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Critical Methodology and the Lutheran Symbols' Treatment of the Genesis Creation Accounts

HORACE D. HUMMEL

The above title reproduces almost the exact wording of the editor's request for this article. It obviously precludes any attempt at an exhaustive treatment of all the issues involved. At the same time, the issues are so crucial and complicated that it is both difficult and dangerous to consider some in passing and without reference to the others. Perhaps there is no topic in all of exegesis and theology which requires knowledgeability, if not expertise, in as wide a range of subjects. Correspondingly, the relevant literature is simply vast. While I hope I have done my homework adequately, I make no pretense to being a specialist in the area, nor have I even had access to all of the recent Missouri Synod publications on the subject. Some of my reflections on wider aspects of the topic are slated to appear eventually in my current series in *The Springfielder*.¹

We must begin by specifying what lexicon we are using. *What* "critical methodology" in the first place? "Critical" is, no doubt, the usual shorthand for what is commonly labelled "the historical-critical method." However common, though, I think it can scarcely be insisted too much that it is a misnomer, except perhaps as a catch-all term for the whole spectrum of

approaches and conclusions. On our topic, as elsewhere, it approaches irresponsibility to generalize about "critical methodology." Even prescindng from theological considerations, the variations are many and often significant, as a glance at the introductions and commentaries will confirm.

Far more significant differences are exposed, of course, when theological contexts are also investigated. That is, the real problems are not *exegetical* as such, but hermeneutical — of the wider context, of how we construe the exegetical details. (There is no better example than *yom* or "day" in Gen. 1.) Sometimes it is merely a case of externally the same conclusion having fundamentally different ultimate import because of its different context. Very often, however, certain conclusions, or at least deployments of certain conclusions, are simply excluded. Thus, with the proper qualifications, and if one feels the evidence is compelling, one might agree with the common critical assignment of Gen. 1 and 2—3 to different sources (commonly called P and J, respectively) and even (although this is always a separate issue) with their common datings, at least in their final form (commonly sixth and tenth centuries B.C., respectively).

However, if one also confesses, as was taken for granted on all sides when the Lutheran Symbols were written, that they also had a common Author, God the Holy

¹ "The Outside Limits of Lutheran Confessionalism in Contemporary Biblical Interpretation," XXXV, 2 (September 1971) and subsequent issues.

Spirit, we have a totally different sort of "criticism" beyond the initial surface agreements. Literary analysis, however valid in itself, is powerless to answer truth questions or make any ultimate value judgments. Absolutely and *a priori* excluded are the common critical tendencies to pit the sources against one another as not totally compatible, not to speak of the entire web of evolutionism, immanentism, subjectivism, and/or naturalism which has always tended to haunt "historical-critical" investigations from their earliest origins in the Enlightenment.

"Critical," in confessional context, can only imply the use of all tools, ancient and modern, in order to understand the sacred text better, never to sit in any kind of subjective judgment upon it. The situation changes radically when what, up to a point, may be merely a neutral method becomes a competing metaphysics or theology. It is the intrusion of extra-Scriptural value-judgments or criteria of truthfulness which commonly makes "higher criticism" objectionable, not coincidental agreement on matters of date and authorship as such (up to the point of contradiction in terms, of course).

Similarly with the "historical" part of "historical-critical." *What* conception of "history"? One defined by the Scriptures or by modern positivism (or other philosophy)? That of the Reformation or of the Enlightenment? Is it the Bible and the Gospel which interpret history, or is it history (or one's conception of it) which interprets the Bible? Is the intense historical consciousness of modern times merely being used as much as possible in order to understand the external and human *aspect* of the inscripturated revelation,

or does "history" represent a judgment that there *is* no other aspect or dimension than a this-worldly one? Does it accept the supernaturalism and the pattern of particular intervention by a personal God which pervades the entire Biblical text, or do modern, secular canons of history cause all that to be rejected as "literalistic," "fundamentalistic," and so forth, or, at most, as allegorical stimuli to modern man's religious self-understanding? If something is finally judged nonliteral, is it on the basis of broad hermeneutical or philosophical presuppositions which virtually force that conclusion, or is it on the basis of hard objective evidence as to the apparent intent of that particular text?²

All of this, however, also assumes a certain understanding of how we relate to the Symbols, or of what "confessionalism" means. Unfortunately, a common understanding of that sort can no longer be assumed, if it ever could. Hence, we must attempt to specify what definition we are

² In the main, I am disposed to sing the praises of especially two recent "evangelical" works which reflect modern historical consciousness in Biblical studies without buying into the theologically objectionable attitudes often associated with "the historical-critical method": G. E. Ladd, *The New Testament and Criticism* (Eerdmans, 1967) and R. K. Harrison, *Introduction to the Old Testament* (Eerdmans, 1969). Two recent studies have underscored the extent to which the virulent liberalism associated with higher criticism at the time the LCMS was formed may have caused it to overreact somewhat: Leigh Jordahl, "The Theology of Franz Pieper," *The Lutheran Quarterly*, May 1971, pp. 118—137; and David Lotz, "The Sense of Church History in Representative Missouri Synod Theology," *CTM*, October 1971, pp. 597—619. However, neither article is too clear about what alternatives or limits of correction are called for, and especially the second article ventures into *theological* judgments with which I can by no means agree.

using for "confessional" as well as for "critical" (or at least which ones we are not using) before we can proceed.³

Presumably, we can exclude a simply relativistic approach, although the common analogical one often appears not to differ much, viz., merely being faithful *as* they were faithful—to whatever we perceive "mission" or "ministry" to be. In practice, this all too often tends to be of the "let the world write the church's agenda" or the "no separation of sacred and secular" types, with each confessional tradition sanctifying the same current fads in its own traditional language—or ignoring the latter if none can be stretched to fit, as the church appears to become more and more the agent of the Enlightenment and its values rather than of the Reformation. Really, the question of "history" anent the Symbols is quite similar to that of its relation to the Scriptures: of course, time and circumstance will always vary somewhat, but are both Bible and Confessions allowed to determine what the basic problems are as well as the answers?

Regrettably, I think it also necessary to exclude another increasingly common redefinition of confessionalism which may be

³ High priority, it seems to me, should be given to the establishment of structures of discussion, self-criticism, floating of trial balloons, etc., without the subversion of *publica doctrina* or abandonment of church discipline. The question is scarcely whether Missouri has always been right on every point, but whether or not its *basic* traditional understanding of "confessionalism" and its consequent discipline is correct. Some change is, no doubt, inevitable (sometimes even in order to remain ultimately the same), but it is one thing if the church changes its mind in an orderly and disciplined way (as it plainly sometimes has), and another thing if we join the typical "ecumenical" babel (and let no one deny that especially in the last decade it has often really been BABEL!).

styled "ecumenical." Of course, the Lutheran Symbols are suffused with nothing if not a profound ecumenical concern, but the modern variety would seem to be of a fundamentally different type. It likes to speak of the "sufficiency of the confessions," but I think the record clearly demonstrates that actual efforts to make the Symbols fully normative are usually in inverse proportion to the championing of that slogan, which in practice readily comes to mean "anything goes," although, of course, it's all "gospel" and "confession"—just ask them!

Instead of taking doctrine seriously and insisting on essentially full agreement, the modern type tends to begin with a sort of neo-mystical "gospel," with all confessional traditions simply various "windows" or "witnesses" to some undefinable "encounter" with Christ." Religion is considered basically a matter of religious experience and all articulations of it or doctrines are viewed as secondary and derivative. All of them are allegedly vindicated only by their consequences in life, especially in facilitating meaningful interpersonal relationships and "humanization." Likewise, "revelation" in past events is known solely through their power to illuminaate present experience; there is no uninterpreted revelation. The Bible tends to be viewed as only a human witness to the human experience of revelation. Perhaps it is insisted that we still "honor" our "tradition," but it is bad form, if not worse, to question the validity of someone else's "response" to "revelation."⁴ "Confessionalism" then

⁴ A recent example in print of the unwritten ecumenical rule that virtually anything said or done must be "gospel" appears in *The Christian Century*, May 10, 1972, p. 551, where in an article critical of the Campus Crusade for Christ,

really becomes pluralistic and repudiates the "scandal of particularity"; it confesses no more than that this has been our experience, that this is the way things look from where we stand.

In that spirit, of course, our ecumenical zealots can easily assure us that our understanding has now "progressed" to the point where all of our differences make no difference, that we should "give up to get a better grip"⁵ and where we are even supposed to glory in all of our differences as, allegedly, evidence of the fulness and richness of the "gospel" in our midst. One would not even waste time asserting what a caricature of traditional confessionalism

the campus-pastor authors ask: "What does it mean ecumenically when the Crusade's campus workers declare that the gospel is not preached from certain local pulpits?" Cf. also Robert C. Wiederaenders (Archivist of the ALC) in a review of a translation of one of Wilhelm Loehe's works in *The Lutheran Quarterly*, May 1972, pp. 195—196, commenting on how things have come almost full circle in a century, so that now "the question of identity is among the most critical questions facing us."

⁵ E. Theodore Bachmann (quoting Fredrik Schiotz) in "Missouri and its Relations to Other Lutherans," *Concordia Historical Institute Quarterly*, May 1972, p. 166. Another article in the same issue which appears to me to represent a polemic against traditional Missourianism is Alan Graebner's, "Thinking About the Laity in The Lutheran Church — Missouri Synod." Most such alleged championship of the laity forgets the massive resistance which the laity usually offer to ecumenical liberalism, documented in Dean Kelleys' *Why Conservative Churches Are Growing* (Harper, 1972); cf. also Wesley Fuersts' pertinent remarks on the anomaly in *The Lutheran Quarterly*, May 1972, pp. 116 to 123. In spite of the recent decline in the popularity of activism, one notes how most of the ecumenical agencies seem almost desperately to be striving to keep the pump primed, and on the campuses the decline has evidently often come almost literally over the dead bodies of many of the campus pastors.

that is, were it not the almost self-evident axiom behind most current ecumenical endeavor.⁶

Philosophically, some brand of existentialism (and/or its siblings, dialectical theology, phenomenology, personalism, and so forth) has proved to be an extremely congenial companion to the type of ecumenical "confessionalism" just sketched. However, it may also be isolated as characterizing still another brand of confessionalism, and a still extremely popular one. As its name indicates, its main accent lies on the "existential," that is, on personal and contemporary relevance or on the application of an issue, upon the experience of the confrontation with God and the resultant change of heart. One does not have to think too hard to understand how essential some such accent is to any living, vital appropriation of the Gospel and the confessions.

Existentialist or related philosophies may thus be a very useful servant in enunciating the indispensable existential dimension of the Christian faith, but the servant may also turn into a terrible master. All too easily the traditional vocabulary continues to be used, but the faith is really radically reinterpreted from within. It would not be the first time that has been the result of an alliance between philosophy and Christianity, and, indeed, in my judgment, the results, in the balance, have been far more baneful in the case of modern existentialism than with the Aristotelianism or "scholasticism" which it scorns so much.

⁶ Nor is it simple cynicism, I submit, to ask just who, in the absence of any church discipline, the participants in the official "dialogues" speak for besides themselves, or why even bother, when with its left hand the churches are renouncing "propositional" religion.

No doubt, the latter easily runs the risk of an excessive intellectualization of the faith, of forgetting the ultimate discontinuity of reason and revelation. But one does not avoid one ditch by veering into the opposite one—in this case, often into a virtual irrationalism and antiintellectualism, where the subjectivities of the *Urerlebnis* or *Ansatz* (Elert) tend to replace the objectivities of doctrine (which is readily styled "legalistic"), of factual history, or of inspired Biblical text.

In the more radical but not entirely unrelated Bultmannian or "new hermeneutic" tradition, any and all talk of God's action in objective events, in the language of space and time, or as due to any supernatural causation, is regarded as "myth," that is, as a false "objectification" of the transcendent. Hence, it allegedly must be demythologized or "translated" back into its supposed original "intent," into the language of personal experience, specifically of the transformation of self-understanding by religious faith. Our sense that things are not the way they should be, but could be better, has simply been expressed temporally in "creation" and "resurrection."

The "Gospel" is often said to have nothing to do with facticity, with observable occurrences in the external world apart from my involvement, but is merely my experience of God's presence in judgment and grace, thus opening up new possibilities for my life in "authentic existence." The Resurrection was no physical event but the return of faith (then and now); "creation" means to confess total dependence on God, and so forth.⁷

⁷ One of the major conclusions of S. Preus' recent detailed study of Luther's hermeneutics (*From Shadow to Promise*, Harvard, 1969) is,

The *fides qua* commonly swallows up the *fides quae* (which itself tends to be given a thoroughly mystical definition); confessionalism is reduced to mere confessing (don't ask *what* very much!); we are told that no discipline is possible but that of "Gospel" (whatever that might mean, and one gets the distinct impression that that is precisely what it is supposed to mean); there are supposed to be no hermeneutical principles but "Gospel."⁸

contrary to Ebeling *et al.*, that the subjectivism of the "new hermeneutic" represents the prevailing medieval view which Luther overcame, not which he championed. Cf. my review in *Interpretation*, January 1970, pp. 94—100.

⁸ For better or for worse, the slogan "Gospel reductionism" has recently attached itself to this position. See E. H. Schroeder's attempt to turn the epithet to advantage in *CTM*, April 1972, pp. 232—247, especially in response to John Warwick Montgomery, who appears to have coined the phrase. If one accepts Schroeder's etymological definition of the phrase (cf. often with "radical"), "Gospel holism" might be more appropriate, viz., the insistence that doctrinal articles dare not be treated atomistically, but are all aspects of "the doctrine of the Gospel." Unfortunately, however, the issue appears to be far more than semantic. The theme that "the formal principle of Lutheran theology is entirely Christological" may simply be an alternate way of stressing holism (and the ultimate artificiality of the "formal" and "material" distinction because the Spirit who inspires is always the Spirit of Christ), but, if it is not very carefully qualified, it also runs the grave risk of making *sola scriptura* quite superfluous and thus, indeed, of participating in the great "flight from objectivity" in most modern theology. If so, "Gospel spiritualism" or "vaporization" (into subjectivity) might be a more accurate charge—or even "Gospel expansionism" as all kinds of secular and political ideas of "mission" and "ministry" invade the defenseless realm of subjective "religion." But, above all perhaps, we have to decide whether we're talking about mere *fides qua* or also about doctrine; if *sola scriptura* is abandoned for mere subjectivity in the latter case, one has a fundamentally different way of "doing theology"—in fact, almost an infinity of them!

It will readily be understood how this type of confessionalism easily assimilates to the ecumenical type, because it has virtually put itself beyond all rational criticism by defining "Gospel" or "faith" as "openness and trust," or as "earnest searching." Hence, one is scarcely surprised to hear repeatedly a defiant "Who's going to impose *his* brand of confessionalism on me?" in this connection. In sum, we may say that this version of confessionalism fails on two counts: both its spiritualism and its dualism (dichotomy of the subjective world of religion and the objective world of science).⁹

It is at this point that we can tune into our specific concern in this article, viz., the Symbols vs. criticism on creation. There can be little doubt that the Symbols' accent in discussing creation is primarily "existential" (using modern jargon, of course). In a sense, that accent simply reproduces what

⁹ The frequent assertion of this school that it is really nonphilosophical (often in criticism of Aristotelian-based "scholasticism's" insistence upon reasonable agreement on doctrinal *formulations*) must also be challenged. Its very anti-metaphysical bias has all sorts of metaphysical implications, especially in its frequent rejection of Biblical supernaturalism and its resultant divorce of the spiritual and the material. Luther's "existential" rejection of philosophical intrusions is thus *toto caelo* different from the subjectivistic reductionism of modern existentialist philosophy.

Karl Heim's work cannot be totally overlooked. It probably has to be ultimately classified as "existentialist," but it does not serve our purpose to examine it further here. His dualism is expressed in terms of different "spaces." See his *Christian Faith and Natural Science* (Harper, 1957) and *The Transformation of the Scientific World View* (Harper, 1953). Neither are we discussing language analysis or "logical positivism," which, at least as concerns us now, tends to have about the same import as the various existentialisms.

we already find in the Bible.¹⁰ Some of that similarity may be due to the essentially similar antitheses which both confronted. (Are they ever absent?) The implication seen by the confessors in the hamartology of both Flacius and the Romanists that would have either made God responsible for sin or denied the essential goodness of the creation was in some ways not fundamentally different from the metaphysical dualism of good and evil implicit in the mythological systems against which Israel warred throughout its existence. Similarly with the confessional accent that although God is present in all creation, creation dare not be given any ultimate valuation — the essence of "paganism," ancient or modern. Thus, we find considerable accent on *continuing* creation and/or

¹⁰ One argument in a circle frequently encountered in Biblical criticism to bolster an existentialist *reductionism* appeals to an evolutionistic reconstruction of the history of Israel's religion (a major example of a survival of classical Wellhausenianism in today's criticism): allegedly Israel's "faith" was originally concerned only with its covenant relationship with God and first began to conceive of Him as the *only* universal God of *all* nature and history when it was forced into competition with other nations and their gods, either when kingship ideology was grafted on to Israel's earlier traditions in the early monarchy, or in and after the Exile in order to explain that catastrophe. Creation is thus considered no part of the "revelation" (encounter) itself, but merely an "inference" from historical experience. One may concede that major *accent* was put on creation in those two periods, but, a cogent case can also be made for its presence in Israel's religion from the outset, so that any "evolution" is "outward" (like a bud opening) rather than "upward." When the strictly evolutionistic version is used to date documents (as classically in the dating of P) and that, in turn, to support the evolutionary theory, one really has "argument in a circle"! And when, further, a "late, therefore inferior" axiology is applied, "destructive" almost seems an understatement.

"providence"; in fact, creation and preservation are scarcely distinguished at all. Nevertheless, the *Deus revelatus* or the Gospel is not knowable from creation. Rather the reverse! A real understanding of the creation as a function of the Gospel is possible only in the light of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

If this will suffice as a summary of summaries of what the Symbols have to say on the subject of creation,¹¹ how do we relate it to the issues which agitate us today? A good share of the problem arises precisely because many of those issues, philosophic as well as scientific, not only were not in dispute in Reformation times, but often were utterly unheard of until modern times.¹² I have already given my judgment that it is illegitimate to extrapolate from the existential quality of the con-

¹¹ Obviously no attempt has been made here to give specific citations from the Book of Concord. The indexes of the various editions should suffice for that. My summary should also be checked against the discussions in the various "theologies" of the Confessions. Attention should also be called to the recent CTCR statement, *Creation in Biblical Perspective*, which admirably reproduces the "existential" accent of both Bible and Confessions. Also noteworthy here is Robert Preus, "Guiding Theological Principles," pp. 12—23, in P. Zimmerman (Ed.), *Rock Strata and the Bible Record* (CPH, 1970).

¹² It should be noted that in many respects even the founding of LCMS 125 years ago antedates them. Darwin's *Origin of Species* did not appear until 1859, with its major impact, of course, not coming until later. It was almost exactly a century ago (December 3, 1872, to be precise) that George Smith announced to the Society of Biblical Archaeology in London his phenomenal discovery of parallels to the biblical Flood story in the cuneiform tablets recently excavated at Nineveh (a popular account of which can be found in J. Pritchard, *Archaeology and the Old Testament* [Princeton, 1958, pp. 160 ff.]).

fessional statements to any full-fledged modern philosophical existentialism. What the Symbols do have to say on creation could largely be summarized in the Small Catechism's "God has made me and all creatures"; "me" as object harmonizes easily with the existentialists' "dialogical relationship," but hardly the "all creatures"!

Likewise, it seems completely invalid to me to attempt to argue from the technicality of the Confessions' silence on the modern issues that nothing dare be insisted upon concerning them in contemporary confessional subscription. Such an approach ultimately has to be labelled "literalistic" or the like, just as surely as any other which disregards changed historical circumstances (although nothing is gained by such labeling, from whatever quarter). Of course, the major new issue is that of historicity or facticity.

Suffice it to be said at the moment that, in my judgment, it is hermeneutically or theologically invalid to dismiss those issues on the basis of (a) the Symbols' silence on the issue, as already stressed; (b) any existentialist or other spiritualistic dualism of "kerygma" or theology from the world of nature and history, as though all that made no difference to the world of "faith"; and (c) any "Gospel reductionism" (if you will) which argues that we may disregard the traditional (and, I am convinced, also confessional) hermeneutical rules of *unus sensus literalis, scriptura scripturam interpretatur, analogia fidei*, etc.¹³

¹³ The situation here is quite comparable to that of *de Scriptura*, where the Symbols are even briefer and deal even more implicitly with the theoretical issues than in the case of creation. As I have argued elsewhere, I also consider it invalid, for roughly the same three reasons, to

As concerns the dualistic evasion, there certainly is *some* truth to the frequently heard assertion that "the Bible is no textbook of science," or that "there *can* be no contradiction between science and faith because they deal with different realms of truth." However, the assertion cannot be made too glibly if truth is really one and if men's confidence is ultimately to be held. It is one thing to stress that the "Gospel" is *primarily* concerned with the "heart," but it is something entirely different to act as though it makes little or no difference if its "kerygma" is also true in the world of space and time, as though "God" made no real difference in events, but only in our way of looking at them. Others have pointed out the strange inconsistency of much "liberalism" in this respect: in correcting excessive body-soul dichotomization in anthropology, or developing justifications for "serving the whole man," its accents are certainly not dualistic! A certain related, backhanded and secularized awareness that nature cannot merely be the neutral stage for the history of redemption is apparent in the current ecology kick. In Old Testament studies it manifests itself in the current concentration on wisdom traditions, with their accent on nature more than history (and much current exegesis is disposed to discover all sorts of wisdom

deny the verbal inspiration and inerrancy of the Bible as confessional teaching. But also similar to the creation issues, that is not to say that all traditional formulations or deployments of those doctrines need be reaffirmed, or that in the light of modern perspectives and evidence (if it really is that, and not another theology or philosophy) certain secondary adjustments cannot be made to the "prehistorical" (Sasse) formulations without in principle calling them into question (issues of date, authorship, sources, etc., if "destructive" value judgments are thoroughly exorcized).

influences imbedded in also the creation narratives of Genesis). We will not even raise the question of how a Lutheran sacramentology can survive in such dualistic, spiritualistic contexts.

Precisely because so many people have become convinced that science has indeed contradicted Genesis and thus ultimately all of Scripture and traditional Christianity, there can be little doubt that there has been no other single factor nearly so responsible for the decline of the influence of the church and the corresponding spread of secularization ("born too late to be Christian"). The various dualistic retreats into subjectivity certainly have not stemmed the popular tide, as, theoretically, I think they are no solution to the question, but only an evasion of it—or a "cop-out." (The same may be true of the otherwise laudable counsel to "stop arguing and preach it.") Nor do many of the testimonials by scientists that they see no contradiction between their work and their faith necessarily carry much weight. As Rachel King stresses repeatedly in her stimulating work,¹⁴ that faith is probably often little more than a sort of nature mysticism, and probably little is heard from the typical liberal Protestant pulpit to shake it. If mechanistic evolutionism continues to win converts among the intelligentsia, it will probably be to no little extent because C. P. Snow's "two culture" analysis was only too correct!¹⁵

¹⁴ Cf. below. Perhaps especially her chapter 18 is relevant in this connection.

¹⁵ *The Two Cultures and the Scientific Revolution* (Cambridge, 1961). Snow argues that the assumption of an objective-subjective dichotomy between the sciences and the humanities runs so deep that each culture only hurls epithets at the other, scientists accusing others

Before we pursue this discussion further and attempt a few suggestions of our own, perhaps one more increasingly popular, but in our judgment, spurious type of confessionalism should be mentioned. We have in mind the various approaches of a "process" type.¹⁶ In Roman Catholic circles, but also elsewhere, Teilhard de Chardin's version is especially influential. Over against the various mind-matter dualisms, this type of approach does have in its favor a certain unitive tendency, which better accords with Biblical holism. Also its attempt to use the more dynamic, Einsteinian view of the universe over against the existentialist tendency to perpetuate the 19th-century Newtonian assumption of a closed, static universe can be seen to accord with the Biblical accent on "continued creation."

of wallowing in subjectivity and themselves fielding charges of a dehumanizing objectivism. If clergymen and theologians also abandon holistic approaches, the chasm really begins to appear unbridgeable.

¹⁶ Most of them are to some extent indebted to the philosophical pioneering of Alfred North Whitehead. Other major names to be mentioned here will include Hartshorne, Cobb, Pittenger, Wieman, and Meland (whence this position has long been more or less associated with especially the University of Chicago Divinity School and many of its graduates). In American Lutheranism its impact is clearly discernible in especially the LCA. Perhaps especially noteworthy for our purposes is: Ian G. Barbour, *Issues in Science and Religion* (Prentice Hall, 1966). Written by a man who is trained in both physics and theology, it ultimately gives its nod in the process direction, but most of the work is an objective and extremely lucid and helpful summary and discussion of the question and the various solutions proffered. Much "theology of hope" weighs in in ultimately the same direction; a useful recent discussion of various futuristic theologies, also in relation to our topic and from a mildly Lutheran viewpoint, is: Hans Schwarz, *On the Way to the Future* (Augsburg, 1972).

However, that is about as far as the Bible can be adduced in its favor, and, as a matter of fact, rarely does it make much of a pretense of being either "Biblical" or "confessional," except perhaps in the most ecumenically attenuated contexts. Its radical immanentism is not totally incompatible with Biblical theism either, but when we note how limited its "god" is in its power to act ("persuasion and love rather than coercion and power"), even in its ability to overcome evil, it is plain that we are far removed from the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Conversely, its optimism about man's capabilities, its substitution of "openness to the future" for the *ephapax* of God's intervention, or of an "Omega point" for an incarnate, crucified Christ, all make it distinctly sub-Christian, at best. I myself would gladly dismiss it as scarcely even worth serious refutation in any context where Biblical and confessional authority are taken with any seriousness, but wishful thinking does not change the fact that we are likely to hear increasingly more of it in the future, even in circles where those authorities are still accorded some nominal honor.

What positive suggestions can then be made without either retreating into the inner self or trying to maintain the oneness of all truth at the expense of the Godhead itself? In the first place, I think it must be emphasized that if traditional, confessional hermeneutics is being upheld, any change in traditional exegesis will come *only* when compelling *evidence* seems to support the change, and all the more so if a departure from the literal sense seems to be involved. But what really constitutes evidence? Aye, there's the rub! Not entirely unlike a law court, exegesis also always has to decide what is

and what is not valid, permissible evidence. The professional exegete soon learns to interpret (initially, at least) the assertion, "Professor X has shown convincingly" to mean no more than, "I agree with him." Elsewhere in Biblical interpretation, one is only too aware of the extent to which the exegete often creates his "evidence" — not in the sense of deliberate fraud, of course, but in the sense that his presuppositions to no little extent determine the shape of his answers in advance. (The Bultmannian and "new hermeneutic" traditions have made quite a point of the impossibility of "presuppositionlessness," but in order to *exalt* subjectivity, as though because of the difficulty in being entirely objective, one should abandon the ideal.)

How does the layman in science assess the alleged "evidences" for evolution? (Or, on the other side of the fence, how does one discuss the mysteries of the Hebrew verb with one who knows no Hebrew?) At one end of the spectrum are the many, both scientists and theologians, who simply, if not dogmatically, assume that evolution is a long-established fact. If the theologians assume a dualistic position, it would seem to be a matter of utter indifference whether it is fact or not. In any event, nothing is so characteristic of the "liberal" as his facility in accommodating virtually any position, especially new ones. If my impressions are right, scientists on the whole (to the extent that it is possible to generalize) are no more impressed by the dualistic and monistic (process) attempts to salvage religion than they are by creationism. Chardin's well-known position, for example, is widely dismissed as "mystical" or the like and hence "unscientific."

At the other end of the spectrum are those scientists and theologians who argue that the evidence simply does not support the theory. Technically, of course, there can be no doubt that none of the "evidence" for evolution can be of the strictly "scientific" sort, for the simple reason that the experiment cannot be repeated. It is less than clear to the nonspecialist to what extent that invalidates many hypotheses. That we *are* dealing with hypotheses which, if accepted, have to be taken on "faith" almost as much as traditional creationism is clear, as partly evidenced also by the profound changes Darwinian theory has itself undergone in its century of existence. Its highly theoretical nature, at best, is something which it would seem even "liberal" churchmen would have a certain interest in emphasizing — in contrast to their sometimes dogmatization of it every bit as much as some scientists. That *some* evidence is involved, however, is seen in the extent to which even the most conservative generally concede that some "evolution" takes place *within* species.¹⁷ Likewise, I think an increasing disposition is discernible to concede that the "seven days" of Gen. 1 does refer to somewhat longer periods of time than ordinary days — although

¹⁷ Sometimes "microevolution" is thus distinguished from "macroevolution." Recent support for this limited view, in contrast to the Darwinian assumption of evolution of all living things from a single cell, came from a noted scientist, Dr. John Moore of Michigan State, at a recent meeting of the Society for the Study of Evolution. Because of its provenance, it attracted some publicity. (Cf. *The Lutheran*, Jan. 19, 1972, p. 23, which, of course, did not fail to observe that most such attacks on the theory came from "religious fundamentalists.") Dr. Moore is quoted as saying that it is "reasonable to conjecture that there were multiple beginnings of life. Either there was one creation or more than one."

usually not nearly so long as the immense periods generally posited by evolutionists.¹⁸

There is no doubt that these viewpoints represent a distinct minority among scientists, but Christians who have any sense of Biblical "remnant" thinking should surely be among the last to reject and ridicule them for that reason alone. These scientists often complain about how other scientists dogmatically refuse even to give them a hearing; one doesn't have to look too hard to find enough comparable examples of "illiberal liberalism" elsewhere to make their complaint thoroughly credible.¹⁹ It

¹⁸ The literature representing this viewpoint is too extensive even to survey here. Some of it is probably well known to much of the CTM readership, at least by title. Easily one of the most thorough, and written by one with both scientific and theological training, is: J. W. Klotz, *Genes, Genesis, and Evolution* (Concordia, 1955; 1970²). We have already mentioned *Rock Strata and the Bible Record*, edited by Paul Zimmerman. Under the same editorship is: *Creation, Evolution, and God's Word* (Concordia, 1972). Two brief, but excellent popular presentations from outside Lutheranism are: Wayne Friar and P. W. Davis, *The Case for Creation* (Moody, 1967) and Thomas Heinze, *The Creation vs. Evolution Handbook* (Baker, 1970).

¹⁹ Cf., e. g., W. Rusch's documentation in P. Zimmerman (Ed.), *Creation, Evolution and God's Word*, pp. 42 ff. Repeatedly one hears reports of ecclesiastical establishment colleges and seminaries refusing even to consider hiring representatives of traditional or "fundamentalistic" positions, no matter how pluralistic their faculties may be otherwise, often to the extent of not even sharing a common confessional "heritage." Likewise, Ralph Moellering, *Reflections on the Campus Ministry* (mimeographed; private mailing, May 1972), p. 16, observes: "Oddly enough, 'liberalism' rarely seems to include toleration for more 'conservative' viewpoints. A kind of bias in reverse automatically assumes that the more orthodox versions of Christianity are unworthy of consideration. An unacknowledged censorship bars conservative publications from many Christian

never ceases to amaze how readily "liberals" can dismiss all the literature defending creationism with a facile sneer of "fundamentalist" — almost the precise reverse of the way some literature was once said to be looked at no further if first glance indicated it did not uphold verbal inspiration.

Far and away the most massive attempt, at least to the best of my knowledge, to come to terms with mainline evolutionary theory (or at least a version of it) from a traditional or orthodox standpoint is Rachel King's *The Creation of Death and Life*.²⁰ The work is a bit diffuse (ranging

student centers and violates the esteemed open-mindedness of self-styled liberals." (The entire document is powerful documentation of the "theological vacillation and instability" in much recent campus ministry — but would describe many other ministries almost equally well.)

²⁰ Philosophical Library, 1970. The jacket describes Dr. King as a "highly trained theologian with long experience of the non-supernatural Liberalism which she has turned from as inadequate, and with long teaching experience in putting complex theological ideas into simple vivid language." A somewhat comparable work by an LCMS clergyman, although of far lesser scope, is: Harold Roellig, *The God Who Cares* (Branch Press, 1971). In contrast to King, who attempts nothing less than a total synthesis of evolution and orthodoxy, Roellig's work is almost characterized by an (unwitting?) dichotomy — chronological, however, not existentialist. The first third of the book appears to me to emphasize "random occurrence of natural phenomena" (p. 20) so much that God, although clearly posited, really seems quite otiose. With chapter five and the story of Abraham, however, Roellig abruptly shifts to an almost totally traditionalistic position. On p. 107, he acidly observes that no field better illustrates than New Testament literary criticism "that basic principle of scholarly research" that "the quantity of sound data is inversely correlated to the quantity of speculative theorizing" or that "the fewer the facts the more rampant the speculations." One can hardly help but ask if a dose of the same healthy skepticism might not have been salutary also in the first part of

over a good share of the total *corpus doctrinae*) and at certain individual points will surely have to be judged as simply idiosyncratic. Nevertheless, in the main it is such a welcome alternative to the usual massive either-or's as well as to the dualistic and monistic "solutions" that, however one ultimately evaluates it, it certainly deserves far more attention than it appears to have received so far. Of course, it is considerably more recent than Chardin's attempt (a critique of which, as well as of other "competitors," King includes in her work), but the great disparity in the acclaim the two works have received probably speaks volumes concerning the biases of much of the theological establishment.²¹

the book. Pastorally, however, the work might be very helpful (I do not mean that derogatorily).

²¹ One excerpt from King's work (p. 375) seems to deserve quotation: "Much more hope for the future of theology is to be placed in an important group of conservatives that would be roughly labeled as Fundamentalists by Full-Fledged Liberals, men who have either come out of the Thoroughgoing Fundamentalist Group or have moved toward Conservatism through disillusion with the bankruptcy of Liberalism. These men sympathize with what the Thoroughgoing Fundamentalists are trying to do But they do not subscribe wholeheartedly to all the intellectual techniques Fundamentalism has used to protect this orthodoxy, and they are aware of the cultural and scientific changes in the last hundred years and are awake to the need of some intellectual method of getting on in an intellectual working arrangement with the development of scientific knowledge. In this situation they are fortunate in having some corroboration from an increasing number of scientists who . . . are willing to go on record as believing in a God who is beyond the range of science and scientific inquiry, and some of whom are willing to go on record as believing that through the divine Christ man has remission of his sins. Possibly the greatest hope for renewed Christian belief in America at large comes from these intelligently conserva-

The entire thrust of King's work is not easy to summarize without serious caricature, but perhaps it will have to suffice to say that the point of departure is the second law of thermodynamics or of entropy, which states that the universe is inexorably exhausting its available energies and running down. This she relates to the origins and effects of evil, as the obverse of God's salvific designs. She goes beyond a mere appeal to the Heisenberg Uncertainty Principle, (applied to the indeterminacy of also the atomic world as an explanation of how "providence" might work or an awareness that many scientific "laws" are only statistically true),²² to clear

tive religious leaders and the spiritually oriented scientists."

²² In this respect, she clearly disassociates herself from the position of W. Pollard (*The Cosmic Drama*, 1955; and *Physicist and Christian*, 1961), another theologian-scientist, whose position appears to allow for no discrimination in God's activity, especially with respect to the origins and defeat of evil. Pollard's accent on entropy, however, is roughly comparable to King's.

Of course, "indeterminacy" is capable of other interpretations, viz., atheistic, mechanistic and deterministic ones. The tragedy of the oft-times conservative refusal even to "dialogue," as well as of the dualistic evasions, is that one of the great "theological" debates of the 20th century (whether evolution is directed and teleological or a matter of blind chance) is being carried on by *scientists*. By the default of the professional theologians the nontheistic scientists are carrying the day—and this is the *real* "theology" with which most of our college and university graduates are being imbued (also in many "church-related" institutions). Perhaps as good an example as any (not to mention B. F. Skinner in psychology!) would be the epilogue of G. G. Simpson's, *The Meaning of Evolution* (Yale, 1949), a widely used introduction to the subject. That that tide is by no means ebbing can perhaps best be documented in the recent best seller, *Chance and Necessity* (Knopf, 1971) by Jacques Monod, one of the 1965 Nobel Prize winners for his work in dis-

and repeated accent on deliberate intervention by a personal God who thus "nudges" the process in the desired direction and who would thus not even have difficulty working genuine miracles! This entire accent on a personal God, plus no hesitation to affirm supernaturalism, thus preserves central Biblical accents which are commonly missing in the virtual deism of "theistic evolution."²³

One of the possible weaknesses of the work is that it merely appeals again to a "God of the gaps," only not quite such major ones as have since been closed by scientists to the embarrassment of earlier apologists for Christianity. However, that whole argument can be turned on end, and a counterattack seems long overdue! Who

covering the mechanism by which the genetic code is transmitted and protein synthesized within the cell. The philosophical conclusion: the process of life is totally blind. "Man finally knows that he is alone in the indifferent immensity of the universe. . . . No more than his destiny is his duty anywhere preordained. It is up to him to choose between the kingdom and the shadows." In the final chapter Monod stresses the need to develop a new basis for ethics based on "objective knowledge" since, he argues, the old prescientific basis has finally been proved nonexistent. The Unitarian reviewer of the work in *The Christian Century* (April 5, 1972) hails it as a work that "has completed, philosophically and religiously, the work that Darwin started, negating all remnant concepts of special creation." On the other hand, the reviewer in *The New York Times* (Oct. 15, 1971) is less than convinced ("one feels a desire to slaughter the messenger that brings this bad news").

²³ Cf. perhaps especially her trenchant remarks in chapter 23 on many modern interpretations of the Exodus miracle, on the fashionable refrains of "interpretation" of God's "mighty acts," of the prophets as "forthtellers," etc. Similarly chapter 28, as well as chapter 47 on heaven. On the Exodus, cf. Barbour, op. cit., p. 420.

says that a "God hypothesis" is needed *only* in the "gaps" where no plausible secular hypothesis can be constructed? Otherwise, the "God is dead" movement would indeed seem to be the only consistent outcome. Or put otherwise, it would mean that we should not rejoice that we have found God, but try to become better scientists.

Space precludes further consideration of King's work, so let me continue with miscellaneous personal observations. My initial, favorable reaction to at least many aspects of King's effort is because she affirms ingredients that I think must be present in any synthesis that has any interest in retaining, in essence, the historic affirmations of the Christian church. Perhaps we should underscore the matter of "evidence" again. We have already indicated how tricky a matter that can be, but, at any rate, such an approach is methodologically and hermeneutically (epistemologically) *toto caelo* different from those which do not proceed from the assumption of a verbally inspired text. The latter assumption, at least in principle, vetoes human subjectivity as a valid part of the investigation. Then we will not knowingly "deny" one iota of anything God has said, but neither will we pontificate prematurely on what "God says." It will never be a matter of the truth of the inspired text, but only of precisely what truth God intended in His *suggestio rerum et verborum*. Modern evidence (especially that provided by archaeology) has brought many changes at many points in the historical understanding of the Biblical text. In principle, the situation should be no different with Gen. 1—3, although, obviously, the stakes are much higher, if you will, and one must make

haste very slowly in concert with one's entire confessional community.

If the objective inspiration of the text must be reaffirmed, so must also "one literal sense." The uniqueness of the latter rule for Biblical interpretation can be overstated, because it really is an elementary assumption for all human communication, which would soon become babel if we could not take people at their word according to ordinary usage, except when there were clear signals to the contrary. However, that is also a way of underscoring the rule's importance for any serious, disciplined Biblical exegesis, not the opposite. At the same time, those signals or the evidence *may* indicate that the literal, intended meaning of the text is nonliteral, or partly so. If one is not simply hurling opprobrious epithets, this is the only meaningful distinction between "literal" and "literalistic" — but, again, the danger of the intrusion of invalid (philosophical) "evidence" can scarcely be overstated.

I defend the position that the "analogy of faith" (which, in this case, I understand as especially the basic historical, incarnational nature of the Christian faith, with its corollary, the "personal" nature of the Biblical God) requires, at very least, basic historical, factual elements in the creation narratives. Any basic dualism of kerygma from fact is as unacceptable here as elsewhere in the history of salvation. Consistently the creation is presented as the first in the series of God's "mighty acts." To interpret the material as *only* "parable," "etiology," "myth" (although the latter term has about as many meanings as writers, some of which might be acceptable) leaves us, in effect, with only moralistic *allegory*, the precise hermeneu-

tical approach generally so strongly rejected precisely because of its antihistorical procedure.

This affirmation, however, need not mean that all aspects are equally historical in the same way. Even this may be very misleading, because the point is not something less than historical in the sense of untruth (for God does not lie), but in the *more-than-historical* dimension of which the empirical is only a transparency. "Scripture as its own interpreter" applies primarily to the theological yield, and anything which subverts or relativizes that is *a priori* out of bounds. Some variation in the external or historical aspect or dimension of that theological yield may be possible, however, up to the outside limits of simple disjunction from facticity — which, in this case, "Scripture as its own interpreter" would also proscribe. (Can there be any connection here with the oft-observed fact, that while the details of Gen. 1—3 are hardly mentioned again in the Old Testament, the basic historicity and theology of what is reported there is simply everywhere assumed?) However, even these distinctions anyone who takes the formal principle with utmost seriousness will venture only most cautiously in the light of what appears to be hard evidence.²⁴

²⁴ In these attempts to sort out the issues or to attempt to steer one's way between pre-scientific literalism and liberalism of whatever stripe, many Roman Catholic investigations, following the guidelines of the Pontifical Biblical Commission, once seemed very helpful. I will mention only one: John Dunne, *How God Created* (Notre Dame, 1960 — still in print). That same author, however, illustrates poignantly how radically the situation has changed within the Roman communion in his more recent *The Way of All the Earth* (Macmillan, 1972), calling forth the editorial in *Christianity Today*, April 14, 1972, p. 25, en-

Where does that leave us? Maybe I can only say here that as far as Gen. 1 itself goes, that is of the creation of universe and of matter, it seems to me that at least a *modus vivendi* of various cooperative working hypotheses is not unthinkable between the traditionalistic and confessional, but also historically sensitive, exegete, on the one hand, and the scientist, on the other, who can concede that his most cherished hypotheses still leave much unanswered and that perhaps some basic modifications in the direction of creationism will have to be seriously considered. (This may be a sort of *via media* between two extremes, but let it be clear that there is no *methodological* assumption that one determines truth by compromising!)

In principle, at least, the compatibility of creationism and "natural law" would appear to have been affirmed all along in the confession of *personal* creation. All theological problems with evolution appear to be present already in embryology. (Cf. the debates in especially the early church on "creationism" vs. "traducianism"!) Biologically, conception and gestation in the human species are quite like that in any mammal, and it is doubtful if we know significantly more about the process than Biblical man; yet this has never hindered the theological confessions. It might well be that in the broader reaches of creation

titled "Has the Catholic Church Gone Mad?" (after the title of a recent book by that name by John Eppstein). One might be tempted to use recent Catholic experience to document the inevitability of a "camel's nose" or "domino" theory, and while the absolute heteronomy to radical autonomy crisis of authority in the Roman communion makes that situation rather unique, it does, indeed, underscore the indispensability of maintaining *sola scriptura* as well as *sola gratia*.

we simply never had this sort of scientific information until recently, and the Bible could scarcely be expected to make a point of the "scientific" aspects in either case. (I did recently hear of a Lutheran pastor who was censured for teaching his confirmation class that they came into existence, not by creation, but when their parents slept together—but that is obviously eccentric.)

The example of personal creation also exemplifies a broader point, viz., that immanence and supernatural transcendence are not the mutual exclusives they are sometimes portrayed to be. In general, one may say that the Bible was *more* concerned to answer the questions, "Who?" and then "Why?" than "What?" and "How [empirically]?" even when it knew the answers to the latter questions, as, e. g., in Israel's wars versus "political or military science." God's "Word" obviously bespeaks both personal and supernatural elements, but at many points in the Bible it is seen as operative in "natural," secondary causation, as well as others where it is clearly a matter of miracle in the strict sense.

Nevertheless, both supernaturalism and the personhood of God are so central in the entire Biblical portrait that I can only greet with consummate alarm the various impulses to treat them as matters of indifference, if not simply to demythologize them. Their prominence in King's effort is part of what makes her hypothesis as attractive as it is. She observes tellingly (p. 247) that if there is truth in Feuerbach's observation that man creates God in his own image, our age would surely exemplify it in its depersonalization of God, consequent upon its depersonalization of man. It is often hard to distinguish

cause and effect, but prior rejection of the supernatural is surely one factor which has facilitated the acceptance of evolutionism from the outset. Obviously, both may be misconstrued: supernaturalism may veer toward magic, and God's personhood may be taken so literalistically that one forgets He is Spirit. Furthermore, the ultimate theological and existential import (soteriological) always transcends both, but that is far different from implying that they are in any way dispensable.

As concerns ultimate origins, any creationistic approach inevitably gets along better with an instantaneous or "big bang" theory than with a "steady state" or continuous (eternal) creation approach (perhaps with eternal oscillation, or at least with matter always coming into being uniformly throughout infinite time and space), if the latter is in any way harmonizable.²⁵ In nontheistic science itself, there

²⁵ Thus both Pollard, *op. cit.*, and King, *op. cit.* However Barbour, *op. cit.*, refuses to take sides on the existentialist basis that the doctrine of creation is really only "about the basic relationship between the world and God" (p. 367). Elsewhere he is quite critical of this sort of dualistic escapism and generally inclines more toward process approaches. He argues that "both theories are capable of either a naturalistic or a theistic interpretation," but does observe that "defense of the infinity of time often displays a naturalistic 'metaphysical bias', as if nature, having taken the place of God, must itself be infinite." Very similarly, Roellig, (*op. cit.*, p. 17) says: "It is the writer's view that the revival of the oscillation theory occurred more for philosophical than scientific reasons. Many cosmologists, it appears, find an eternal cosmological model more intellectually and theologically satisfying than one that seems to start with a singular event." While Roellig disagrees with that approach, he too argues that it ultimately makes no difference because "regardless—the ultimate origin of all that makes up the universe is from the hand of God."

seems to be no current unanimity on this subject at all.

If the continuous creation theory were to triumph, one could really assert that the pagan, mythological cosmogonies had finally triumphed over Biblical creationism. In fact, in many ways one could make a case for modern *scientism* as a reversion to paganism (its whole accent on nature and its universals, its immanentalism, its concomitant culture's virtual worship of sex, etc.). It is also one of the many ways in which one observes that the basic philosophical options (probably ultimately only three: materialistic naturalism, idealistic pantheism, or Biblical creationism) are no different today than ever! Something like what we would call the "eternity of matter" (in the Ancient Near East commonly pictured as a primordial ocean) is a staple of mythology (not unlike the givens or simple brute facts which science notes without being able to say why). Somehow (usually unspecified, but most crudely in the cosmogony of Heliopolis in Egypt, where Atum masturbates on the primeval hillock) the first male-female pair emerges to procreate and set in motion the "myth of the eternal return," the eternal cycle of life and death, summer and winter, etc., upheld by the cult's "celebration of life," fertility, and sexuality.

Hence, it can and should be insisted, contrary to popular usage, that these are not "*creation myths*," because they really do not talk of "creation" at all, but of *eternal generation*, of *cosmogony*, upheld and celebrated in the cult.²⁶ "Creation" is really a Biblical term, that is a historical

²⁶ Alexander Heidel makes this point very effectively concerning the Babylonian cosmogony in his *Babylonian Genesis* (Chicago, 1951²).

term, presupposing a transcendent, personal deity of the unique, Biblical type, and we use "creation" of the mythological cosmogonies only because our modern Western languages have been so informed by the Biblical heritage that they lack much genuine mythological conceptuality and vocabulary.²⁷

If "creation" versus "cosmogony" somewhat summarizes the profound difference between the Biblical and mythological (ancient or some modern, "scientific") views, what about cosmology? This is always a sore point. The allegedly "primitive" and hence "erroneous" cosmology of the Bible (solid "firmament," flat earth set on pillars in a subterranean ocean) remains a point of debate. Bultmann has made the alleged three-story universe of the New Testament a major justification for demythologization. Surely, there is fundamental confusion here — not least with respect to the word "myth." In general, one seems to have almost a party-caucus situation on this

²⁷ There is the related question whether the Old Testament itself teaches *creatio ex nihilo*. Cf. the commentaries and Old Testament theologies (which do not always agree with what follows). Barbour, op. cit., p. 384, has a good summary; he blames the accent on *ex nihilo* and the neglect of *creatio continua* for the later difficulty in understanding evolution as the means of creation. At best, many things would have to be sorted out here. I argue that that debate is largely one of semantics or other technicalities. From a strictly, narrowly exegetical viewpoint one cannot demonstrate such teaching in Gen. 1 and elsewhere. However, the vocable *bara* already points strongly in that direction, and, above all, the internal "logic" in that direction (building on Yahweh's personal, transcendent nature) is so strong that when Greek logic and philosophy became available to express it abstractly, it seems to me that really it was no more than a formal, technical change in expression.

question: either it is *de rigueur* to insist that here we have parade examples of Biblical "error," or the opposite dogma.

Even apart from dogma, I think the decision easily goes to the latter camp. One has such a variety of world-pictures in both testaments that one can scarcely but conclude that we must be dealing with *popular* observation, often expressed poetically, not with "science" in any sense. It is anachronistic and almost laughable even to try to apply that modern conceptuality to the Bible, but that seems very often to be the beginning of evil. Then one can scarcely but have low esteem for Biblical man in maintaining such mutually exclusive cosmologies.²⁸ Did they "believe" those cosmologies? I suppose in a sense they did — but as popular, not "scientific" descriptions. In that sense, "modern man" believes them too! (A certain parallel is offered in Biblical "psychology" — certainly no "science," yet continued in our use of "heart," etc.)

The neat German distinction between *Weltbild* and *Weltanschauung* is somewhat helpful, if it does not eventuate in the thoroughgoing dichotomy that we have repeatedly scored. Both within the Bible as well as afterwards, there are many "cosmologies." Various ones have been current in "science" even in our lifetime, and probably only a very few are simply incompatible with creationism. Hence Bultmann and company could scarcely be more wrong when they argue from three-story universe anthropomorphisms to the dispensability of the entire supernatural framework of

²⁸ Ample documentation of this is given, I think, in: Carl Gaenssle, "A Look at Current Biblical Cosmologies," *CTM*, October 1952, although one need not agree on all details.

the Scriptures.²⁹ Whether we speak of ultimate origins (or destinies) or of present structure, we can only say that we *ultimately* know little more about genesis than is written in the Book of Genesis. Theories galore, indeed, but nothing is proved. And so we believe.

Gen. 2 and 3, however, with their greater accent on the creation of *man*, and also his fall, seem less amenable to this type of approach than chapter one. The Hebrew text itself uses "*'adam*" both generically (with the definite article) and as a proper noun, thus suggesting a historical as well as a suprahistorical dimension. However, there seems no way around the argument that the Adam-Christ typology (not mere analogy!), as well as, in a way, the entire *ordo salutis*, makes a historical element (in the ordinary sense of the term) a *sine qua non* for both *Adam* and the Fall. We not only *are* creatures; we also *were* created. We not only *are* fallen, but "in Adam's fall we sinned all." At very least, as outside limits, there would have to be tangible links with actual events at *two* points, at the beginning of time and at the creation of man — and hopefully much more. (In a way, this simply underscores the fact that

²⁹ The parallelism here of creation and resurrection (or of creation and "new creation") is by no means coincidental. Together with the incarnation, they constitute perhaps the "gut" miracles of Biblical revelation, and it is no accident that in all three the claims and domains of science and religion, of objectivity and subjectivity, clearly intersect. Thus, I think it is not so much a matter of some inevitable "domino" effect on the other two if creation is spiritualized as it is that the fatal compromise with dualism and subjectivism has *already* been made. Nevertheless, it should be clear that we are not speaking primarily of *fides qua* (which only God can judge anyway), but of its noetics or doctrinal expression.

the most *basic* clash between creationism and evolutionism is that of *grace* versus works, not other secondary ones which often attract more attention.)

How this relates to the scientific information we seem to have is less than clear, but if one assumes that the text is "innocent until proved guilty," if you will (the precise opposite of course, of much "higher criticism"), the purely negative "evidence" we appear to have about "Adam" does not suffice to call historicity into question. I can only call attention here to probes attempting to relate this Biblical data to the appearance of *homo sapiens*, who alone was really "man" and who had no real continuity, except perhaps somewhat structurally, with anything that preceded. (In what has *followed* it certainly seems demonstrable that there has since been no "evolution" of man's native moral, aesthetic, and religious faculties parallel to his undeniable technological progress — in flat contradiction to the facile meliorism which is at the heart of all that is objectionable in most popular evolutionism.)

If a suprahistorical element may then be interwoven with the historical in Gen. 1—3, it is not the sole instance in the Bible. In no case is it a matter of simple reduction into mere existential truth ("of" God vs. "about" Him), but of the necessity of using analogical language to communicate "what eye hath not seen nor ear heard." This is true of all theology proper; it is true of the entire scenery of heaven; it is true of the miracle of inspiration; and, most similar of all, it is true of *eschatology* as of "protology" (creation). Creatures of space and time have no other way of speaking about what is above, before, after (or in any other way beyond) space and time.

(Even if Gen. 1—3 are taken as totally "scientific" description, it is doubtful if we "understand" one whit more; one *believes* or he does not, in either case.) In all these cases, of course, we have no dearth of existentialists who reduce them to mere ciphers of "transcendental values" or the like, but I think that option is simply precluded for the confessional theologian. Until scientific evidence to the contrary arose within the past century, there was no justification for any suggestion that Gen. 1—3 in its literal sense should be treated somewhat like those other examples, but if that does seem called for now, there are at least ample Scriptural parallels and precedents for such a construction without any break in *principle* with the various aspects of Biblical and confessional hermeneutics.

Our final considerations, then, must concern briefly the possible "form" in which the suprahistorical aspects of the protology were couched. The manifold formal parallels with especially the Mesopotamian materials, as well as the profound difference in theological deployment, are nearly universally recognized, although, of course, construed in various ways.³⁰ Of course, in confessional context it will not be a mere matter of "Israel's" confession, but also of objective, propositional revelation. Thus, if there is validity to the comparison of protology to eschatology, one may argue that just as God caused the "apocalyptic"

³⁰ Cf., e. g., two recent articles in the March 1972 *Journal of Biblical Literature* (citing abundant other literature) on the name "Eve," on the long problematic Gen. 4:1, and on the antediluvian patriarchs of Gen. 5. Heidel, *op. cit.*, and in his parallel study on the flood parallels in the Gilgamesh Epic, already conceded this clearly.

form to be adapted for communication about the eschaton, so with some of the raw materials of the ancient Near Eastern cosmogonies for protological revelation.

Culturally speaking, or considering the human, historical *side* of the revelation, it appears virtually impossible any longer to entertain the possibility, as is still sometimes argued, that the influence of these narratives was from Israel to Mesopotamia, rather than vice versa. However, that *theological* instinct is surely correct (if, for the *n*th time, it is not totally divorced from empirical history), and it can only be noted here that a cogent theoretical case can still be made for the hypothesis that "primitive religion" is the corruption of an original monotheism, although it certainly is not a favored hypothesis in most "history of religion" study (perhaps, one surmises, ultimately out of the same "*haec opinio legis*" motives that make melioristic evolutionism so attractive in general).

We have enough extra-Biblical apocalyptic material to see quite clearly how severely that genre was pruned and purged before being used as a vehicle for revelation, and then likewise with the cosmogonies. The "apocalyptic" genre has been recognized long enough that we have that universally recognized name for it, but in the case of the originally mythological materials of Genesis we have, as yet, no commonly agreed upon term (and, of course, if it is merely an alternate "myth," there is little reason why we should work at it). (Perhaps we should recall that "Gospel" too is a unique genre, quite without parallels in the Graeco-Roman world.)³¹

³¹ At least until a decade or so ago, many Roman Catholics spoke of "allegorical history," that is, an account of events which really oc-

Whatever names we use, I am of the mind that work along these lines, that is, that ducks the problems neither by fiat nor

_____ curred, but not in precisely the same way in which narrated. Involved in that label is the Roman Catholic tradition of using "allegory" in a much more positive sense than usually in Protestantism. "Primal history" (often as an attempted translation of *Urgeschichte*) is also used, again with possibilities if it escapes the

by spiritualism, has only begun. As for this article, however, like most, one never really finishes, but only eventually gives up and stops.

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_____ existentialist and dualistic traps. Are there other suggestions?