the grounds of his science.⁵

For Ramm, the appreciation and acceptance of science marks an historical point of no return for evangelical scholarship. He looks forward to the time when evangelicals no longer depreciate the findings of science, but understand them with the advantage of their

¹Ibid., [9].
²Ibid., 32.
³Ibid.
⁴Ibid.
⁵Ibid. Ramm notes, “It is a frequent dictum in works on Bible and science for the writer to affirm that the Bible never contradicts ‘true’ science. By implication all science in conflict with the Bible is untrue science. Therefore in any debate between science and the Bible any opposition to the Bible in the name of science can only be made in the name of a false science” (ibid., 42).
Christian perspective, and show to the world that Creation and history are indispensable to an evangelical theology, and vice versa.

Ramm notes the impact the Enlightenment had upon society. He writes that seventeenth-and eighteenth-century thought introduced a general distrust of traditional custom, antiquity, and gave authority to modern science and university disciplines. Priority was placed upon skepticism, reason, and analysis, and historicism, scientism, criticism, rationalism, tolerationism, optimism, and Kantianism characterized the intellectual milieu of that time. This climate produced what Ramm calls the modern event of Christianity—naturalism. He states that naturalism has given birth to many later movements, such as communism, secularism, pragmatism, behaviorism, evolutionism, neo-positivism, and religious modernism. As a result of naturalism, a non-religious world view that denies supernaturalism, God, and the Bible has dominated society. He concludes that the “God is dead” movement of the 1960s was a symptom of the lingering Enlightenment spirit.

Ramm’s early writings reflect his reaction against rationalism, which he deemed a foe of Christianity. He prepared himself for this cultural battle when he wrote his master’s thesis on the idealism of Sir James Hopwood Jeans and Sir Arthur Stanley Eddington and his doctoral dissertation, which has a strong emphasis on the empirical rationalism of

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3See Ramm, “The Idealism of Jeans and Eddington in Modern Physical Theory.”
Frederick Robert Tennard. These men and their theories called for a spiritual interpretation of nature. The Christian View of Science and Scripture and Protestant Christian Evidences are examples of his apologetics for a Christian approach to the physical world. In A Christian Appeal to Reason, Ramm attempts to show philosophically that Christianity's spiritual interpretation of nature is logical and rational. His resistance to speculation is shown in The Right, the Good, and the Happy.

By contrast, Morris's scientific creationism emphasizes the role of science in the understanding of nature. In this pursuit, he is happy to subordinate science to Scripture, as he believes that the Bible is the primary authority in all areas, yet he expends most of his efforts supporting the scientific basis of his model. Morris's scientific argument is based on the assumption that "true science" cannot be in disagreement with the account set out in the Bible, since God is the author of both.

Morris laments and reacts to what he considers the attempts of some evangelicals to force science on the Genesis account of Creation. "The sad aspect of this conflict is that so many 'evangelicals' are trying to force the evolutionary ages of geology into the Genesis account of creation. Instead of defending our biblical Christian faith, they are trying to accommodate it to the unbelieving world view of evolutionary naturalism."3 He says accommodations to such evangelicals who attempt to "affirm their belief in the resurrection of Christ and His imminent return and [that while] these are indeed vital doctrines . . . they are not defending the true Christian faith when they dilute the historical

1For a summary of this concept see Ramm, "An Investigation of Some Recent Efforts to Justify Metaphysical Statements from Science with Special Reference to Physics."

2Miller, 16-17.

3Morris, Defending the Faith, 21.
authenticity of the foundational chapters of the Bible."¹ He warns that in trying to accommodate long evolutionary ages evangelicals are rejecting the worldwide cataclysm of the Flood and that such accommodations "seem indifferent to the fact that this means accepting a billion years of suffering, dying biosphere before Adam's Fall brought sin and death into the world."² Morris holds a very literal perspective of the Bible's account of the book of Genesis; he sees more contradiction than harmony between science and Scripture and concludes that science can only be accommodated if it submits to the literal interpretation of the Bible.

Ramm, however, advocates just the opposite: adjusting the interpretation of Genesis to accommodate evolution. He sees the rejection of evolution and natural sciences by evangelicals as unnecessary and meticulously seeks to demonstrate that evolution, with all the necessary qualifications having been made, has been adopted into Catholic and Protestant evangelical theology and has not meant the disruption of either.³

**Assessment of the Positions of Morris and Ramm**

Prior sections of this chapter summarize the beliefs of Morris and Ramm on nature and hermeneutics. The following section gives a comparative analysis and evaluation of their respective positions.

**Natura Originalis**

**Morris: A Strength**

Morris's views of the origin of nature are internally consistent with his own methodology—a methodology which claims that the Bible is God's revelation and the

¹Ibid.

²Ibid.

final authority. He believes that the Bible reveals how nature was created. His model of origins is based on the literal general claim that God initially created the universe in a period of six days of twenty-four hours each, that occurred about six thousand years ago.

**Ramm: Weaknesses**

Ramm’s methodology has a weakness. His views on original nature flow from his methodology that holds that modernism (or “new evangelicalism”) and science can reinterpret the Scripture to give it new meaning. In so doing Scripture can accommodate an ancient earth, and a localized rather than universal Flood. He disagrees with Morris’s literal and historic view of the Creation account of Gen 1-11, allowing for figurative and metaphorical interpretations of Creation.¹

Unfortunately, Ramm seems to be inconsistent when he states that he wishes to be true to both the accounts of the Bible and science, yet will not allow the Bible in its so-called prescientific form to tell how God created original nature. He claims that while the Bible tells only that God is the Creator, science tells how nature was created. Ramm cannot claim to be true to the Bible while at the same time giving new meaning to its teaching about the origin of nature, sacrificing biblical authority and giving priority to agreement with contemporary scientific understanding.² For example, Ramm speaks of the need for theology and other sciences being wedded together in a single organism of knowledge. He concludes that science is more factual and authoritative than Scripture, since it deals with a visible universe. Even though he claims science needs the light of revelation, he suggests that the Bible may be unreliable on matters of nature because it deals with the invisible universe and myth. Ramm, in contrast with Morris, does not

¹Ibid., 272.

²Ibid.
consider Genesis creationism as science because it is based on Gen 1-11, which Ramm considers a myth, arguing that it cannot stand scientific scrutiny. For him, religious views and revelation cannot be subjected to scientific methodology and analysis and thus are not necessarily factual and authoritative. He supports the harmonization of religion and science, with science having the final authority over what is considered factual. In progressive creationism, Ramm combines elements of sudden fiat Creation and gradual evolution, turning Gen 1 into a treatise to be evaluated, judged, and tested by science.

Another problematic issue is Ramm's position on the Garden of Eden as it relates to the world outside its bounds. While he concurs with the biblical claims that the Garden of Eden was a special place, free from death, he argues that outside the Garden there was death among animals and suffering that began at the origin of nature. According to this model, paradise was the best part of nature, its conditions enviable. The biblical account, however, does not seem to create a divide between the conditions inside and outside paradise. The Bible states categorically that before Adam sinned there was no death anywhere in the world, and that all creatures were free of violent nature. Ramm's model, therefore, runs contrary to a straightforward reading of the biblical accounts.

Although this section is not an exercise in biblical exegesis, it is helpful to illustrate from the biblical account a general understanding of the relation of Eden to the rest of the world. According to Gen 1:25 KJV, "God made the beast of the earth after his kind, and the cattle after their kind, and every thing that creepeth upon the earth after his kind: and God saw that it was good." The Scripture further states that these created animals, which were "good," were provided a vegetarian diet: "And to every beast of the earth, and to every fowl of the air, and to every thing that creepeth upon the earth, wherein there is life, I have given every green herb for meat: and it was so" (Gen 1:30

1See Ramm's arguments in ibid.

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O. The phrase “every beast of the earth” (Gen 1:30) appears to refer to all created animals wherever found, outside or inside of the Garden of Eden rather than only in the Garden. The Bible does not divide the beasts of the earth as Ramm does and implies that something must have happened to original nature to give reason for God to later call some beasts evil, where He had once referred to them as good (Ezek 17).

In summary, Ramm reads into the biblical account his own presuppositions of the notion of animal death before sin. He seems to concludes that science is more factual and authoritative than Scripture, since it deals with a visible universe.

*Natura Continua*

**Morris: A Strength**

Morris’s views on contemporary nature are consistent with his methodology. As before, he has little trouble consistently maintaining a literal interpretation of the Genesis account. He contends that two events, namely the Fall and a worldwide Flood, fundamentally altered God’s perfect original nature. He argues that original nature became cursed because of the entrance of sin into the world through Adam, and the resultant moral and spiritual deterioration eventually brought on the judgment of the great Flood.

**Ramm: Weaknesses**

Ramm rejects the Genesis story of a universal Flood and accepts evolutionary uniformitarianism as being a more factual and reasonable alternative. He further minimizes the biblical account and relegates the events described in Gen 6 to a local Flood in Mesopotamia. Ramm believes that the original authors of the Bible taught what today scientists believe to be a fictitious event. Needless to say, this is a major departure from Scripture, inconsistent with the descriptions of a universal Flood referred to in both
the Old and New Testaments as a worldwide destruction of the earth by a Flood. The results of this view thereby create a weak structure for his attempt to harmonize science and Scripture, as he has already begun to erode the credibility of his inspired source.

Furthermore, Ramm does not acknowledge theological problems inherent in accepting a long evolutionary history of the world, including its uninterrupted chain of famine and death on the earth unconnected to and preexisting Adam’s sin. He does not see evolution as being antithetical to faith. However, affirming death prior to the sin of Adam results in serious theological problems of consistency and the very integrity of evangelical theology. For example, How can a process of Creation that makes use of millions of years of death and pain and terror be consistent with a God of love; and who would wish to praise a God who creates through death? Thus, Ramm’s position is problematic, eroding the ability of the Bible to inspire worship.

Ramm’s account of present nature suggests that the notions of sin and death, including physical death in the nonhuman world, do not constitute a cause-effect relationship, meaning that death existed before the Fall. This contradicts the biblical teaching that physical death of all life forms is the consequence of Adam’s sin, and thus undermines the basis for atonement theology. This suggests that Ramm’s model can be understood as not being fully consistent with his attempt to maintain the importance of a substitutionary atonement.

_Natura Nova_

**Morris: A Weakness**

Morris’s account of future nature is inconsistent with his otherwise rigidly strict interpretation of Scripture, especially in his notion of hell as forming some part of that future nature. Morris’s teaching of “everlasting punishment” or “eternal fire” in future nature is not consistent with the biblical concept of a nature that is restored to be a perfect
mirror of original nature.¹ According to Morris, future nature will include a new heaven and a new earth, each free of suffering, but also with “everlasting punishment” and “eternal fire.” Although his concept of hell is derived from a long historical tradition, the logical result is that there is no possibility of future nature completely restored to its original perfect condition if some part of it will be hell. Hell, by its very nature, is not Edenic, nor is there any indication that it was created as a part of God’s “very good” original Creation. The concept of a future hell creates an inconsistency between future and original nature as characterized in the Scriptures.

**Ramm: A Strength**

Ramm agrees with Scripture that the second coming is the final triumph over evil. It ushers in a “new age” and the passing away of the “former things” or “old age.” He agrees with the Scripture that in the new paradise there will be no death and pain. It is a final restoration of the original paradise of the original Creation.² The second coming closes one chapter of nature, the “old age” and opens a new one the “new age” in a new heaven and a new earth.

**Ramm: A Weakness**

Ramm’s beliefs about the nature of paradise in both original and future nature do not agree with Scripture. Ramm claims that the ideal conditions in the Garden of Eden were the only paradise, and argues that outside the Garden original nature was a place of death and suffering. A major point concerning Ramm’s model of *Natura Nova* seems to be that only in the locality of paradise is one immune from death and pain of eternal hell.


The implication seems to be that nature outside paradise will continue to suffer in eternal hell. A theological implication arises from this understanding. The existence of suffering, whether part of a hell or a natural part of Creation, casts serious doubt on the biblical claim of a loving God.

In the next section, Morris’s and Ramm’s views concerning hermeneutics are examined in terms of their strengths and weaknesses

Hermeneutics

Morris: A Strength

Morris’s hermeneutic interpretation of nature is consistent with a literalist view of Scripture and inspiration and a strict evangelical concordist’s principle of biblical inerrancy. He believes that the Bible is the Word of God and as such speaks with absolute authority about every matter it addresses—including history and science, as well as religion. In other words, Morris affirms the full inspiration and authority of the Bible. He suggests that the Bible contains no theological, historical, or scientific errors. Morris further claims that the Bible is an utterly reliable sacred text—while written by humans, its actual author was God.¹

Morris reflects this understanding of the Bible when he contends that “the only proper and true view of the inspiration of the Bible is that it is completely and literally inspired, altogether free of errors and conveying exactly what God wished to say to man.”² He argues that the Bible describes an authoritative history which must be regarded as a factual presentation of literal, historic, and scientific truth about nature.

¹Morris, Many Infallible Proofs, 164.

²Ibid.
**Morris: A Weakness**

Morris's view of the Bible and his affirmation of the supreme authority of the Bible over science can present difficulties with modernism and broad concordism. While Morris rejects the arguments of Ramm and other liberal evangelicals that science has authority over Scripture in matters of nature and their claim that science can give new meaning to Scripture, especially when there is conflict between it and science, he does not acknowledge the possibility that his own biblical interpretations may be inconsistent with a “literal interpretation” of Scripture.

**Ramm: A Weakness**

On the one hand, Ramm’s views of hermeneutics are consistent with modernism. He rejects the literal interpretation of the Bible and suggests a metaphorical interpretation of Gen 1-11. His views are inconsistent with the evangelical principles of biblical inerrancy. On the other hand, he appears to bend the Bible to accommodate science, subordinating Scripture to scientific theory, and allows modern science and his naturalistic presuppositions to direct his biblical interpretation.

This chapter has critically compared the concept of nature in the context of science and religion in the writings of Morris and Ramm. Chapter 6 draws conclusions based on the data presented in this and the previous chapters.
CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

This chapter offers a summary of the dissertation’s findings regarding the authority of science in relation to Scripture according to Morris and Ramm, which forms the basis of the evangelical discussion of nature. Next, the chapter frames the evangelical discussion of nature synchronically and diachronically. Finally, the chapter reaches four critical conclusions and makes recommendations for further study.

**Summary of Findings Regarding Morris and Ramm on the Authority of Science in Relation to Scripture**

Evangelical concordism grew out of a sincere desire by scholars to integrate their faith with modern science. The leading strict and broad concordists, Henry Morris and Bernard Ramm, were each dissatisfied with evangelical hermeneutics and the evangelical understanding of the concept of nature. They sought, each in his own way, to resolve the apparent tension between biblical teachings and science, which sometimes was accomplished by isolating religion from science. Concordists agree that one’s faith influences one’s view of the natural world and that God is the ultimate reality of the entire universe. Nevertheless, these leading voices have contrasting methods of reconciling faith and science.
Morris attempts to resolve this tension by subordinating science to Scripture, while Ramm interprets Scripture through science. Whereas Morris forms geological theories to support the claims of Gen 6-9 concerning Noah's Flood, Ramm tries to resolve the tension by harmonizing Scripture with leading theories of evolution and geology.

For evangelicals, the same faith that leads Morris and other modern creationists to seek reconciliation with science also imposes some very severe restrictions on such an effort. Strict concordism, with its doctrine of biblical literalism, allows little room for compromise with modern science. Despite all of their scientific arguments, the primary reason that creationists reject evolution is because they find it inconsistent with their interpretation of the Bible. If science conflicts with God's word, the creationist dismisses the science at the points of conflict. Due to the time scales and means of Creation described in Genesis, literal interpretations prevent any compromise with evolution and modern geology. Strict creationists have drawn important lines between their "literal" view of Genesis and the more liberal, "non-literal" approach of broad concordists.

Morris warns against "the old cycle of compromise" of the broad evangelical concordists. He believes that in spite of attacks and criticism from his fellow evangelical

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1 Broad concordists allege that a creationist feels no need to take scientific claims seriously or to study them analytically for error, as he already knows that if they conflict with Scripture, they are not accurate.

2 Morris claims: "The old cycle of compromise is again repeating itself. In reaction against the revival of scientific, literal biblical creation that has been convincing millions around the world in recent decades, including thousands of fully qualified scientists, a number of evangelical scientists have been vigorously attacking those of us whom they call 'young-earth creationists.' Insisting that Christians must accept the
scientists, his "scientific, literal biblical creation"\(^1\) fits the scientific facts better than "the supposed scientific evidence"\(^2\) offered by progressive creationism. A strict concordist, Morris views Scripture as scientifically and historically inerrant. For a literalist, the acknowledgment of any error in the Bible has potentially enormous implications. If the Bible is incorrect when it says that Creation lasted six days, then how can one be sure that it is correct when it says that Christ rose from the dead?

For most creationists the "plain meaning" of an inerrant Bible requires very little if any human interpretation. Morris defends his "literal interpretation" in the following manner, "Liberals are quick to ridicule those who accept what is called the 'literal interpretation'\(^3\) of Genesis, forgetting that there really is no such thing. If something is 'interpreted,' it is not taken literally at all. An 'interpretation' is actually a 'translation,' in which words are not taken at face value, but are converted into other words.\(^4\) Thus Morris claims that he does not interpret Scripture at all, but merely sets forth its literal meaning.

Rather than accepting the literal six-day creation account of Gen 1-2, Ramm supposed scientific evidence of the 'Big Bang' origin of the universe around 15 billion years ago, as well as the 4.5 billion years of 'geological ages' of earth history, in order to be approved by the scientific community, they want to be recognized as 'progressive creationists' by the Christian community" (The Modern Creation Trilogy: Society and Creation [Green Forest, AR: Master Books, 1996], 3:193).

\(^1\)Ibid.

\(^2\)Ibid.


\(^4\)Ibid.
proposes a progressive creationism which, despite his disclaimers, is a modified and refined form of theistic evolution. Progressive creationism combines successive acts of fiat Creation with evolutionary development. According to this theory, God intervened at various times to create something new—his last Creation being that of man. He calls this process “vertical radiation.” Ramm suggests that the empirical evidence of science is the source of truth about the world of nature—that which is accessible directly or indirectly to the senses—but is unable to tell us how the world was created. He proposes progressive Creation as a marriage of fiat Creation and developmental evolution.¹

Broad concordists are driven by a strong desire to integrate their faith with modern science. They believe that if the God of the Bible is truly the Creator and Lord of this universe, he must also be a God of science. They believe that evangelicals must seek to resolve the apparent conflict between the Bible and the theories of modern science.

Ramm calls for harmony between science and Scripture and argues that the two can never conflict. He has much to say to secular scientists and scientific Creationists. He also presents to evangelical Christians what he terms a healthy model for the reconciliation of science, modern critical studies, and theology. According to Ramm, his thirty-year personal pilgrimage can show how Christians may grow toward positive balance among these three disciplines.²

¹Ramm, The Christian View of Science and Scripture, 256.

colleague of Ramm's at Baylor University, states: "Although Ramm's 1954 book was very influential among evangelicals, it made too many concessions to science. By combining elements of sudden fiat Creation and gradual evolution, his form of 'progressive creationism' turned Gen 1 into a treatise in science to be evaluated, judged, and tested by science."\(^1\) Patterson adds that Ramm's "'special creation,' called in to provide the missing links left by natural evolution, is merely a form of the 'God of the gaps' hypothesis."\(^2\)

In *The Christian View of Science and Scripture*, Ramm attracted both interest and suspicion in the evangelical community because of his relative openness to evolution and apparent willingness to reinterpret Scripture in harmony with leading scientific theories. Ramm argues that Scripture can accommodate an ancient earth, a non-literal Fall of Adam, a local and limited flood, a figurative "long day of Joshua," and death before the Fall.\(^3\) Strict concordists, led by Henry Morris, complained that Ramm was conceding too much to the pressures of modern science and not validating the text itself. Ramm's self-appointed task was to engage in what he called "the noble tradition,"\(^4\) derived from an era when Christian scholars respected both the Bible and nature as sources of divine truth and did not drive a wedge between them.\(^5\) He claims that, ideally, 

\(^1\)Ibid.

\(^2\)Ibid.

\(^3\)See Ramm, *The Christian View of Science and Scripture*.

\(^4\)Ibid., 9.

\(^5\)Ibid., 25.
the scientist and the theologian should be able to perform their respective duties without coming into conflict.\(^1\) It seemed to him that not only did rapid developments in philosophy and science contribute to this conflict, but the strategies of those who sought to defend the Bible often played into the hands of the Bible's critics. Fundamentalists claimed that the Bible flatly contradicted the theories of modern science. Ramm states that the result of this approach is that most scientific study was carried on "in ignorance of Biblical statements and Christian perspectives, and with no interest in the Biblical data on the sciences, and no confidence in what the Bible might even say about the same."\(^2\)

**Framing the Evangelical Discussion of Nature from the Perspectives of Morris and Ramm**

Employing philosophical language to frame the discussion, in this section the dissertation's conclusions are summarized in order to frame a relevant evangelical discussion of nature and science which is distinct from the liberal, non-concordist evangelical, or Catholic perspectives. Because the dissertation has focused on three epochs of nature, it is helpful for the full ontological essence of nature to be structured into synchronic and diachronic perspectives.\(^3\)

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\(^1\)Ibid., 43. In taking this view, Ramm stands in the tradition of many nineteenth century evangelical scholars such as Orr and Warfield who likewise did not see Darwin in direct opposition to the Bible.

\(^2\)Ibid., 23.

\(^3\)Evangelical attempts to develop a coherent concept of nature are often marred by a polarization of the two extreme and contrasting views of strict and moderate concordism. Evangelicals are struggling to understand and interpret the creation texts, while attempting to harmonize biblical exegesis with modern science. In the background of the discussion of the synchronic and diachronic analysis of nature are two competing
Synchronic Questions

The synchronous analysis of nature considers a cross section of nature at any particular point in time in the epochs of nature. The following analysis asks questions about nature considered synchronically. The answers to these questions form the synchronic framing of the discussion of nature.

Are Death and Suffering Essential Aspects of Nature?

Is this earth the best of all possible worlds? Morris, in Miltonian fashion, claims that the primeval Creation of paradise was ruined and lost by the Fall of man, and that present nature, with its decay and death, is under the divine judgment of curses. Thus, for Morris this present world is not the best of all possible worlds.

By contrast, Ramm maintains that while the world is not perfect, it is good even with its decay and death. In so doing, he is perhaps the first outstanding contemporary evangelical scholar to reopen the discussion of death before the Fall that was so prominent in the nineteenth century. He indicates that it "is all an imposition on the record" to suggest that all death came from man's sin. In Ramm's view, the ideal world views as outlined by Morris: "The two competing world views can also be called creationism and evolutionism. Any system rejecting an Omnipotent Creator identifies the universe and its processes as sufficient in themselves. These processes are 'natural' processes, whereas processes of true creation (i.e. calling something into existence out of nothing by the power of the Creator) by definition must be supernatural. Thus natural processes of origin and development of complex systems, including living systems are called evolutionary processes," *The God Who is Real: A Creationist Approach to Evangelism and Missions* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1988), 15.

conditions (those without the presence of death) existed only within the garden of Eden. Outside of it there was disease, death, and bloodshed in nature long before man sinned. He suggests that this is the world as God made it and it is “very good” even with its inherent death and decay.

Does Nature Function Substantially on Its Own?

According to Aristotle, nature functions substantially on its own power of being, and not accidentally.¹ This renders nature eternal. By contrast, for Morris nature does not function on its own inherent principle of being, but it owes its being to an ultimate cause. He believes that nature functions accidentally by the ordained and absolute power of God. For Ramm, the created species appeared as a result of creative acts of God that Ramm describes as a vertical radiation.

Trying to find a compromise between the views of Morris and Aristotle, Ramm does not object to the ordained and absolute power of God in Creation through vertical radiation, leaving room for the concept that nature is capable of evolving on a limited scale on its own power through horizontal radiation until there is a need for the next creative act by God resulting in vertical radiation. In other words, God triggers the creative process or progressive creation through vertical radiation, and then the Creation continues to adopt on its own through horizontal radiation.

¹Aristotle claims: "Nature is a principle or cause of being moved and of being at rest in that to which it belongs primarily in virtue of itself and not accidentally." The Physics, trans. Philip H. Wicksteed and Francis M. Comford (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1970), 211.
Hermeneutically, Morris affirms the authority of Scripture above science, thus subordinating the role of science to scriptural interpretation of history and truth. Ramm, however, acknowledges the authority of science and believes that it is up to evangelicals to "set forth terms of rapprochement" between science and theology.¹ He opposes the efforts of "hyperorthodoxy" which oftentimes portray scientific development as demonic and affirms only the authority of Scripture. He argues that science should reinterpret Scripture especially in Gen 1-11. Ramm says that evangelicals have forgotten that "the God and Christ of redemption are the God and Christ of creation."² A belief that God's work in nature or science will not contradict Scripture is fundamental to Ramm's approach.

What Is the Role of Science in the Discussion of Nature?

Ramm warns that evangelicals cannot afford to close their minds to the facts of science, that they need to build a philosophy of science so it can serve the cause of Christianity. Indeed, he further suggests that theology and science need to be wedded as a single organism of knowledge. He argues that science needs the light of revelation and revelation needs the perspective of science. He concludes that science emphasizes the visible universe and theology the invisible universe, yet each make up parts of one

²Ibid., 30.
universe. Since it is one universe, the visible and the invisible interact harmoniously both 
metaphysically and epistemologically.\(^1\) Thus, the study of those parts must also interact 
with each other in order to form a true composition of knowledge. Ramm feels that if the 
scientist and the theologian will each stick to their respective fields of study and listen to 
one another, then there will be no conflict. He believes that the findings of science will 
ever contradict what the Bible teaches on any subject.

Morris believes that the human endeavor of science in general should be 
subordinated to Scripture, used only to complement and confirm God's revelation in the 
Bible. Ramm disagrees. He makes due allowance for the fact that the language of the 
Bible is not scientific language but rather uses popular, phenomenal, non-technical, and 
culturally conditioned language.\(^2\) Ramm sees a difference between the language which 
carries the truth and the truth which is carried. Like Morris, he contends that "the restraint 
of the Holy Spirit upon the writers of the Bible preserved them from the errors of their 
days."\(^3\) However, Ramm rejects the notion that the Holy Spirit taught the writers of the 
Bible scientific truth. Therefore, he believes it futile to search the Bible for anticipations

\(^1\)Ramm notes that the God of Creation and the God of the Bible are the same, and 
senses a divine imperative to harmonize science and Scripture. He admits that 
theologians had made stupid mistakes in exegeting the Bible and that scientists had made 
equally bad blunders in misunderstanding the Bible. If both had been careful in their 
duties and had listened attentively to the other side, there would have been no disharmony 
between them (ibid., 55-56).

\(^2\)Ibid., 66-70.

\(^3\)Ibid., 70-71.
of modern science, as some strict concordists do.¹

Ramm indicates that a biblical approach to Creation should always be open to a continuing dialogue with modern science. Evangelicals must strive to correlate the best science of their day with the theistic worldview of the Bible. He stoutly affirms that true science and proper theological interpretation of the Bible do not conflict and that due regard must be given to both science and Scripture.

The best approach, Ramm believes, is to seek a positive relationship between science and Christianity,² meaning that the data of science are to be complemented by a theology that can give a "purpose and theological ordering" to the discoveries of science.³ However, the findings of science are also needed to aid one's understanding of the Bible. For instance, modern astronomy can "greatly enlarge our idea of the immensity, infinity, and eternity of God."⁴ In short, according to Ramm, "only a serious, intelligent, critical Biblicism can hope to hold in happy relationship Christian theology and modern science."⁵ He suggests that neither biblical authority nor scientific integrity is to be sacrificed. Ramm thus embraces a heritage that is in sharp contrast with strict concordism. The modern agenda articulated by Ramm suggests that science should be able to explain the Scripture and possibly give it some new meanings.

¹Ibid., 125.
²Ibid., 33.
³Ibid., 34.
⁴Ibid., 36.
⁵Ibid., 37.
In the next section, the diachronic approach will be considered. This approach addresses the whole sweep of nature through time.

Diachronic Questions

Does Death Precede Sin in Nature?

Can the affirmation of the presence of death on earth for long ages before beings capable of sin arrived be maintained without undermining evangelical theology? Ramm affirms the presence of death on earth for ages before the Fall of man. This view poses some difficulties for evangelical theology, especially in the understanding of the substitutionary death of Jesus Christ and the doctrine of atonement. On the other hand, Morris rejects the notion of the presence of death before Adam and the Fall of man, maintaining that there is a cause and effect relationship between sin and the presence of death in nature. He categorically believes that there was no death in original perfect world before the Fall of man and that sin arrived with the Fall of man, causing decay and death to become a force in nature.

In What Fashion Does Future Nature Mirror Original Nature?

Several questions regarding the future of nature help unpack this key framing issue of the evangelical understanding of nature by broad and strict concordists. How does the essence of nature in new Creation compare with the ontology of nature in original Creation in the thinking of Morris and Ramm? Is new Creation an improvement over original Creation in some respects? Is new Creation a complete restoration of
original Creation? Is new Creation in some respects different from original Creation? In original Creation, were any existing elements of nature under the continuing judgment of God? In new Creation, are there any existing elements of nature under the continuing judgment of God?

Morris states that in original nature there were no existing elements of nature under the judgment of God before the Fall of man. However in future nature, in spite of God restoring nature to its original primal "very good" created state, sinners and the devil and his angels will be eternally under the judgment of God in "eternal hell" facing "everlasting ruin or punishment." From this, we can infer that there will not be a complete restoration of original nature since some elements of nature will be under the continuous divine judgment of God in "eternal hell." While for Morris there is a new heaven and a new earth which is free of death and decay, the totality of future nature does not perfectly mirror original nature because of the continuing judgment of God on some elements of future nature. In this sense, Morris cannot claim that future nature in its totality is a wholly new reality. Disharmony and discord remain for eternity within future nature.

Ramm is mute on the concept of hell as part of future nature while he argues that "the paradise of God is the New Jerusalem, which thus represents an environment of perfection by the divine power." Further, he says, "Thus glorification is not only an entering into a perfected and glorious environment but it is also the full partaking of the ____________________________

1Morris, The Defender's Study Bible, 1337.

2Ramm, Them He Glorified, 122.
fullness of life in the environment represented in our text [Rev 2:7] by eating of the tree of life in the paradise of God."¹

In the next section, the dissertation’s major conclusions are given, followed by recommendations for further study.

**Conclusions of the Dissertation**

This dissertation reaches four primary conclusions about nature and the relation of Scripture and science among evangelical thinkers as articulated by Morris and Ramm.

First, Ramm requires reinterpretation of Scripture when Scripture appears to make statements that counter current scientific beliefs regarding nature. He finds this necessary in order to harmonize biblical concepts with contemporary science. The dissertation concludes that this process may, however, result in giving meanings unintended by the biblical authors to scriptural statements about nature.

Second, the study suggests that synchronic and diachronic perspectives of nature of the ontological essence and boundaries of nature provide a broad framework for evaluating Scripture and nature, illuminating certain contended aspects of the discussion such as the issue of death before sin and the role of science in the evangelical discussion of nature.

Third, the study has found that the strict and broad concordist approaches to

¹Ramm further claims: "To eat of the tree of life means to enter into ‘all the possibilities of a complete and glorious life,’ for the one who overcomes is ‘prepared to become immortal in a vastly higher sense than was possible to primitive man’" (ibid.). However, one seems left with the question whether outside the New Jerusalem some elements of future nature may mirror the status of nature in its present conditions, namely pain and suffering.
nature, as articulated by Morris and Ramm, are inadequate and insufficient for the task of developing a fully coherent evangelical concept of nature as indicated below.

Morris's interpretation of future nature lacks coherence with original nature and the concept of a restoration to that original state in which all was “very good.” His allowance for the presence of continual suffering and pain under the judgment of God mars the perfect reflection of original nature in future nature.

Ramm's claim that suffering and death are essential elements in original, present, and future nature is insufficient and problematic for evangelical theology. Although Ramm's analysis of future and original nature is more self-consistent than Morris’s, he achieves this coherent model by suggesting that original nature was only perfect in the garden of Eden, elsewhere being afflicted by a natural order that included death and decay. Mirroring this, Ramm’s conception of future nature is of a similar paradise that offers sanctuary from the continuance of death and decay. This model, although self-consistent, is weak in its suggestion that death and decay could comprise a ‘very good’ Creation, and is a great departure from an original nature (and thus also future nature) that was perfect. In so doing, Ramm’s conclusions about future and original nature run the risk of casting doubt on the idea of an omni-benevolent God. A loving God does not subject some part of future nature to suffer pain for eternity as Morris suggests. A new heaven, according to Isa 65 and Rev 21, will be free of pain and suffering. Evil will be annihilated entirely from future nature.

Fourth, the study finds that Morris's emphasis on a literal interpretation of the Scripture is a positive development in evangelical attempts to develop a coherent
theology of nature. The Scripture is not made to say what it does not intend to say. On the other hand, the study credits Ramm for calling upon the evangelicals to be open to science and to develop a healthy attitude toward science. This is an important step in developing a balanced discussion of nature. While Morris and Ramm each have strengths as noted, they also tend to appeal to the extremes of the evangelical spectrum. This dissertation suggests that there is a need for a more centrist approach to nature in evangelical discussions.

Recommendations for Further Study

In light of the critical evaluations given above, it is important that evangelicals seek better ways to address the concept of nature while avoiding the polarization offered by the strict and broad concordists.

Morris embraces a literal interpretation of the Genesis account while Ramm rejects a literal interpretation of the six days of Creation, embracing rather a metaphorical and a non-literal manner of interpreting the Genesis “days” of Creation. This discord suggests a need to determine whether evangelicals can pursue a concordist approach and yet remain true to evangelical theology. If so, it is suggested that a fresh interdisciplinary approach is needed that would give priority to Scripture, yet remain in accordance with the Scriptural vision of future nature as totally free of death and suffering.

Equally important in the discussion of nature is the role of science itself. Evangelicals must determine the role of science in relation to an authoritative Scripture.
Can there be ways to accept and analyze the hypotheses of science in order to approach a harmony between science and Scripture?

Although literalistic and liberal viewpoints continue to polarize, open dialogue by all parties is required if there is ever to be a possibility of accord. Future studies are needed which will specify and clarify the minimum requirements of Scripture regarding the essence of nature which are based on both scientific data and faithful biblical interpretations. For example, these requirements could include building consensus regarding the sense in which Scripture is the Word of God, and the appropriate place of figurative and literal interpretations of Scripture.
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