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Andrews University

Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

REVELATION AND CREATION IN THE THOUGHT OF
BERNARD L. RAMM AND CARL F. H. HENRY:
THE CREATION "DAYS" AS A CASE STUDY

A Dissertation

Presented in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

by

Warren Harvey Johns

October 2005

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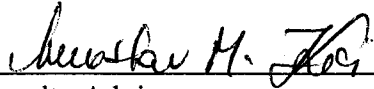
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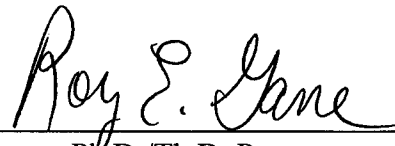
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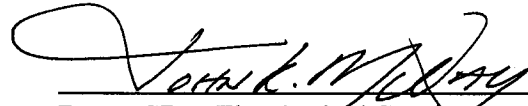
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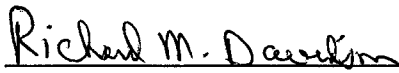
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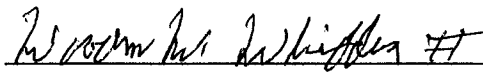
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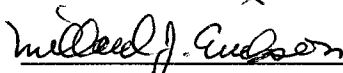
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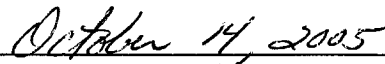
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ABSTRACT

REVELATION AND CREATION IN THE THOUGHT OF
BERNARD L. RAMM AND CARL F. H. HENRY:
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Adviser: Miroslav Kiš

ABSTRACT OF GRADUATE STUDENT RESEARCH

Dissertation

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Date completed: October 2005

This study explores the relationship between the doctrines of creation and revelation within evangelical thought, especially focusing upon the writings of the two foremost leaders of "Neo-evangelicalism," Bernard L. Ramm and Carl F. H. Henry. Neo-evangelicalism arose in America in the 1940s as a reaction against the Fundamentalism of the first decades of the twentieth century. One of its purposes was to free evangelicalism from the anti-intellectual tendencies of Fundamentalism while yet maintaining a belief in the full inspiration and historicity of Scripture. As a result, evangelicals have sought to harmonize the biblical record of creation with modern geological discoveries.

The goals of this study are twofold: First, to explain how and why Bernard Ramm and Carl Henry differ in their understanding of the doctrines of revelation and creation, and second, to uncover the reasons why Ramm, Henry, and most evangelical theologians and scientists adopt a metaphorical understanding of the days of creation, when the large majority of scholars in the past one hundred years have understood the creation days to be literal, twenty-four-hour days.

The approach of this study is descriptive, comparative, analytical, and evaluative. The first two chapters introduce the subject and provide a survey of the historical background for the evangelical understanding of revelation and creation, while the next two chapters, which are also descriptive, examine in detail the thought of Ramm and Henry on the doctrines of revelation and creation, and especially their views on the days of creation. Chapter 5, which is comparative and analytical for the large part, consists of comparisons and contrasts between the thought of Ramm and Henry upon revelation and creation as well as upon the specific nature of the creation days. The evaluative phase involves a discussion of why this issue is important to evangelicalism, noted in the last part of chapter 5 and in the summary and conclusions found in chapter 6.

The differences between Ramm and Henry on the doctrines of revelation and creation can be accounted for largely on the basis of the differing methodologies and philosophical positions of the two. The contrast between the evangelical approaches to understanding the days of creation and the approaches of non-evangelical scholarship is best explained on the basis of the evangelical understanding of revelation and inspiration.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ANF	<i>Ante-Nicene Fathers</i>
CVSS	<i>The Christian View of Science and Scripture</i>
GRA	<i>God, Revelation and Authority</i>
PL	<i>Patrologia Latina</i> , ed. J.-P. Migne

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCING THE PROBLEM WITHIN ITS EVANGELICAL CONTEXT

Evangelicalism today is characterized by an unflagging devotion to the authority of Scripture, which is considered to be its ultimate authority. But a high view of Scripture does not come without its challenges, especially when Scripture is discovered to be in conflict with extra-biblical sources of authority, such as science, history, archeology, or philosophy. Modern evangelicalism is being torn by two major controversies revolving around the authority of Scripture: the one involving the relationship of the early chapters of Genesis to the discoveries of modern science, particularly the science of geology, and the other involving the question of inerrancy as it impacts upon the authority of the Bible as the Word of God. These two controversies have consumed more time, interest, and scholarly debates among evangelicals than perhaps any other two subjects going back nearly two centuries, which coincides with the rise of geology as a modern science at the beginning of the nineteenth century.

Evangelicalism has been defined in such a variety of ways that no two definitions are alike,¹ but all definitions contain this common denominator:

¹See "Preface," *Bible Interpreters of the Twentieth Century: A Selection of Evangelical Voices*, ed. Walter A. Elwell and J. D. Weaver (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1999), 7-9. Here one finds a comprehensive bibliography of contemporary sources that attempt to define evangelicalism.

Evangelicalism. The movement in modern Christianity, transcending denominational and confessional boundaries, that emphasizes conformity to the basic tenets of the faith and a missionary outreach of compassion and urgency. A person who identifies with it is an “evangelical,” one who believes and proclaims the gospel of Jesus Christ.¹

In reality, it is the evangelical emphasis upon inerrancy, and not its stress upon the supremacy of the gospel, that has become the badge mark of evangelicalism in the last half of the twentieth century: “Evangelicals regard Scripture as the divinely inspired record of God’s revelation, the infallible, authoritative guide for faith and practice.”² Most definitions of evangelicalism center upon the theological and doctrinal aspects of the movement, even when evaluating it from a sociological viewpoint.³ An additional criterion is that evangelicals identify with movements and organizations that transcend denominational boundaries and reject the separatism of Fundamentalism.

Although Fundamentalism and evangelicalism have common roots in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, mainly because of their common opposition to Darwinism, Fundamentalism has been distinguished from evangelicalism by its distrust of modern scholarship and science. In the first two decades of the twentieth century “Fundamentalism” was a term attributed to a North American Protestant movement that arose as a reaction against the liberalist advocacy of relativism, evolutionism, and higher

¹R. V. Pierard and W. A. Elwell, “Evangelicalism,” *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, 2nd ed., ed. Walter A. Elwell (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2001), 405.

²*Ibid.*, 406.

³According to a survey developed by Kellstedt and Green for evaluating contemporary evangelicalism in America, “Four criteria were used: (a) salvation only through faith in Jesus Christ (the mechanism of the evangel); (b) an experience of personal conversion, commonly called being ‘born again’ (the mechanics of the evangel); (c) the importance of missions and evangelism (sharing the message of the evangel); and (d) the truth or inerrancy of Scripture (the source of the evangel).” Lyman Kellstedt, John Green, James Guth, and Corwin Smidt, “Evangelicalism,” *Encyclopedia of Religion and Society*, ed. William H. Swatos (Walnut Creek, CA: Altamira Press, 1998), 176.

criticism, and in the 1940s "Neo-evangelicalism" (popularly known today as "evangelicalism") was born within the midst of Fundamentalism as a reaction against the anti-intellectual tendencies of the latter.¹

The Doctrines of Revelation and Creation

Evangelicals have viewed the doctrine of revelation to be one of the central doctrines of the Christian faith and thus have been wary of attacks upon that doctrine from the right and from the left. "The question of revelation is at the very heart of the modern theological debate," observes J. I. Packer. "And, just because Christianity purports to be a revealed religion, . . . this means that the real subject under discussion is the essential nature of Christianity."² J. J. Davis notes this centrality of revelation to evangelicalism:

¹I define "Fundamentalism" as a movement within evangelicalism that calls for biblical inerrancy as the test of biblical orthodoxy, that distances itself from any form of "ecumenism" (including Billy Graham's transdenominational evangelistic campaigns), that distrusts modern science as being secular, and stresses apocalypticism as a response to liberalism's optimism for mankind. The term "Neo-evangelicalism" was coined in 1947 by Harold J. Ockenga, pastor of the Park Street Congregational Church in Boston, in order to distinguish the new movement from nineteenth-century evangelicalism, which has been identified as conservative, revivalistic Protestantism. Throughout the dissertation I will treat the words "Neo-evangelicalism" and "evangelicalism" as synonymous and as equivalent to what Marsden has identified as "card-carrying evangelicals"—"people [who], like their nineteenth-century forebears, have some sense of belonging to a complicated fellowship and infrastructure of transdenominational evangelical organizations," that is, people "with directly fundamentalist background." George Marsden, "The Evangelical Denomination," in *Evangelicalism and Modern America*, ed. George Marsden (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984), xiv. According to Marsden, "Fundamentalists were especially militant evangelicals who battled against the modernists' accommodations of the gospel message to modern intellectual and cultural trends." *Ibid.*, xii. Neo-evangelicalism, then, was a movement arising in North America in the 1940s as a reaction to Fundamentalism, which reached the height of its influence in the 1920s and 1930s. Recently Gerald Priest has taken exception to Marsden's definition of a fundamentalist as one who is "an evangelical who is militant in opposition to liberal theology in the churches or to changes in cultural values or mores." George M. Marsden, *Understanding Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 1. Priest offers the following definition instead: "*Fundamentalism is a movement committed to belief in and affirmation of the historic biblical doctrines essential to the Christian faith and insistent on separation from all forms of apostasy and ungodliness.*" Gerald L. Priest, "Early Fundamentalism's Legacy: What Is It and Will It Endure through the 21st Century?" *Detroit Baptist Seminary Journal* 9 (2004): 305, emphasis original.

²James I. Packer, "Contemporary Views of Revelation," in *Revelation and the Bible: Contemporary Evangelical Thought*, ed. Carl F. H. Henry (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1958), 89.

"Divine revelation is the foundation of evangelical theology, and evangelical theology's task is not only to refine our understanding of God, but also to further the extension of God's reign in the world."¹ Evangelicalism also perceives one's belief in revelation as the basis for one's belief in God: "If God had not spoken, we could not know for sure that he exists."² Over one hundred years ago the American evangelical, James Orr, affirmed that "all *religion originates in revelation*. Many can know God only as, in some way, God reveals, or makes Himself known, to man."³ While not strictly an evangelical, theologian Emil Brunner concurs with modern-day evangelicals on the importance of revelation: "All that the Church proclaims and teaches is an attempt to express in human language the truth which she has received. Hence the divine revelation alone is both the ground and the norm, as well as the content of her message."²

¹John Jefferson Davis, *Foundations of Evangelical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1984), 75. Davis suggests that the impact of revelation is felt in society at large: "The question of divine revelation has consequences that extend far beyond the bounds of the institutional church. The major institutions of Western civilization have been shaped in various ways under the impact of Judeo-Christian revelation" (97), its influence being seen in American law and government, American education, and in the rise of modern science. Davis cites historians of science, Alfred North Whitehead and Stanley L. Jaki, as his authorities for the idea that Christian revelation gave rise to modern science (106-7).

²Robert P. Lightner, *Evangelical Theology: A Survey and Review* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1986), 9. Evangelicals believe that God cannot truly be known except as he reveals himself, according to Morris: "It is this revelation of God which has always been seen as basic to serious study of theology. Man as man has no access to the inner life of God, no knowledge of God's essential being. Theology is not a study of 'God-in-himself' but of 'God-as-he-has-revealed-himself.'" Leon Morris, *I Believe in Revelation* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976), 11. Erickson asks the question whether the doctrine of God is more basic for studying theology, or the doctrine of revelation, and he answers it by suggesting that the two are so intertwined that one must begin with the study of both in establishing the foundation for all the rest of theology: "On this basis, both God and his self-revelation are presupposed together." Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1987), 33.

³James Orr, *Revelation and Inspiration* (New York: Charles Scribner's, 1916), 2, emphasis original.

²Emil Brunner, *Revelation and Reason: The Christian Doctrine of Faith and Knowledge* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1946), 3.

Evangelicals and non-evangelicals alike view the doctrine of creation as a most fundamental doctrine of the Bible.¹ Most doctrines of the Christian faith have as their starting point the doctrine of creation. The doctrine of God has as its starting point the declaration, "In the beginning God created . . ." (Gen 1:1). Otto Weber asserts: "We cannot know God's nature in any other way than through his work. . . .The doctrine of God's work [creation], in turn, can be nothing other than the doctrine of God from the point of view that God is the One who works. Both belong together."² After noting the close connection between the doctrine of creation and the doctrine of man and other doctrines, Millard Erickson remarks: "Alter the doctrine of creation at any point, and you have also altered these other aspects of Christian doctrine."³ The doctrine of Christ likewise cannot be divorced from the doctrine of creation, for "in the beginning was the Word," and "all things were made by Him" (John 1:1, 3). Claus Westermann, who is not an evangelical, sees a vital connection between Christ as redeemer and Christ as creator:

The Christian faith does not take its stand on an event at the beginning, but on an event in the 'middle of the time'; but because it looks to the whole, it must speak of the beginning. If Jesus Christ came

¹Donald McKim speaking on behalf of evangelicals has this to say about creation: "Since God as Creator is the explanation for the existence of the world and for human existence, it is the activity of creation that establishes our deepest and most essential relation to God: as Creator and thus Lord. The doctrine of God as Creator, then, is perhaps the most basic conception of God that we know." D. K. McKim, "Creation, Doctrine of," *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, 2nd ed., ed. Walter A. Elwell (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2001), 304. Perhaps the most widely used systematic theology today is Millard Erickson's *Christian Theology*. The condensed version of this notes the interconnection between creation and all other doctrines: "Our understanding of the doctrine of creation is important because of its effect upon our understanding of other doctrines. . . . Alter the doctrine of creation at any point, and you have also altered these other aspects of Christian doctrine." Millard J. Erickson, *Introducing Christian Doctrine*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2001), 130. The following research is designed to show the close connection between creation and revelation.

²Otto Weber, *Foundations of Dogmatics* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981), 463.

³Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 367.

as the savior of all humanity, then his coming in 'the middle of the time' must have something to do with the beginning. The Pauline and Johannine theologies alike are at pains to relate the event 'in the middle' with the event at the beginning.¹

The doctrine of eschatology, or last things, has no meaning without its foundation upon the doctrine of first things, or protology. "Creation and consummation," writes Bernhard Anderson, "first things and last things, are inseparably joined like Siamese twins. The first words of the Bible, 'in the beginning,' have as their counterpart the prophetic expectation, 'in the end.'"² One could paraphrase the words of Prenter, "Creation is the beginning of redemption, and redemption is the consummation of creation,"³ in the following way: "Creation is the beginning of eschatology, and eschatology is the consummation of creation."⁴

One can conclude that the doctrines of creation and revelation are two of the most pivotal doctrines in Christian theology, yet among evangelicals there is more confusion, more erosion, more redefinition within these areas than any other two areas of theological exploration. A prime example of this is to be found in the wide and varied interpretations of Gen 1 among evangelicals, especially when it comes to the meaning of the "days" of

¹Claus Westermann, *Genesis 1-11: A Commentary* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1984), 1. Emil Brunner views a vital interrelationship between the doctrines of creation and redemption in his work, *The Christian Doctrine of Creation and Redemption* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1952).

²Bernhard W. Anderson, *Creation versus Chaos: The Reinterpretation of Mythical Symbolism in the Bible* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987), 110. He goes on to observe that in Old Testament theology creation is an eschatological concept.

³Regin Prenter, *Creation and Redemption* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1967), 200.

⁴Hardy iterates this same point in a different way: "Taken in their interrelation, creation and eschatology therefore integrate space and time and the elements and processes by which they are mediated. . . So, viewed ontologically, eschatology is the unfolding of what is enfolded in protology." Daniel T. Hardy, "Creation and Eschatology," in *The Doctrine of Creation: Essays in Dogmatics, History and Philosophy*, ed. Colin E. Gunton (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1997), 115-116.

creation.¹ Chaos seems to hold sway among the opinions and views of evangelicals on the meaning of the creative days, for there is no single dominant paradigm among evangelicals on this subject. The analysis of the variant views becomes a case study of how complex the challenge is to harmonize Scriptural interpretation with contemporary science and how difficult it is to unite the evangelical doctrines of creation and revelation that intersect at their common starting point in Gen 1. It almost goes without saying that one's doctrine of revelation is bound to impact upon one's doctrine of creation, and one's doctrine of creation will unquestionably affect one's interpretation of the days of creation.

The Need for This Study

If, as already noted, the doctrine of revelation is perhaps the most fundamental doctrine in all of theology—otherwise, how would we know God, without divine revelation?—and if the doctrine of creation is viewed as the starting point for a discussion and exposition of the major doctrines of the Bible, including eschatology, then a focused study upon the very point where these two doctrines intersect, namely the interpretation of Gen 1, is merited. Within evangelicalism more confusion arises in an exposition of Gen 1 over the meaning of the creative days than upon many other subjects, such as the mode of creation (by fiat or by process, or through both) and the initial creative act (out of nothing, that is, *ex nihilo*, versus out of something). Time takes precedence over process, but a determination of process is dependent upon the amount of time involved.

¹The authoritative *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* (2001) lists six doctrinal areas that “are being hotly debated within evangelicalism” today, such as, God’s nature (e.g. his omniscience), humanity of Christ, salvation (e.g. universalism), inerrant Scriptures (versus “infallible” or “authoritative”), and hermeneutics. The following is one of the six: “Fifth, the traditional doctrine of direct creation (not necessarily twenty-four-hour day theories) is being replaced by theistic evolution.” Pierard and Elwell, 409. The shift is away from twenty-four-hour days to day-ages, then to theistic macro-evolution.

At the very core of the evangelical debate lies the question of the nature and scope of revelation, hence of biblical authority, which has occupied the church's attention from the earliest centuries when Christianity came in contact with Greek philosophy, to more recent centuries with the rise of modern science.¹ One of the greatest challenges to the Bible's authority emerged with the rise of Old Testament criticism in the eighteenth century and the development of modern geology in the nineteenth century, evoking a mostly negative response in the United States among the conservative, evangelical branch of Protestantism.²

According to Robert Price, neo-evangelical "thinkers including Bernard Ramm, Harold John Ockenga, Dewey M. Beegle as well as Carl F. H. Henry and E. J. Carnell sought to escape the fortress-mentality of fundamentalism and bring the faith of Warfield and Machen into a new world."³ Bernard Ramm in particular was anxious that the new

¹In the third century Origen synthesized Christianity with Alexandrian philosophy, lessening the full authority of Scripture by means of the allegorical method of interpretation. In the fifth century Augustine accomplished a lasting synthesis between Platonism and Christian theology, in which philosophy was relegated to the role of servant or handmaid to religion; and in the thirteenth century Thomas Aquinas performed a lasting marriage between Aristotelianism and Roman Catholic thought, in which the two are considered copartners in a mutual relationship. In the sixteenth century Copernicus and in the seventeenth century Galileo and Kepler brought about the downfall of the geocentric theory, thus challenging the authority of the church and in a lesser sense the authority of Scripture itself.

²One can define "evangelicalism" as the conservative branch of Protestantism characterized by revivalism and a high view of Scripture that eventually developed into a full-blown doctrine of biblical inerrancy. During the period of revivalism and apocalypticism in nineteenth-century America, the impact of geology with its "millions of years" was being felt even upon most evangelical scholars as the traditional, biblically based view of "six thousand years" was being abandoned. Various compromise schemes were developed as a result to explain Gen 1, the two most prominent being the view that the creation days represented geological eras and the view that millions of years could be inserted into a hypothetical gap between Gen 1:1 and 1:3. These two views, the first being known as the "day-age theory" and the second the "gap theory," were adopted by most fundamentalist leaders of the early twentieth century as a response to the evolutionism and higher criticism promoted by liberalism.

³Robert M. Price, "Neo-Evangelicals and Scripture: A Forgotten Period of Ferment," *Christian Scholar's Review* 15 (1986): 315.

evangelical movement should come to grips with the challenges presented by the Enlightenment.¹ As a result, evangelical thinkers started viewing modern science from a more friendly perspective, no longer as a foe as their fundamentalist forefathers had done.² Still, if science and Scripture were to be given equal authority, much as philosophy and religion were treated on par by Aquinas, evangelicals were bound to live with a certain amount of reinterpretation of Genesis in order to bring the Bible into alignment with scientific discovery. Such re-interpretations of Genesis, often employing the modified results of the critical methods, tended to cut to the core of the evangelical doctrine of Scripture, especially impacting on its authority. Hence, "one of the most explosive issues in the evangelical arena today is the doctrine of scripture"³--the nature and scope of revelation, its relation to science, and its authority in all fields of learning.

Concomitant with the advancing discoveries of modern science, especially geological science, evangelicalism has responded with a variety of interpretations of the early chapters of Genesis, thus suggesting that science may have become in some cases a major controlling factor in biblical exegesis. The wide divergences among evangelicals on Gen 1 are exemplified in their understanding of the days of creation, which ranges from considering them as literal days with millions of years interspersed between each day ("the

¹According to Ramm's thinking, "If it was the Enlightenment that toppled orthodoxy among the intelligentsia and brought forth liberalism as its result, then evangelical theology must come to terms with the Enlightenment as well." R. Albert Mohler, "Bernard Ramm: Karl Barth and the Future of American Evangelicalism," *Perspectives in Religious Studies* 17 (Winter 1990): 36.

²The anti-intellectual tendencies of Fundamentalism have been summarized in George M. Marsden's "Fundamentalism as an Intellectual Phenomenon," in *Fundamentalism and American Culture: The Shaping of Twentieth Century Evangelicalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980), 212-228.

³Price, 315.

intermittent-day theory"), to the idea that each day is intended to encompass a geological era ("the day-age theory"), or to the concept that each day is a prophetic picture pointing backwards to God's creative activity ("the pictorial-day theory"). More recently, evangelicals have moved beyond these three theories, first propounded in the nineteenth century, to the literary days concept (also known as the "framework hypothesis"), which in the future may become the reigning paradigm.¹ Still, evangelicalism displays a wide variety of views on Gen 1 within its ranks. Appendix A summarizes and categorizes these various views.

One of the greatest controversies in twentieth-century evangelicalism has been over the nature of inspiration—how to define the widely-held evangelical belief in inerrancy, the concept that Scripture is not liable to err. Does inerrancy entail matters of history and science in Scripture, or can it be limited to solely the theological statements of Scripture? This controversy came to a head in 1976 with the publication of *The Battle for the Bible* by leading evangelical theologian Harold Lindsell.² Amazingly, evangelical scholars, whether theologians or scientists, rarely interpret the creative days as six literal, consecutive, twenty-four-hour days within which all of life on this planet came into existence. This stands in direct contrast with scholars of more fundamentalist persuasion or scholars

¹Recent discussions of creation week are focusing upon the day-age view, as articulated by Hugh Ross, and the framework hypothesis, as advocated by Meredith Kline. For example, see David G. Hagopian, ed., *The Genesis Debate: Three Views on the Days of Creation* (Mission Viejo, CA: Crux Press, 2001). This recent work has been reviewed by doctoral candidate Scott Yoshikawa, of Trinity Evangelical University, who concludes that "of the three arguments presented [literal view, day-age theory, framework hypothesis], the strongest by far is the framework view." Scott Yoshikawa, review of *The Genesis Debate: Three Views on the Days of Creation*, ed. David G. Hagopian, *The Upper Register*, 2000, http://www.upper-register.com/other_studies/review_genesis_debate.html (January 6, 2005).

²Harold Lindsell, *The Battle for the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1976).

advocating what is loosely called a "liberal" position, such as process theologians, neo-orthodox, existentialist, or radical higher critics. These two camps, lying to the right and to the left on the theological spectrum of evangelicalism respectively, are united in viewing the days of creation as six consecutive, twenty-four-hour days.

What is clear from a survey of prominent works by theologians and exegetes is that evangelicals appear to be inconsistent in their interpretation of the days of creation. While viewing the narratives of Abraham and onward starting with Gen 11 as being literal and historical, they view the early accounts of the origin of this world as historical, yet non-literal--an apparent contradiction in methodology.¹ The question begs to be answered, Why do we find an inconsistency in evangelical interpretation between the non-literal application of the seven days in Gen 1 and the literal application of events, their sequence, and their timing in the narratives of Abraham in Gen 11-50?

Statement and Justification of the Problem

Evangelicals over the past fifty years have maintained a high view on the authority of Scripture, endowing it with authority even in the areas of science and history, yet apparently allowing science to influence, if not dictate, their interpretations of specific passages of Scripture, such as Gen 1. Generally, they hold to the inerrancy of Scripture,

¹Crucial to this study is the definition of the term "literal." Early Christian and Jewish interpretation was for the most part based upon the grammatico-historical method of exegesis, whereby two types of meaning are recognized: 1) the literal and 2) the figurative. By the Middle Ages the four-fold sense of Scripture was developed, which was partitioned into the literal, moral, allegorical, and anagogical senses. The first of the four senses is defined as: "the literal sense, which related the things done and said in the biblical record according to its surface meaning." F. F. Bruce and J. J. Scott, "Interpretation of the Bible," *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, 2nd ed., 613. This stands in contrast to the figurative sense, which looks for a deeper or more abstract reality than what is on the surface. Days of creation involving more than twenty-four hours are then considered to be figurative or metaphorical.

even in the areas of science and history. They uphold propositional revelation as opposed to other forms of revelation. Their system of hermeneutics is based largely on the grammatical-historical method of interpretation inherited from the Protestant reformers, although some use modified forms of the historical-critical method. Nevertheless, they tend to take the literal view of Scripture as the most natural one, thus accepting for instance the supernaturalness of miracles, the virgin birth, the resurrection, and of creation.

When it comes to the days of creation in Gen 1, however, the large majority of evangelicals choose the figurative or non-literal interpretation over the literal view, while treating the other Genesis narratives as literally and historically accurate. Although overlooked by the majority of evangelical scholars, this inconsistency has been noted by a few, such as James Barr.¹

The question facing us is this: On what basis do evangelicals arrive at distinctly different ways of interpreting Gen 1, ranging from strictly literal to largely symbolic, when the large majority are in agreement on the importance of propositional revelation, Scriptural inerrancy, and the perspicuity of that revelation? In attempting to answer this question, this study will analyze the thought of two leading neo-evangelical theologians who have addressed in depth the nature of revelation as well as its relation to creation, namely Carl F. H. Henry and Bernard L. Ramm--both Baptist systematic theologians with doctoral degrees in the area of philosophy. One of the leading historians of modern evangelicalism, Mark

¹The Oxford University scholar with evangelical roots, James Barr, has been one of the most outspoken in criticizing evangelicals for alternating between the literal and non-literal approaches to Genesis in order to preserve its inerrancy. See for example his *Fundamentalism* (London: SCM Press, 1981), 40-41. In a later work he is even more strident in his attack on the evangelical inconsistency for holding to various non-literal interpretations of Gen 1. See his *Beyond Fundamentalism* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1984), 137.

Noll, ranks Bernard Ramm with Carl Henry and E. J. Carnell as the leaders of a "postwar renewal" of evangelical theology.¹ Stanley Grenz and Roger Olson describe Henry and Ramm as the most representative and articulate voices within evangelicalism.² Entire issues of two Baptist scholarly journals have been devoted to honoring these two theologians.³

Both Carl F. H. Henry and Bernard L. Ramm advocate a non-literal approach to the

¹Mark A. Noll, "Evangelicals and the Study of the Bible," in *Evangelicalism and Modern America*, 112. The same thought is expressed in idem, *Between Faith and Criticism: Evangelicals, Scholarship, and the Bible in America* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1986), 178. According to Arnold Hustad, Millard Erickson's 1968 summary of evangelicalism, *The New Evangelical Theology*, is largely based upon the writings and thought of E. J. Carnell, Carl F. H. Henry, and Bernard Ramm, its earliest pioneers and leading thinkers. Arnold Hustad, "Bibliographic Essay on the Works of Millard J. Erickson," in *New Dimensions in Evangelical Thought: Essays in Honor of Millard J. Erickson*, ed. David S. Dockery (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1998), 443. Early on scholars have recognized both Henry and Ramm as two of the most prominent leaders of the modern evangelical movement. E. J. Carnell is excluded from this doctoral study because his writings upon the subjects of both creation and revelation are not nearly as extensive as those of Ramm and Henry.

²Stanley J. Grenz and Roger E. Olson, *Twentieth-Century Theology: God and the World in a Transitional Age* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1992), 288ff. These sentiments are echoed by others. Kelvin Neal Jones in his dissertation considers Henry to be "the definitive theologian of evangelical Christianity in the twentieth century." "Revelation and Reason in the Theology of Carl F. H. Henry, James I. Packer, and Ronald H. Nash" (Ph.D. dissertation, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1994), 38. Clark Pinnock had these glowing words for one with whom he held much in common: "Bernard Ramm is a quintessential postfundamentalist [evangelical] theologian of the postwar period in America." "Bernard Ramm: Postfundamentalist Coming to Terms with Modernity," *Perspectives in Religious Studies* 17 (Winter 1990): 9.

³Stanley Grenz in introducing the Winter 1990 issue of *Perspectives in Religious Studies* dedicated to Bernard Ramm states: "The essays in this festschrift offer a tribute to this great evangelical and Baptist leader," who is ranked along with Carl Henry and Billy Graham as the three pioneers of the fledgling new evangelical movement. Stanley J. Grenz, "Editor's Introduction," *Perspectives in Religious Studies* 17 (Winter 1990): 5. The Winter 2004 issue of *The Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* is entitled, "Carl F. H. Henry (1913-2003): A Tribute." Stephen Wellum introduces the issue by remarking: "To find Christian pastors, teachers, and theologians who understand our *Zeitgeist* [or 'battle ground' as suggested by Martin Luther], and are able both to pinpoint the crucial challenges of our day with biblical-theological precision and address our situation in a prophetic voice with the truth of the gospel is indeed rare. . . . In our day, Carl F. H. Henry was one such individual." Stephen J. Wellum, "Editorial: Remembering Carl F. H. Henry (1913-2003)," *The Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 8, 4 (2004): 2.

days of creation, although they have distinctly different methods for interpreting Gen 1.¹ This being true, a study of the writings of these two scholars as leading thinkers among evangelicals should shed light on the question of why evangelicals in general can so readily adopt non-literal approaches to the days of creation and other details in Gen 1 while viewing the remainder of the biblical narrative as historical.

Purpose and Scope of the Study

From a broad perspective this dissertation investigates the impact that one's doctrine of revelation has upon one's understanding of Gen 1, viewed from evangelical presuppositions. As will be noted shortly, the two leading evangelical scholars who have discussed extensively the relationship of science and theology and have presented a well-developed doctrine of revelation are Carl F. H. Henry and Bernard L. Ramm. The works of both scholars have been carefully examined to delineate the degree to which one's doctrine of revelation has a direct impact upon one's doctrine of creation.²

¹Carl F. H. Henry does not limit the Hebrew term *yom* ("day") to twenty-four hours, thus opening the door to the "day-age" theory, emphasizing Gen 1 as being in correct chronological sequence. *God, Revelation and Authority*, vol. 6 (Waco, TX: Word Books), 114, 133, 145-146, 226; hereafter cited as *GRA*. On the other hand, Bernard Ramm sets forth the "pictorial-day view" of the creation days. Gen 1 is treated as prophecy in reverse; the visions of past geological events were presented to the inspired author on seven different days, thought to be literal, on which he recorded what he had seen. However, the events described lasted millions of years and did not occur in the same sequence that the visions were given. Bernard L. Ramm, *The Christian View of Science and Scripture* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1954), 218-226; hereafter cited as *CVSS*.

²Both Ramm and Henry have written prolifically on the subject of revelation--its meaning, purpose, importance to all of theology, etc. Both men are agreed in viewing the doctrine of revelation as being fundamental to the Christian faith and mission in this world. Henry begins volume 2 of his classic six-volume set, *God, Revelation and Authority*, with these words: "Nowhere does the crisis of modern theology find a more critical center than in the controversy over the reality and nature of divine disclosure" (that is to say, revelation). *God, Revelation and Authority*, vol. 2, *God Who Speaks and Shows: Fifteen Theses, Part One* (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1976), 7. Kelvin N. Jones in his dissertation on Henry rightly notes that "Henry's theological Mount Everest is that 'divine revelation is the source of all truth, the truth of Christianity included. . . . The task of Christian theology is to exhibit the content of biblical revelation as an orderly whole'" (79-80). Ramm describes the importance of revelation in its relation to redemption:

More specifically, the purpose of this study is to describe, analyze, and evaluate the views of two leading evangelical theologians, Carl F. H. Henry and Bernard L. Ramm, in order to discover the rationale for why they adopt a basically non-literal approach to Gen 1, while advocating a literal, historical approach to the other narratives in Genesis and in the rest of Scripture. Ramm's ground-breaking book, *The Christian View of Science and Scripture* (1954), rapidly became the most influential book on science and theology issues among evangelicals and has dominated discussion on the subject until the end of the twentieth century.¹ At the same time, much of what Henry wrote on the subject after 1954 was in reaction to Ramm's accommodationist understanding of Scripture that allowed

"Redemption is more fundamental than revelation in the sense that revelation is light thrown upon redemption, but from the perspective of religious theory of knowledge special revelation is *the most important doctrine of the Christian faith*." Bernard L. Ramm, *Special Revelation and the Word of God*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1961), 19, emphasis added.

¹The year after Ramm's book was published, Joseph T. Bayly, editor of *His* magazine, wrote these words, since then proven accurate: "Some day this book may be considered a landmark of changed attitudes among evangelical Christians toward evolution and science, and, conceivably, toward the Bible itself." Joseph T. Bayly, "The Christian View of Science and Scripture: A Critical Review of Bernard Ramm's Book," *Eternity*, August 1955, 4. Nearly forty years later, Joseph L. Spradley writing from a more favorable viewpoint towards the book summarized its influence as follows: "Publication of Ramm's *The Christian View of Science and Scripture* (1954) was one of the most important events in the postwar emergence of evangelicals from nearly a half-century of conflict with science." "Changing Views of Science and Scripture: Bernard Ramm and the ASA," *Perspectives on Science and Christian Faith* 44 (March 1992): 5. Mark Noll correctly notes that Ramm's book was the catalyst for the formation of the modern creationist movement, in that John C. Whitcomb and Henry M. Morris wrote their book, *The Genesis Flood* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1961) as a response to Ramm's 1954 work and thus inaugurated what is now known as "scientific creationism." Mark Noll, *Scandal of the Evangelical Mind* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 191. A seasoned assessment of Ramm's work some fifty years later states that it "unleashed a firestorm" among evangelicals, opening the door to a localized flood, a figurative "long day of Joshua," an ancient earth, and to a degree theistic evolution (or "progressive creation"). Stanley J. Grenz, *Renewing the Center: Evangelical Theology in a Post-Theological Era* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2000), 106. Another fairly recent assessment of Ramm's book, which is acknowledged as being "very influential among evangelicals" is critical of it for making "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." Bob E. Patterson, "Modern Science and Contemporary Biblical Interpretation: Ramm's Contribution," *Perspectives in Religious Studies* 17 (Winter 1990): 66. This last statement reflects the trend in evangelicalism of finding in Gen 1 less and less science and more and more theology in more recent times.

portions of Genesis to be reinterpreted by science.¹

A major focus of this study is upon the doctrine of revelation/inspiration as it relates to the doctrine of creation. Since both Ramm and Henry have written extensively on the nature of revelation/inspiration as well as the Scriptural view of creation, this study is limited to those aspects of the issue that lie at the interface of both revelation and creation. It will not concern itself with their views on geology per se, but with their views on theology. Geological questions, such as the age of the earth or evidences for creation and the Biblical Flood, are outside the scope of this study.

Conversely, the philosophical presuppositions undergirding each man's doctrine of revelation/inspiration are illuminating and will prove to be of importance in clarifying each one's concept of creation. Henry is noted for having adopted the philosophical methodology of apriorism, or presuppositionalism, which he inherited from Gordon H. Clark, his mentor.² By contrast, Ramm has advocated the evidentialist approach to

¹Henry feels that Ramm was too enamored with the findings of modern science and accepted such findings uncritically. Carl F. H. Henry, interview by the author, 1 April 1993, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, Deerfield, IL.

²Grenz and Olson, 293. James E. White in his doctoral dissertation also notes that Carl Henry is a presuppositionalist. "The Concept of Truth in Contemporary American Evangelical Theology" (Ph.D. dissertation, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1991), 144. He considers the question of presuppositionalism versus evidentialism to be "the great divide" among evangelicals (145). Presuppositionalism, also called apriorism, begins with certain absolutes, such as "the consistency of truth" principle. When applied to Scripture, it starts with the position that since the Bible is from God, it must therefore be true. No attempt is made to "prove" Scripture to be true. For further discussion of presuppositionalism from an evangelical viewpoint, see Stephen R. Spencer, "Fideism and Presuppositionalism," *Grace Theological Journal* 8 (1987): 89-99. An assessment subsequent to Henry's death has characterized him as a proponent of "Biblical foundationalism," which is similar to presuppositionalism, but distinct from Cartesian foundationalism. Chad Owen Brand, "Is Carl Henry a Modernist? Rationalism and Foundationalism in Post-War Evangelical Theology," *The Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 8, 4 (2004): 52-53. Brand concludes: "Carl Henry has resisted the move toward epistemological skepticism and rank fideism, without at the same time capitulating to Cartesian or Lockean foundationalism." (54).

philosophy and Christian apologetics.¹ These two approaches seem to have influenced each author's doctrine of revelation/inspiration in differing, but significant, ways. Such will deserve further detailed investigation in this study.

Outside the scope of this study are the exegetical and lexical questions over the meaning of the Hebrew *yom* ("day") as it is employed in Gen 1. Contemporary studies from evangelical, fundamentalist, and liberal/critical perspectives are available for supporting a literal usage of *yom* in Gen 1.² A systematic theological study, such as presented here, must rely upon the detailed exegetical studies of biblical theologians and the works of Hebrew grammarians, especially upon the meaning of *yom* in Gen 1.

¹Grenz and Olson, 301. Evidentialism starts with the facts at hand, and derives from them the "evidences" or "proofs" of the truthfulness of Christianity and the trustworthiness of Scripture. For a discussion of evidentialism see John W. Montgomery, ed., *Evidence for Faith: Deciding the God Question* (Dallas: Probe Books, 1991), especially 15-22, 23-37. This volume contains papers presented at the Cornell Symposium on Evidential Apologetics, Ithaca, New York, 1986.

²Representative of conservative scholarly studies in support of the literalness of the creation days are the following: John James Davis, *Paradise to Prison: Studies in Genesis* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1975); J. Ligon Duncan and David W. Hall, "The 24-hour View," in *The Genesis Debate*, ed. D. G. Hagopian, 19-119; Terence E. Fretheim, "Were the Days of Creation Twenty-four Hours Long? [Yes]" in *The Genesis Debate: Persistent Questions about Creation and the Flood*, ed. Ronald F. Youngblood (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1990), 12-35; James B. Jordan, *Creation in Six Days: a Defense of the Traditional Reading of Genesis One* (Moscow, ID: Canon Press, 1999); Douglas M. Lindsay Judisch, "The Length of the Days of Creation," *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 52 (1988): 265-271; Robert V. McCabe, "A Defense of Literal Days in the Creation Week," *Detroit Baptist Seminary Journal* 5 (2000): 97-123; Charles Ryrie, *Basic Theology* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1986), 184-186; James Stambaugh, "The Days of Creation: A Semantic Approach," *Creation Ex Nihilo Technical Journal* 5 (1991): 70-78; Noel Weeks, *The Sufficiency of Scripture* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1988), 95-118; and John C. Whitcomb, *The Early Earth: An Introduction to Biblical Creationism* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1986), 28-40. None of these scholars holds the prominence of a Ramm or a Henry among evangelicals today. The one evangelical study that relies the most heavily upon non-evangelical scholars in support of the literalness of the creation days is also perhaps more linguistically oriented than most contemporary evangelical studies on this topic: Gerhard F. Hasel, "The 'Days' of Creation in Genesis 1: Literal 'Days' or Figurative 'Periods/Epochs' of Time?" *Origins* 21 (1994): 5-38. The most helpful historical-critical investigations that lead to the conclusion that the days should be considered literal are found in Old Testament word-study books: Ernst Jenni, "Jom, Tag," *Theologisches Handwörterbuch zum Alten Testament*, ed. Ernst Jenni and Claus Westermann (Munich: Chr. Kaiser, 1984), 1:709; and Magne Saeboe, "Yom," *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, ed. G. Johannes Botterweck and Helmer Ringgren (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 6:23.

Research Methodology

The approach adopted in this dissertation is descriptive, comparative, analytical, and evaluative. The descriptive aspect necessitates an accurate summarization and synthesis of the views of Henry and Ramm on revelation and creation from a sympathetic perspective. The comparative quest is to delineate the significant similarities and differences between the two theologians. The analytic aspect goes a step further and uncovers reasons why there are distinct differences between the two men, even though their thinking arose within the same theological milieu. This necessitates examining the presuppositions behind the doctrine of revelation held by each. The evaluative aspect addresses thus far one unanswered question: Why do both men in general adopt a non-literal approach to Gen 1, when they accept the essential historicity of the later chapters of Genesis?

The evaluative test applied to each man's views is that of logical consistency and coherence. Consistency involves looking for internal consistency within the writings of each theologian as well as external consistency whereby the thought of each individual is compared and contrasted with the thought on the given topic both within and without evangelicalism.

Statement of the Thesis

The issue to be examined is whether two evangelical theologians (i.e. Carl F. H. Henry and Bernard L. Ramm), who both believe in propositional revelation and the essential inerrancy of Scripture, are inconsistent in their methodology when they adopt an interpretation of Gen 1 that upholds the general historicity of the creation narrative and yet

sidesteps the literal nature of the days of creation. A related issue that needs to be addressed is why these two prominent theologians who have similar evangelical roots and training can pursue distinctly different approaches to understanding Gen 1. The starting premise of this study is that one's doctrine of revelation determines one's approach to the doctrine of creation, and not vice versa. An additional premise is that one's philosophical presuppositions as well as one's theological methodology will directly impact upon one's doctrine of revelation and upon the related issue of inspiration.

Outline of the Research

Chapter 2 provides the historical setting and background requisite for understanding the sometimes complex debate by neo-evangelicals in the last fifty years on the subject of the relation of science and revelation, especially as it affects the doctrine of revelation and the authority of Scripture. Chapter 3 summarizes and analyzes the doctrines of revelation and creation as found within the writings of Bernard Ramm, and chapter 4 accomplishes the same within the writings of Carl Henry.

Chapter 5 takes the information presented in chapters 3 and 4 and probes much deeper in its evaluative and analytic tasks in attempting to ascertain why the two men pursue different courses on the question of creation and especially the days of creation while at the same time holding in common much of evangelical belief. A cause-and-effect relationship should be apparent between differing aspects of their respective doctrines of revelation and their differing interpretations of Gen 1. In this chapter the chain of cause and effect is carried one step further in order to uncover the philosophical presuppositions upon which each of the two scholars has constructed his doctrine of creation to determine if

ultimately such presuppositions have had an impact on the specifics of each one's interpretation of Gen 1. It is my sincere hope that the evangelical understanding of Gen 1 might come into better focus, and a more consistent view can be upheld within the context of the pivotal doctrines of creation and revelation.

The dissertation ends with chapter 6, which consists of a summary and conclusions. It also suggests areas of future research that should complement this study.

Review of the Literature

Two primary sources among the many other writings of Ramm and Henry elucidate their respective views on the subject of the relationship of science and religion, especially illuminating how their understanding of revelation impacts on their interpretation of Gen 1. The one, Bernard Ramm's 1954 work, *The Christian View of Science and Scripture*, has become a classic study on the relationship of science and religion for evangelicals during the last fifty years.¹ The other, volume 6 of Henry's magnum opus, *God, Revelation and Authority*, provides an incisive and comprehensive analysis of the doctrine of creation as it directly relates to the doctrine of revelation.² Both studies are the primary documents for understanding the views of their authors. The decades following the publishing of Ramm's epochal 1954 work witnessed a running debate between Henry and Ramm over the

¹This work was the main vehicle for introducing "progressive creation" to evangelicals--the concept that God creates by fiat new life forms at various progressive stages during the long geological ages, followed by a certain amount of evolutionary development after each creation.

²Carl F. H. Henry's *God, Revelation and Authority*, Vol. 6. *God Who Stands and Stays, Part Two* (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1983) is largely devoted to expounding Henry's doctrine of creation as it relates both to his doctrine of revelation and his doctrine of God.

relationship between scientific thought and biblical revelation.¹

An abundance of secondary literature written both by evangelicals and by non-evangelicals analyzing the evangelical response to science and religion issues in the last fifty years is readily available. Such is listed in the Bibliography at the end of this dissertation. Some works are devoted to an analysis of the creationist views of either Henry² or Ramm,³ but thus far none has concentrated on comparing/contrasting the views of Henry and Ramm on science and religion.

A survey of doctoral dissertations and master's theses has uncovered twenty-three doctoral dissertations that are directly pertinent to our study, besides fifteen master's theses that specifically deal with the theology of either Carl Henry or Bernard Ramm and six master's theses that examine the literalness of the creation days.⁴ Of the seventeen doctoral dissertations that focus upon (or highlight) Carl Henry, four cover his teachings on ethics, sociology, and politics; three analyze his apologetic method; one discusses his philosophy (ontology and epistemology, in particular); two his reaction to the views of Karl Barth; one

¹Two examples of this running debate are Henry's article, "Science and Religion," in *Contemporary Evangelical Thought*, ed. Carl F. H. Henry (Great Neck, NY: Channel Press, 1957), 247-282, in which the author expresses concern about Ramm's progressive creationism as well as Fundamentalism's strict creationism, and Ramm's article-length review of *God, Revelation and Authority*, entitled "Carl Henry's Magnum Opus," *Eternity* 28 (March 1977): 58-63, in which Ramm critiques Henry for failing to give due recognition to the value of biblical criticism.

²See for example, Bob Patterson, *Carl F. H. Henry* (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1983), 140-145.

³See for example, Patterson, "Modern Science and Contemporary Biblical Interpretation," 55-67.

⁴Bibliographic information on the doctoral dissertations and master's theses discussed is found in the "Unpublished Documents" section of the Bibliography. The six master's theses devoted to a study of the length of the creation days are authored by E. D. Miller (1949), R. T. Belton (1961), S. Genden (1975), D. E. Conrad (1984), J. M. Huston (1986), and S. H. Yoo (1989). The master's theses devoted to Carl Henry are by D. P. Haney (1965), R. H. Warneck (1968), M. W. Dempster (1969), J. R. Zeigler (1979), D. G. Marion (1984), M. Knoecklein (1988), R. M. Wade (1990), J. Karanja (1990), R. L. Williams (1991), E. J. Miller (1994), and K. N. P. Hahner (2001). Master's theses dealing with Bernard Ramm's theology are by G. B. Weaver (1960), R. D. McCormick (1980), M. C. Popovich (1982), and R. L. Jones (1985).

his doctrine of God; one his doctrine of atonement; four his views on inspiration and/or revelation; and one his systematic theology in general.¹ Three doctoral dissertations concentrate on Bernard Ramm--two dealing with his doctrine of revelation, and one covering his systematic theology in general.² In addition, one doctoral dissertation touches upon Ramm's response to Karl Barth.³ One doctoral dissertation deals with the theology of both Henry and Ramm, in addition to that of Edward J. Carnell.⁴ Two doctoral dissertations have been located which address the interrelationship between the doctrines of revelation and creation,⁵ but neither of these deals with evangelical thought. Four doctoral dissertations elaborate on evangelical approaches to resolving the science and religion issues; one on the evangelical views of revelation; and one on the evangelical understanding of epistemology.⁶ Two doctoral dissertations explicate the medieval

¹The four on Henry's ethics are by G. E. Farley (1966), R. E. Anderson (1983), M. M. Kiš (1983), and D. L. Weeks (1991); the three on his apologetics are by R. A. Purdy (1980), W. E. Johnson (1989), and K. N. Jones (1994); the one on Henry's philosophy is by S. M. Hutchens (1989); the two on issues raised by Barth's theology are by S. W. Sorge (1987) and R. A. Mohler (1989); the one on his doctrine of God is by T. R. McNeal (1986); the one on the atonement is by A. K. Jacobs (1985); the four on inspiration/revelation are by G. M. Galloway (1996), B. Kharbteng (1997), P. E. Murphy (1998), and S. L. Oldham (2000); and the remaining one is by L. D. Sharp (1972).

²The two are by R. A. Day (1979) and K. R. Pulliam (1986), and the one is by D. W. Miller (1982).

³R. A. Mohler (1989). Mohler also covers Carl F. H. Henry and a number of other evangelical theologians.

⁴M. J. Erickson (1963).

⁵Franklin D. Steen, "Tayler Lewis on Scripture: A Defense of Revelation and Creation in Nineteenth Century America" (Th.D. dissertation, Westminster Theological Seminary, 1971); Samuel David Smith, "A Study of the Relation between the Doctrine of Creation and the Doctrine of Revelation through the Created Universe in the Thought of John Calvin, Friedrich Schleiermacher and Paul Tillich" (Ph.D. dissertation, Vanderbilt University, 1965).

⁶The four are by W. C. Duke (1982), T. A. McIver (1989), D. L. Russell (1993), M. A. Kalthoff (1998); the one on revelation is by K. R. Trembath (1984); and the one on epistemology is by J. E. White (1991).

understanding of the days of creation in Gen 1.¹ However, only one doctoral dissertation is known to have been completed on the topic of the days of creation within contemporary evangelicalism, which it approaches from an exegetical, a philosophical, and a scientific standpoint.² Needed is a doctoral study on the thought of two of the great evangelical minds—Carl F. H. Henry and Bernard L. Ramm—on the subject of revelation/inspiration as it directly impinges on the understanding of creation, especially the nature of the days of creation.

¹F. E. Robbins (1912) and G. Freibergs (1981).

²Raymond L. Scott, "The Length of the Creation Days and the Age of the Earth: Historical, Exegetical, and Scientific Considerations" (Th.D. dissertation, Grace Theological Seminary, 1984). My approach differs from Scott's in that I am analyzing the views of two theologians on the subject; Scott does not critique or analyze the views of any specific theologian or group of theologians. His views parallel closely those of his major professor, John C. Whitcomb, who worked closely with Henry M. Morris in founding the modern creationist movement.

CHAPTER 2

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND TO EVANGELICAL VIEWS ON REVELATION AND CREATION

Twentieth-century evangelicalism has its historical roots primarily in the Protestant Reformation, but secondarily in the entire history of Christian thought. This research attempts to outline two major theological strands, the doctrine of revelation and the doctrine of creation, as they are articulated by the most influential thinkers from the second or third centuries A.D. to the present. This tracing of the two strands is highly selective, in that its focus is upon those thinkers whose ideas are relevant to the twentieth-century debate among evangelicals over the proper relationship between science and theology, especially focusing upon the specific arena of Gen 1 and the understanding of the days of creation. A variety of evangelical and non-evangelical sources for tracing this outline have been consulted. Heavy reliance is made upon the work of the conservative contemporary Roman Catholic theologian, Stanley L. Jaki, who has analyzed a variety of ways theologians and philosophers have attempted to harmonize Gen 1 with the scientific thought contemporary to their time.¹ The theme of his book is that all attempts at concordism, or bringing one's

¹Stanley L. Jaki, *Genesis 1 through the Ages*, 2nd rev. ed. (Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press, 1998). Jaki provides a thorough analysis of the views of theologians throughout church history relative to their understanding of Gen 1 and the days of creation. A much briefer study on this topic is Jack P. Lewis, "The Days of Creation: An Historical Survey of Interpretation," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 32 (1989): 433-455.

view of Gen 1 into line with current scientific thought, have failed by not doing justice to the major topics and purposes of Gen 1. This theme has relevance to the subsequent analysis and critique of the views of both Bernard Ramm and Carl F. H. Henry.

This study begins with a survey of the historical background by examining carefully the various views of Christian thought leaders on the length and nature of the days of creation. The approach here is to start first with the crux of the issue that often divides modern-day evangelicals into competing camps on the topic of the relationship of science and theology, and that is the length of the creation days and the time allowed for creation. Then I will move on to the broader topics of revelation, inspiration, and creation as they impinge upon the evangelical debates on science and religion.

Survey of Christianity's Understanding of the Days of Creation

Early Church and Medieval Periods

The New Testament writers do not address, or clearly allude to, the seven days of creation week other than to the seventh day itself, although they frequently refer to the act of creation.¹ In the apostolic age the seven days of creation were assumed to be a reality, in line with contemporary Jewish writings.² Christian writers of the second century discuss

¹Many New Testament passages refer to creation and allude to Gen 1:1-2:3, such as, John 1:1-3; Matt 19:4-5; Acts 17:24-26; 1 Cor 8:6; Eph 3:9; Col 1:15-16; 11:3; and Rev 4:11; 10:6. The seventh day is explicitly mentioned in Heb 4:4. The issue in many New Testament creation passages is whether Christ as Son of God can be considered Creator, not the nature and duration of the creation days. Rev 14:7 has a possible allusion to the days of creation via Exod 20:8-11, according to John T. Baldwin. See his "Revelation 14:7: An Angel's Worldview," in *Creation, Catastrophe, and Calvary: Why a Global Flood Is Vital to the Doctrine of Atonement*, ed. John T. Baldwin (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2000), 19-39.

²Josephus in *Antiquities*, 1.1.1, describes the events of the six days of creation and relates them to the Sabbath, citing Exod 20:11. The writer of the *Slavonic Apocalypse of Enoch* (II Enoch 27:4-30:8), dated to the late first century A.D., portrays the first six days of creation also in a literal sense.

the creation days in light of the 1,000-year theory, the concept that the six days of creation are prophetic figures of the 6,000 years of earth history suggested by the Septuagint chronology. The seventh day, or Sabbath, then is symbolic of the 1,000 years of millennial rest preceding or following the second advent. These concepts first appear in the *Epistle of Barnabas* and reappear in Irenaeus, Hippolytus, Lactantius, Cyprian, Jerome, and in the writings of many other early church theologians and leaders.¹ Gen 1 in the minds of these early Christian theologians is viewed more than an account of the world's beginning, but it provides a prophetic chronology for the world's ending, thought to be after exactly 6,000 years of history. This prophetic aspect of Gen 1 has relevance to certain interpretations found among nineteenth- and twentieth-century evangelicals.² Even within a prophetic application of the creation days the twenty-four-hour element of the actual creation days is still retained.

The writings of the early church fathers display considerable variation upon the concept of strict, twenty-four-hour days for creation week, due largely to the influence of Jewish allegorism, Greek philosophy, or pagan cosmogonies. The earliest church fathers who unambiguously advocate a creation week of six twenty-four-hour days are Theophilus

¹A succinct summary of the 7000-year theory is found in Irenaeus: "For in as many days as this world was made, in so many thousand years shall it be concluded. . . . For the day of the Lord is as a thousand years [2 Pet 3:8]; and in six days created things were completed: it is evident, therefore, that they will come to an end at the sixth." *ANF* 1:557. Psa 90:4 also is quoted in support of the theory. For Barnabas, see *Epistle of Barnabas*, 15:4, 5; for Hippolytus, see *ANF* 5:179; for Cyprian, see *ANF* 5:496; and for Jerome see Migne, *Patrologiae Latina (PL)*, vol. 22, col. 1172, cited in Leroy Edwin Froom, *Prophetic Faith of Our Fathers: The Historical Development of the Prophetic Interpretation* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1946), 1:448. For a score or more of other references dating to the period from the second century through the Reformation, consult the indexes of Froom, *Prophetic Faith of Our Fathers*, vols. 1 and 2 under the entries of "1000 years" and "6000 years" in "prophetic chronology."

²Especially in the thought of Bernard L. Ramm, who advocated the "revelatory-days" or "prophetic-days" interpretation of Gen 1, to be discussed in greater detail in chapter 3.

of Antioch, Methodius, Lactantius, Victorinus of Pettau, Ephrem of Syria, Epiphanius of Salamis, Basil of Caesarea, Cyril of Jerusalem, and Ambrose of Milan—covering the period from about A.D. 180 to A.D. 400.¹ The earliest examples of church fathers advocating non-literal or figurative days for Gen 1 are the Alexandrian fathers, Clement and Origen, who lived at the last half of the second century and first half of the third century. These adopted the allegorical methods of the Jewish theologian Philo, also of Alexandria, who looked for levels of meaning within the biblical text. The literal meaning was a window for viewing the deeper figurative meanings of the text, which for the Christian writers often had a Christological or ecclesiastical emphasis.

The outstanding example of an early church father down through the end of the fifth century who understood the creation days in a non-literal sense is Augustine of Hippo (A.D. 354-430). Most evangelicals who are advocating the creation days as being figurative refer back to Augustine as the most influential figure in the early church for moving the interpretation away from a strictly literal interpretation.² Contrary to what some evangelicals infer, Augustine did not view the creation days as occupying millions of years each. What he saw was that all things in the entire universe were created at once, in a single instant of time. His concept of the instantaneous creation of all is founded upon one

¹Based largely on Robert I. Bradshaw, “The Days of Genesis 1,” in *Creationism & the Early Church*, chap. 3, <http://www.robibrad.demon.co.uk/Chapter3.htm> (26 January 2005).

²For example, Davis A. Young, *Christianity and the Age of the Earth* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1982), 22-23; Henri Blocher, *In the Beginning: The Opening Chapters of Genesis* (Leicester, Eng.: InterVarsity, 1984), 49; and Ramm, *The Christian View of Science and Scripture*, 77. (This last-named work is abbreviated as *CVSS*.) Ramm states: “Progressive creation was taught as early as Augustine. . . . He taught original *ex nihilo* creation, and subsequent formation, or creation and formation (*formatio*).” Ibid. “Progressive creation” is the evangelical term for a variety of views that treat the creation days as non-literal and describe creation as taking place over millions of years.

passage in the Apocrypha, *Sirach* 18:1, which according to the Latin translation asserts: “He who lives forever created all things at once [i.e., simultaneously].”¹ How can this be, if the Creator took seven days to create all things, Augustine queries? His solution is that creation has two phases: the first is the creation of all things instantaneously as “seminal principles,” a view adapted from Pythagorean and Stoic philosophy, and second is the formation or shaping of the created works. The six days are dramatic representations of the second aspect or the formation portion of creation. While on the one hand Augustine acknowledges that the creation days are indeed six days, on the other hand he unveils the deeper theological meaning of the opening chapter of the Bible “in which the six days are seen as prophecy showing the six ages of human history, the six stages of human life, and the six stages of growth in the spiritual life. At each level, the seventh day of Sabbath rest symbolizes the reality of heaven.”² The influence of allegorization is evident in Augustine’s thought on Gen 1.

Actually Augustine’s views on the six days are similar to some of his predecessors. Ambrose of Milan (A.D. 339-397) in his noted work *Hexaemeron* suggests that the creation of all took place in one day and that this one day was repeated six times, an idea that

¹Thomas Aquinas in his discussion of Augustine’s views on the days of creation cites *Sirach* (Ecclesiasticus) 18:1 as the scriptural basis for Augustine’s view (see Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, question 74, art. 2.) Jack Lewis notes Augustine’s multiple use of *Sirach* 18:1 (“The Days of Creation,” 440, 443). In addition to the influence of the apocrypha, church fathers were influenced by Philo, no doubt, who iterates the following on the six days: “He [Moses] says that in six days the world was created, not that its Maker required a length of time for His work, for we must think of God as doing all things simultaneously.” *Philo*, vol. 1, Loeb Classical Library (London: William Heinemann, 1929), 13.

²Z. Hayes, “*Hexaemeron*,” *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, 2nd ed. (Detroit: Thomson Gale, 2003), 6:815. The allegorical approach of Augustine reached its climax in the work of the thirteenth-century Franciscan, Bonaventure, who perceived the six days as providing “a framework for discussing a rich theology of history, . . . [that] culminated in the beatific vision of the seventh day.” *Ibid.* The term *hexaemeron* is from the Greek and literally means “six days,” being a technical term for the six days of creation.

reappears in Augustine.¹ Ambrose appears to be the first church father to recognize the bipartite structure of Gen 1, the acts of the first three days being paralleled by the acts of the last three days, which he divides into the phases of “foundation” (or division) and of “adornment” respectively.² This structural approach to Gen 1 was especially popular among such medieval theologians as Robert Grosseteste in his *Hexaemeron* and in the writings of Thomas Aquinas.³ A structuralist approach has been popularized and critiqued by numerous evangelical theologians in recent times under the heading of the “framework hypothesis.”⁴

¹Ambrose, *Hexaemeron*, 1, 10, 37, in Migne *PL* 14:155-156, cited in Robert Letham, “‘In the Space of Six Days’: the Days of Creation from Origen to the Westminster Assembly,” *Westminster Theological Journal* 61 (1999): 153-154. Letham summarizes Augustine by noting the problem that God did not create anything on the seventh day, yet there are seven days of creation: “The solution to this enigma Augustine finds in that God created only one day, which recurred seven times and, by its recurrence, many days passed by. So it was not necessary for God to create the seventh day, for it was made by the seventh recurrence of the one day he had created ([*The Literal Meaning of Genesis*] 4.37, cf. 5.1-3).” *Ibid.*, 156.

²Jaki, 82. He notes that this bipartite division was later to dominate much of the exegesis of Gen 1 by theologians in the Western Church.

³For Grosseteste, see his *Hexaemeron* (ca. A.D. 1235), which was the most comprehensive work on the six days of creation written in the medieval period. For Aquinas, see his *Summa Theologiae*, chaps. 68-71, where he emphasizes the two major actions of the Creator, the action of “distinction” (or division) and the action of “adornment” (from the Latin Vulgate of Gen. 2:1, *ornatus*). For all the medieval authors on the subject of the days of creation, see Gunar Freibergs, “The Medieval Latin Hexameron from Bede to Grosseteste” (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Southern California, 1981).

⁴For evangelicals advocating the “framework view,” see for example Henri Blocher; Meredith G. Kline, “Space and Time in the Genesis Cosmogony,” *Perspectives on Science and Christian Faith* 48, no. 1 (1996): 2-15; Mark D. Futato, “Because It Had Rained: A Study of Gen 2:5-7 with Implications for Gen 2:4-25 and Gen 1:1-2:3,” *Westminster Theological Journal* 60 (1998): 1-21; and Lee Irons with Meredith Kline, “The Framework View,” in *The Genesis Debate: Three Views on the Days of Creation*, ed. David G. Hagopian (Mission Viejo, CA: Cruxpress, 2001), 217-256. This last study is critiqued by other authors in *The Genesis Debate*, 257-277. Kline’s earlier works are critiqued by Jordan, 51-69. The framework view is summarized by a quote found in Mark A. Throntveit, “Are the Events in the Genesis Creation Account Set Forth in Chronological Order?” in *The Genesis Debate*, ed. Ronald Youngblood, 42. It reads: “The English translation of Benno Jacob’s Genesis commentary begins: ‘The story of creation leads up to man, the subject of all history. The earth is prepared for him so that he may live, work and rest upon it. All this is placed into the *frame* of “six days”, not to write a historical account in the sequence of time, but to construct before our eyes the universe as a meaningful cosmos.’” (emphasis added).

Augustine's concept that creation was instantaneous and that each day thereafter in the six days was a repetition of the first day's work often captured the thinking of such medieval theologians as Venerable Bede (d. 735) and became a starting point for discussion on the nature of the creation days. Anselm of Canterbury (d. 1109) does not find that the words of Moses support a creation that happened all at once, yet "at the same time, he recognizes the possibility of understanding the text to refer, in Augustine's sense, to an instantaneous creation."¹

Most of the early church fathers held to a strictly literal interpretation of the creation days down to A.D. 400, but when we come to John Chrysostom (d. 407), we begin to see a shifting of that position. While Chrysostom is usually placed in the literalist camp, he "is a literalist inasmuch as he takes Gen 1 for literal illustrations of such basic tenets of the faith as creation out of nothing, the evidence of the Creator from his visible works, and his omnipotence."² For Chrysostom the real meaning of Gen 1 is theological, an idea which is the cornerstone of advocates of the framework hypothesis today.

As we move into the medieval period we find Christian writers coming more and more under the influence of Greek philosophy. Erigena (d. ca. 877) re-casts Moses as a Platonist, and the acts of creation as the bringing into being the "ideas" for reality.³ When much later we come to Thierry of Chartres (d. 1155), we discover the approach of a physicist to Gen 1. In his *De Sex Dierum Operibus*, he interprets the creation days and

¹Letham, 159.

²Jaki, 79.

³Ibid., 100-106. For him the "ideas" of elements far transcend the elements themselves.

their activities “in light of his study of Plato and Aristotle.”¹ A century later we come across the works of the first truly great “theologian, philosopher, and scientist” combined, Albertus Magnus (d. 1280). He understood creation as taking place in three phases: first creation out of nothing, then “distinction” (or division) whereby opposite forms are made, and third, “ornamentation” whereby final forms are transferred. His view of creation is heavily Aristotelian.

That of his most famous student, Thomas Aquinas (d. 1274), is also Aristotelian and draws from his tutor the concept of a difference between “distinction” and “ornamentation” in creation. But he goes much further and advocates the idea of “accommodation”—that when Moses set forth his description of the origin of all things, he “had in mind the uneducated of his people.”² Accommodation in the writing of Genesis later became an important idea in John Calvin’s explanation of creation and was incorporated therefrom into the writings of the evangelical, Bernard L. Ramm, who in part is the subject of this dissertation. Aquinas rejects the view that the days of creation are literal on the basis that God is timeless, and his work of creation is timeless (without time); thus God created the world instantaneously and not in six days, making the six days’ work a work of modifying the initial creation that took place at the beginning of the six days.³

¹“Thierry of Chartres,” *Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, 3rd ed., ed. F. L. Cross (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 1609. For a more complete discussion of the views of Thierry of Chartres and other twelfth-century cosmologists, see Robert Marian Ziolkowski, “Science, Theology, and Myth in Medieval Creationism: Cosmogony in the Twelfth Century” (Ph.D. dissertation, Cornell University, 2000).

²Jaki, 120.

³On the question of God’s timelessness see Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, 1.10, 1, and on the question of the six days see 1.74, 1, especially this synthesis of his own thinking: “Following the other Fathers [in addition to Augustine], one may say that the work of differentiation and ornamentation is seen in a kind of transformation of creatures that is measured by time. The work of creation, however, consists in

What we have uncovered in our survey of the interpretations of Gen 1, especially the days of creation in the early Church down through the medieval period is that the days are interpreted literally, symbolically, allegorically, and theologically. The desire of many writers was to harmonize the creation account with Greek philosophy, showing that Moses was truly a philosopher and cosmogonist. The debate was not whether the world's creation occupied millions of ages, but whether creation could have occurred instantaneously while still taking place over the span of six days, and whether the days, while being considered literal, could be also prophetic of the "seven ages" of mankind.

The Period from the Reformation to the Enlightenment

The great principle of the "Bible and the Bible alone" (*sola scriptura*) as a source of spiritual authority adopted by the great reformers meant that there was little or no desire to harmonize the first page of the Bible with the writings of the Greek philosophers. Thus, both leading reformers—Luther and Calvin—emphasized the days of creation as ordinary twenty-four-hour days. Luther states that Moses is dealing with a real world, not an allegorical one, and thus, as a proverb says that we must call "a post a post," then we must apply the right terminology to day, the evening, and the morning, the word *day* meaning the

the divine action alone producing the whole being of things all at once. Thus each work of differentiation and of ornamentation is said to be made in a day, whereas creation is said to occur *in the beginning*, which conveys the idea of something instantaneous." *Summa Theologiae* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1967), 10:153, emphasis original. By placing the work of origination of creation "in the beginning," which is a period of timelessness, in effect Aquinas opens the door wide to the possibility of the eternity of the world, something which he does not deny in his writings. Thus creation in his thought and that of his followers could have occurred in a period of more than six literal days.

same to him as it does to us.¹ Calvin weaves in ideas of accommodation to his understanding of the term in Gen. 1:5: “And the evening and the morning were the first day.” His comments on this passage show a decided reaction to the stance of Augustine that creation actually happened at one time (within one day):

The first day. Here the error of those is manifestly refuted, who maintain that the world was made in a moment. For it is too violent a cavil to contend that Moses distributes the work which God perfected at once into six days, for the mere purpose of conveying instruction. Let us rather conclude that God himself took the space of six days, for the purpose of accommodating his works to the capacity of men.²

When Calvin examines the scriptural account of the fourth day, he decidedly invokes accommodation to harmonize the biblical account with the findings of astronomy. He was aware that Saturn, one of the solar planets, is greater in size than the moon, yet it is presumably classed with the stars in Gen 1:14. The moon is the “lesser light,” and appears much greater in size than Saturn, although called “lesser.” How can that be? Calvin’s answer: “Here lies the difference; Moses wrote in a popular style things which, without

¹David W. Hall, “The Evolution of Mythology: Classic Creation Survives as the Fittest Among Its Critics and Revisers,” in *Did God Create in Six Days?* ed. Joseph A. Pipa and David W. Hall (Taylors, SC: Southern Presbyterian Press, 1999), 280. Martin Luther has unequivocally stated: “For above [in Gen. 1:5] he said: ‘Evening and morning became one day.’ There he is speaking of the natural day, which consists of twenty-four hours, during which the *primum mobile* revolves from east to west.” *Luther’s Works* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1958), 1:42, emphasis original.

²John Calvin, *Commentaries on the First Book of Moses Called Genesis* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1948), 1:78. The very wording of Calvin’s *Institutes*, “in the space of six days,” applied to creation has been incorporated into the Westminster Confession of Faith (1647): “It pleased God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, for the manifestation of the glory of his eternal power, wisdom, and goodness, in the beginning, to create or make of nothing the world, and all things therein, whether visible or invisible, *in the space of six days*, and all very good.” Philip Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom, with a History and Critical Notes* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1919), 3:611. Presbyterianism currently is debating the meaning of the phrase, “in the space of six days,” to determine whether it limits the major acts of creation to six literal days. For the debate, see Letham, 149-174; William S. Barker, “The Westminster Assembly on the Days of Creation: A Reply to David W. Hall,” *Westminster Theological Journal* 62 (2000): 113-120; Max Rogland, “*Ad litteram*: Some Dutch Reformed Theologians on the Creation Days,” *Westminster Theological Journal* 63 (2001): 211-233; and J. V. Fesko, “The Days of Creation and the Confession Subscription in the OPC,” *Westminster Theological Journal* 63 (2001): 235-249.

instruction, all ordinary persons, endued with common sense, are able to understand; but astronomers investigate with great labour whatever the sagacity of the human mind can comprehend.”¹ Here Calvin lays the foundation of the concept of divine accommodation to the limits of human reason—a concept seized by evangelicals in the twentieth century.

The time of the “Great Awakening” of the eighteenth century is marked by the thought of two influential figures, John Wesley of England and Jonathan Edwards of America. We differentiate the two as belonging to different theological traditions, Wesley being Arminian in his theology with an emphasis on free-will and sanctification and Edwards being Calvinistic with an emphasis on justification. Neither of the two seemed to be concerned that a literal approach to creation was in jeopardy in any sense, for the challenges of geological science did not arise until the concept of uniformitarianism was advocated by the Scottish geologist James Hutton in 1788.² Edwards viewed the six days of creation in a twofold sense: first, as a pattern for our working six days followed by the seventh day of rest, and second, as a type or symbol of the work of redemption and restoration climaxed by the new creation.³ He finds a good deal of symbolic value in the

¹Calvin, *Genesis*, 1:86.

²For a discussion of Hutton’s presentation to the Royal Society in Edinburgh in 1788, see Francis C. Haber, *The Age of the World: Moses to Darwin* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1959), 164-169. The foundation for uniformitarianism, the idea that only gradual changes can account for the present structure and strata of the earth, was summarized best in the conclusion of his lecture: “The result, therefore, of our present enquiry is, that we find no vestige of a beginning,—no prospect of an end.” James Hutton, quoted in Haber, 168. This statement, according to Haber, “brought against Hutton the full force of theological and diluvialist condemnation.” *Ibid.* Here for the first time was a major scientific challenge to the concept that the world had been created in six literal days some 6,000 years ago.

³Jonathan Edwards, *The Works of Jonathan Edwards* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1994), 13:215-216, 310-319, 540-541. Much of the discussion revolves around the question as to why the seventh day of the week is not to be observed during the Christian era if we are still to memorialize the creation week by observing its Sabbath.

creation week structure from Gen 1 in that it portends the history of the earth being accomplished in a period of 6,000 years, followed by another 1,000 years or millennium of rest.¹ The idea that one day that “one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day,”² laid the foundation for evangelicals and others later on to suggest that each of the creation days was figurative of a geological era when new life was brought into existence. We can conclude that until the end of the eighteenth century the majority of biblical expositors understood the days of creation week as being literal, although they attributed symbolic value, more or less, to the days as well.

The Modern Period

The Enlightenment, coming to a culmination in the late eighteenth century, ushered in the modern period starting roughly with the beginning of the nineteenth century. James Hutton in 1785 prepared the way for modern geology with his presentation to the Royal Society in Edinburgh, a study entitled, “Theory of the Earth.” Prior to this, Thomas Burnet and others presented their works under the rubric of “Sacred Theory of the Earth.”³ Hutton’s approach was new in that he derived an explanation for the geological structures of the earth without recourse to Scripture or divine intervention.⁴ For this reason, he is

¹Edwards writes: “The Sabbath of rest is typical of the great sabbath of the world after the sixth thousand years, when the spiritual, or first, resurrection of the church shall begin, and of the eternal sabbath or rest of the church after the second resurrection, of bodies.” (13:540).

²2 Pet 3:8, cf. Ps 90:4—“A thousand years in thy sight are but as yesterday when it is past.”

³For example, Thomas Burnet, *Telluris Theoria Sacra* (London: n.p., 1681), translated into English as *Sacred Theory of the Earth* and running through many editions (for example, Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University, 1965); William Whiston, *A New Theory of the Earth, from Its Original, to the Consummation of All Things* (London: Printed for R. Roberts, by B. Tooke, 1691).

⁴Evidence of this is that Hutton’s work is entitled, “Theory of the Earth,” without the adjective “Sacred” preceding the title.

given the accolade of the “father of modern geology.”¹ Hutton was one of the first scientists in the English-speaking world to break the bounds of biblical chronology, allowing for unlimited amounts of time for the development of the earth with all its present-day features. At the same time he maintained a semblance of orthodoxy by stating that humankind has been on the earth only during the period allotted him by biblical chronology.²

By the end of the eighteenth century the science of modern geology had been born. Almost immediately there developed within theological circles two major attempts at reconciling Gen 1 with the scientific needs for vast amounts of time. The first of the great harmonizers during this period was the pioneer French geologist, Jean André Deluc (1727-1817), who was appalled at the secularism of many of the French scholars during that era. He proposed that the biblical account is historical back to and including the Deluge, but the Deluge becomes the watershed, so to speak, between what can be known by science and what cannot be known. Prior to the Deluge the earth was in the process of creation, a process that is not knowable by humankind. The gestation of the earth may have taken place over many eons of time. Each of the creation days may have occupied vast ages, but

¹In a variety of quotes from secondary sources, Roy Porter notes that, prior to Hutton, geology was non-existent, for Hutton was the first theorist to develop a theory on actual field observation. *The Making of Geology: Earth Science in Britain, 1660-1815* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 184. Before Hutton’s day, it is noted, the earth sciences were founded largely on speculation, not on observation. *Ibid.*, 185.

²“Hutton believed that Mosaic history was correct in placing the beginning of man at no great distance in the past, since nothing had been found in written or natural monuments to alter such a view.” Haber, 164-165. The work of creation prior to that of man must have taken considerable ages because of the simple reason that living things, especially plants, are dependent upon soil for growth and nourishment, and soil is the result of a breakdown of rock particles from the crust of the earth, which could only have taken much time, according to Hutton’s logic. *Ibid.*, 165-166.

the activities of each day are not amenable to modern discovery or testing.¹ This concept later became known as the “day-age view,” that is, each day of creation represented a geological age or era. This became one of the most popular methods for harmonizing Genesis and geology in the nineteenth century.

A second method of harmonizing the two records was pioneered by the Scottish theologian and churchman, Thomas Chalmers, who, in a review of the geologist Cuvier’s *Essay on the Theory of the Earth*, proposed a new means of reconciliation. He granted that the earth had a much longer history than what had been traditionally taught. He startled his conservative fellow believers by asserting: “The writings of Moses do not fix the antiquity of the globe. If they fix anything at all, it is only the antiquity of the species.”² What alarmed Chalmers was that the literal history of the first few chapters in Genesis were being dispensed with in such haste. The integrity of all of Scripture was at stake. He believed that one could accept the findings of modern geology and still maintain the historicity of the Genesis record. He writes:

Should the phenomena compel us to assign a greater antiquity to the globe than to that work of days detailed in the book of Genesis, there is still one way of saving the credit of the literal history. The first creation of the earth and the heavens may have formed no part of that work. This took place at the *beginning*, and is described in the first verse of Genesis. It is not said

¹Ibid., 194-195. The historian of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century science and religion, Otto Zöckler, states that DeLuc was the first of the harmonists or concordists between science and religion (“erst naturwissenschaftliche Konkordisten”), “Schöpfung und Erhaltung der Welt,” *Realencyklopädie für protestantische Theologie und Kirche* (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs, 1906), 17:698.

²Thomas Chalmers, quoted in Haber, 201, emphasis original. The “species” here referred to is the human species.

when this *beginning* was.¹

The days of creation then were literal days, and the account of creation itself was the account of the “re-creation” of the earth after the Satanic fall. The present creation also would have taken place about 6,000 years ago, as the last in a long series of creations and possible destructions. Chalmers’s view became for a while the leading method of reconciliation for those who wished to retain the literalness of the days of creation and also accept the findings of geology purportedly supporting vast ages of time.

These two schemes of reconciliation, the first one called the “day-age view” and the second called the “ruin-restitution” or “gap theory,” were not the principal means of harmonization of the scriptural record with the geological in the nineteenth century. A third, but less influential view, cropped up first on the European continent and then later in England about the middle of the nineteenth century. It can be labeled the “revelatory days view,” or “prophetic *tableaux* view” of creation as it originally was known.² Again, the attempt was to reconcile the literal record of Gen 1 with the discoveries of modern geology. Each of the days of creation was considered to have been a prophetic picture of God’s activities, as if each were an eye-witness account or panoramic view of the creative work on that particular day. Thus the days are described as literal days, but prophetic days, and

¹Chalmers, quoted in *ibid.*, 202, emphasis original. Chalmers’s view as summarized here was not new to scholarship. Scholarship at times through the Middle Ages had suggested that the beginning itself may have been long antecedent to the actual work of the six days. Chalmers apparently relies upon the suggestions of the poet John Milton, who described a long history of warfare between God and the Satanic angels before the creation of this earth. According to Zöckler, the ruin-restitution view was first advocated by the German theologian Johann Georg Rosenmuller in his Latin work published in 1776 (17:697).

²A nineteenth-century summary of this view is described in these words: “And here [in Gen 1 cf. Dan 9:24-27 and Eze 4:6] are harmonized the ordinary day conception of the writer of the narrative, and the indefinitely long periods required by science. Each of the six tableaux of the creative week impressed the seer as an ordinary day, while in the Divine mind each tableau was symbol of an indefinitely long period.” E. Nisbet, *The Science of the Day and Genesis* (Rochester, NY: G. Venton Patterson & Co., 1886), 36.

the Genesis account is presented as “prophecy in reverse.” The visions may have been given to Moses during a period of seven literal days when he was awaiting a face-to-face encounter with God on top of Mt. Sinai, and thus this view is sometimes known as the “Mosaic vision theory.”¹ The significance of this view of “revelatory days” for the present study is that Bernard Ramm, who will be the focus of study in the next chapter, adopted this view some one hundred years after its origin and kept it alive through the latter half of the twentieth century.

In the twentieth century, conservative Protestantism has had its many advocates of the same types of schemes for reconciling Genesis and geology that one finds in the nineteenth century, but with arguments more intricate and sophisticated generally. The day-age view continued to have its advocates within evangelicalism throughout the period. Some of the more prominent authors are Gleason Archer, J. Oliver Buswell, Edward J. Young, Gordon R. Lewis and Bruce A. Demarest, Millard Erickson, and Hugh Ross.² The “ruin-restitution view,” or more recently known as the “gap theory,” has had a greater following among fundamentalists than among evangelicals. The main reason is that the gap

¹This latter variation of the “prophetic view” of the creation days received its greatest promotion in the widely read works of the Scottish stonemason and high church author, Hugh Miller. States Haber: “In ‘*The Mosaic Vision of Creation*’ he [Miller] called to mind those sections in the story of creation given in *Paradise Lost* where Adam is carried by Michael to the top of a mountain and coming events are described as rising up in vision before him.” *Ibid.*, 237. Just as prophecy does not assimilate itself into reality until it is fulfilled and actual events are matched with the prophecy, so the creation account does not become associated with reality until the work of the geologist’s hammer uncovers the history of creation in the beds of the rocks, thus vindicating these “prophetic pictures.” This view was not original with Miller. Dr. Johann H. Kurtz, Professor of Theology at Dorpat, advocated this view in his *Die Astronomie und die Bibel* (1842), which was translated into English in 1857. It was popular with many French authors, such as Dorlodot and Hummelauer. See Zöckler, who describes this as the idea that Genesis is presented “in sechs scharf geschiedene Visionen oder Tableaus” (699).

²Gleason Archer, *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction*, 3rd ed. (Chicago: Moody Press, 1994), 171-178.

theory was widely disseminated through the popular *Scofield Reference Bible* and this is associated more closely with pre-millennial eschatology, widely held among fundamentalists.

The “revelatory-days view,” the one held by Bernard Ramm, had a much greater following among its proponents in the nineteenth century than in the twentieth century. The most influential nineteenth-century theologian who advocated this view was Augustus H. Strong, who wrote a three-volume *Systematic Theology* from a Baptist perspective, a work widely used by seminaries across the United States in the twentieth century. It was probably Strong who had a major influence in Ramm’s thinking and propelled him in the direction of the revelatory-days view early on in his career.¹ Besides Ramm, the major twentieth-century champion of this view has been P. J. Wiseman.²

Evangelicalism and the Doctrine of Revelation

The Identification of Evangelicalism

Evangelicalism has a variety of connotations depending upon the context in which the term is used. Originally the term *evangelical* was applied to Protestantism as opposed to Catholicism. In Germany even to this day the term connotes “Lutheranism” in contrast

¹Ramm lists Strong among other advocates of this view—J. Pohle, Hugh Miller, J. H. Kurtz, P. J. Wiseman, Canon Dorlodot, and L. F. Gruber (*CVSS*, 149). Strong sets forth the reason for advocating this view: “We adopt neither (a) the allegorical, or mythical, (b) the hyperliteral [twenty-four-hour days], nor (c) the hyperscientific interpretation of the Mosaic narrative [the day-age view]; but rather (d) the pictorial-summary interpretation,—which holds that the account is a rough sketch of the history of creation, true in all its essential features, but presented in a graphic form suited to the common mind and to earlier as well as to later ages.” August H. Strong, *Systematic Theology* (Philadelphia: Judson Press, 1907), 2:393. In the latter part of this statement one notes the influence of Calvin’s accommodationism.

²P. J. Wiseman, *Creation Revealed in Six Days* (London: Marshall, Morgan and Scott, 1958).

with the other major branch of Protestantism on the Continent, which is “Calvinism.”¹ In the United Kingdom, evangelicals have been known as the conservative revivalists within the Anglican or Church of England communion, that is, a movement within a church, rather than as a distinctive church. Its roots go back to the revivalism in England in the first part of the eighteenth century, but unlike Methodism it never advocated breaking with the mother church. Starting about 1830 with the rise of millennialism and interest in prophetic interpretation, British evangelicalism broke into two camps, the conservatives and the moderates, the former believing in a literal return of Christ to earth prior to the millennium along with the fulfillment of most latter-day prophecies and the latter believing that prophecies were to be fulfilled after a millennium of revivalism and reformation on earth. Late in the nineteenth century and early in the twentieth, the conservative group linked arms with the fundamentalist and revivalist movements in the United States on the basis of shared concerns, such as the dangers of higher criticism and theory of evolution undermining belief in the Bible’s authority. The moderate group of British evangelicals has been closely allied with American evangelicals historically, more so after the mid-twentieth century when American evangelicalism differentiated itself from Fundamentalism. Under the leadership of John R. W. Stott in the last half of the twentieth century, British conservative evangelicalism has gained a new voice and “played a full part in the General Synod and other councils of the C of E [Church of England], often working with Anglo-

¹“Evangelicalism,” *Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, 3rd ed., ed. E. A. Livingstone (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 579. The German adjective, *evangelisch*, applies equally to Protestantism as to Lutheranism. I am not employing the word “evangelical” in the German sense in this dissertation.

Catholics in opposition to liberalism.”¹ While this study will not be dealing with British evangelicalism as such, I do wish to point out that the same issues, concerns, theological goals, and social missions are found within British evangelicalism as among American evangelicalism, the latter being the focus of this study.²

The reference point for defining evangelicalism is American evangelicalism dating from about 1940 to the present. Most definitions of evangelicalism examine it on the basis of either its theology or its structure, or on the basis of both theology and structure. The history of the movement is also critical in defining the movement.

Sociological Definition

From the structural or sociological viewpoint, evangelicalism is said to be a loose coalition of many distinct entities having common goals that are truly evangelical. It is a movement that cuts across many denominational boundaries, often splitting church bodies into portions that are considered to be “evangelical” and remaining portions said to be “non-evangelical,” as in the case of the Church of England, as we have already seen. Thus its boundaries are not clearly defined, but its core elements are distinctive. For example, evangelicalism is defined by its colleges and seminaries (e.g., Wheaton College and Fuller

¹Ibid., 580. A major difference between conservative and liberal evangelicals in England has been that the latter have accepted the findings of biblical criticism, and the former have not.

²For a historical/theological view of British evangelicalism since its inception, see David W. Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730s to the 1980s* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1984), and for a thorough analysis of the contemporary evangelical scene in Britain and America see J. Christopher Soper, *Evangelical Christianity in the United States and Great Britain: Religious Beliefs, Political Choices* (New York: New York University Press, 1994). An anthology of essays that also deals with both British and American evangelicalism, often comparing the two, is Mark A. Noll, David W. Bebbington, and George W. Rawlyk, eds., *Evangelicalism: Comparative Studies of Popular Protestantism in North America, the British Isles, and Beyond, 1700-1900* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994).

Theological Seminary); its publications and publishers (e.g., *Christianity Today* and InterVarsity Press); its evangelists (e.g., Billy Graham, whose work was never limited to one denomination); its student ministries, both on and off campus (e.g., Campus Crusade for Christ, Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship, or Francis Schaeffer's L'Abri Fellowship); its national and international conferences (e.g., Jerusalem Conference on Biblical Prophecy, 1971, which was chaired by Carl F. H. Henry); its ministries and missions (e.g., World Vision International and Prison Fellowship Ministries, both of which had the services of Carl Henry as lecturer); its television ministries (Pat Robertson and the "700 Club," as just one example); its associations of evangelical organizations (e.g., National Association of Evangelicals and Evangelical Press Association); and its scholarly societies (e.g., Evangelical Theological Society, mainly for theologians; and American Scientific Affiliation, for scientists).¹

The sociological approach to defining evangelicalism will never have clear boundaries, nor will it ever define the core or essence of evangelicalism. It is a functional or organic approach, tracing the movement from cause to effect, from plans to results. The overall results are impressive, yet it is the theological nature of the movement that gave impetus to its reason for existence and gives explanation for its recent successes. However, it is much more difficult to give a precise theological definition of its essence, perhaps explaining why it is often defined organically, especially by sociologists of religion.

¹This listing of entities is meant to be representative only, not exhaustive. Monographic studies have been written about a number of the above entities; for example, Mark A. Kalthoff, ed., *Creation and Evolution in the Early American Scientific Affiliation* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1995), which deals with the last of the entities named above, and George M. Marsden's *Reforming Fundamentalism: Fuller Seminary and the New Evangelicalism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), which focuses upon the second named entity above. Most of these studies emphasize the structural and functional aspects of evangelicalism, although the latter of these two does delve into its theological aspects and controversies.

Theological Definition

The defining characteristic of evangelicalism is its theology. Since it is a very broad-based movement spanning a wide variety of denominations, its theology is centered upon certain core beliefs. Alister McGrath lists six “fundamental convictions” that identify modern evangelicalism:

1. The supreme authority of Scripture as a source of knowledge of God and a guide to Christian living.
2. The majesty of Jesus Christ, both as incarnate God and Lord and as the Savior of sinful humanity.
3. The lordship of the Holy Spirit
4. The need for personal conversion.
5. The priority of evangelism for both individual Christians and the church as a whole.
6. The importance of Christian community for spiritual nourishment, fellowship, and growth.¹

McGrath’s list is a summary of a greater elaboration of evangelicalism in its 1990 statement, “Evangelical Affirmations,” that includes the following topics: Jesus Christ and the gospel, creation and fall, God as source and ground of truth, holy Scripture, the church,

¹Alister McGrath, *Evangelicalism and the Future of Christianity* (Downers Grove, IL: InverVarsity Press, 1995), 55-56, shows a similar comparison between his list and George Marsden’s “five defining characteristics”: “(1) the reformation doctrine of the final authority of Scripture, (2) the real, historical character of God’s saving work, (3) eternal salvation through personal trust in Christ, (4) the importance of evangelism and missions, and (5) the importance of a spiritually transformed life.” *Ibid.*, 196-197, n. 4, cf. Marsden, “The Evangelical Denomination,” vii-xix. In both lists the doctrine of Scripture comes first, indicating its prime significance for evangelical theology.

doctrine and practice, human rights and righteousness, religious liberty, and second coming and judgment.¹ The “Evangelical Affirmations” regarding “holy Scripture” sets forth a position that defends an inerrancy that includes “history and science” as well as “faith and practice,” that upholds propositional revelation, and that promotes the unity of Scripture in matters of hermeneutics.²

In these doctrinal statements of evangelicalism and in other statements, the doctrine of Scripture becomes the defining criterion for evangelicalism. John J. Davis offers the following definition of evangelicalism: “Evangelical theology can be defined as *systematic reflection on scripture and tradition and the mission of the church in mutual relation, with scripture as the norm.*”³ This then is a theological definition of evangelicalism, not a sociological one. After stating that the “formal principal of the Reformation” was *sola scriptura*, by which one’s beliefs and practices are controlled by the norm of Scripture, McGrath summarizes evangelical thought in these words: “This commitment to the priority and authority of Scripture has become an integral element of the evangelical tradition.”⁴

Once the Bible is described as the norm for all that the church teaches and practices, a major debate has ensued within evangelicalism for much of the last half of the twentieth century: the debate over to what degree the Bible is inerrant or without errors. Within a few years after the rise of modern evangelicalism in the 1940s, many of the most vocal

¹Kenneth S. Kantzer and Carl F. H. Henry, eds., *Evangelical Affirmations* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1990), 30-37.

²Ibid., 32-33. Scripture is said to be “complete” in its “truthfulness” and “full and final” in its “authority.” Ibid., 32.

³Davis, 43, emphasis original.

⁴McGrath, *Evangelicalism and the Future of Christianity*, 59.

evangelicals were promoting the adoption of full inerrancy as the defining principle of evangelicalism. Perhaps the most controversial individual during that half-century epoch was Harold Lindsell, who in writing *The Battle for the Bible* (1976), pointed to the works of those who were said to be evangelicals, but whose writings undermined the authority of the Word through a compromised doctrine of inerrancy. For him, the true evangelicals did not limit the Bible's authority to just doctrine and ecclesiology.

Actually, the opening salvo in the evangelical debate over inerrancy was made by Dewey Beegle in his *The Inspiration of Scripture* (1963), followed by his *Scripture, Tradition, Infallibility* (1973). In both works he proposed “that the Bible contained errors, even in areas related to the authors’ intention.”¹ This allowed even for “theological errors” in Scripture. The latter work was followed three years later by Lindsell’s fiery response to Beegle and many others, including Bernard Ramm, whom he felt had compromised the core doctrine of evangelicalism. The next major development in the “battle for the Bible” was the publication of a mediating work in 1979 seeking to find a compromise position between the extremes of Lindsell and Beegle, the work of Jack Rogers and Donald McKim, *The Authority and Interpretation of the Bible*.² Their suggestion, later known as the “Rogers-McKim proposal,” was “that the Bible’s infallibility extends to matters of faith

¹Mark Ellingsen, *The Evangelical Movement: Growth, Impact, Controversy, Dialog* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1988), 219. Reference is to Dewey Beegle, *The Inspiration of Scripture* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1963). Beegle’s subsequent work, *Scripture, Tradition, and Infallibility* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1973), only added fuel to Lindsell’s book, which in part was written to counteract the arguments of Beegle.

²Jack B. Rogers and Donald K. McKim, *The Authority and Interpretation of the Bible: An Historical Approach* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1979).

and practice, but not to matters of history and science.”¹ This intermediate position became known as the “limited inerrancy view.” Bernard Ramm, who contributed to the Rogers/McKim proposal, criticized those who were saying that “Scripture alone” is the essence of Christianity and thus of evangelicalism.² While Stanley L. Gundry, who was President of the Evangelical Theological Society in 1979, agreed with Ramm that inerrancy is not the defining characteristic of evangelicalism, he demonstrated clear-cut support for the views of Harold Lindsell.³ The debate over inerrancy is still continuing within evangelicalism and remains far from a settled issue. Even more critical than inerrancy is the issue of the extent of the Bible’s authority.⁴ Therefore, inerrancy should not be viewed as the defining characteristic of evangelicalism nor the litmus test for evangelical orthodoxy.⁵

¹The above summary of the “Rogers and McKim proposal” is taken from John D. Woodbridge, *Biblical Authority: A Critique of the Rogers/McKim Proposal* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1982), 142. Subsequently others have either defended or criticized the Rogers and McKim compromise.

²Bernard Ramm, “Is ‘Scripture Alone’ the Essence of Christianity?” in *Biblical Authority*, ed. Jack B. Rogers (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1977), 109-123.

³Stanley N. Gundry, “Evangelical Theology: Where *Should We Be Going?*” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 22 (1979): 4. This was the Presidential Address to the E.T.S., given at its 30th annual meeting on 27 December 1978.

⁴In light of the fact that evangelicalism is defined as a movement that supports the authority of Scripture as being pervasive in all aspects of life and belief, any attempt to severely limit the Bible’s authority would result in the undermining of evangelicalism itself. This study, however, does not attempt to exhaustively cover the issue of inerrancy, nor seeks to point to a resolution of that important issue, in view of the fact that the issue of Scriptural authority is a more critical issue than even that of inerrancy. Briefly, the reason is that one can believe, for example, that Gen 1 is inerrant as both a theological and a historical statement, yet limit its authority to the era and audience in which that treatise was originally given. A book with mathematical tables can be declared inerrant, yet have no theological authority.

⁵Certain evangelicals, such as European scholars C. S. Lewis, F. F. Bruce, and G. C. Berkouwer, are said to be representative of those who do not hold to the biblical doctrine of inerrancy, yet are considered to be supportive of evangelicalism.

Historical Definition

By “historical definition” we wish to convey the concept of employing a historical approach for the understanding of evangelicalism; a movement is defined by its history, that is, as much by its roots as by its present-day outgrowth.¹ The advantage of the historical approach is that the movement can be differentiated from the matrix out of which it arose by identifying specific events and persons connected with that movement. The disadvantage is that it is extremely difficult, if not impossible, to designate which are the major factors responsible for a movement’s coming into existence versus those factors that would be considered minor or less important. With that disadvantage in mind, we will still attempt to identify a few of the major factors that brought evangelicalism into existence or were part of its roots, acknowledging that such a listing is selective and perhaps arbitrary.

Evangelicalism in nineteenth-century America can be identified as a movement that combines Scottish common-sense realism with a high view of the authority and inspiration of Scripture. Its early beginnings can be seen most clearly within Calvinism and Presbyterianism, although the movement soon expanded beyond these denominational lines. Other important strands are seen in its early development—an emphasis on revivalism and an interest in prophetic interpretation for last-day events. Evangelism came to be more than an effort to save men’s souls, but also meant involvement in social action, such as the temperance movement, abolitionism, city missions, and taking care of the orphans and the

¹Certainly every movement, denomination, or religious organization today can be defined and evaluated by the factors that brought such into existence, as in the case of scholarly approaches to Lutheranism, Calvinism, Methodism, Seventh-day Adventism, etc.

homeless.¹ The burden for educating the masses of people was taken up by the “Sunday-school” movement, while clergy were trained in seminaries and their professors were trained in both American and European universities, indicating the value placed on higher education.

The soil for the rise and growth of the evangelical movement was prepared by the first and second “Great Awakenings.” The First Awakening was characterized by the preaching of Jonathan Edwards and George Whitefield in America and by the efforts of the Wesley brothers as well as Whitefield in England. This movement climaxed in the 1740s in the colonies. The Second Awakening was characterized by the preaching of Timothy Dwight, president of Yale, who witnessed one third of the student body have a conversion experience.² This led to revivals on the American frontier, known as the “burned-out district,” and evangelistic meetings both in large city churches and in small towns by evangelists such as Charles G. Finney. The fires of evangelism fed the fires of world missions as missionary societies were formed, and the nineteenth century became known as the “century of world missions.”³

The intellectual strand for twentieth-century evangelicalism can be traced back to the last half of the eighteenth century in America. In 1768, John Witherspoon, a Scottish

¹Millard J. Erickson, *The Evangelical Mind and Heart: Perspectives on Theological and Practical Issues* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1993), 14-18. For a fine historical description of the rise of evangelicalism, see idem, *The New Evangelical Theology* (Westwood, NJ: Fleming H. Revell, 1968), 13-45. For a fuller elaboration of the work of evangelicals and others in nineteenth-century social reform, see Timothy L. Smith, *Revivalism and Social Reform: American Protestantism on the Eve of the Civil War* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980).

²John Jefferson Davis, *Foundations of Evangelical Theology*, 25.

³Davis calls it the “Great Century of Missions.” Ibid.

Presbyterian clergyman, became president of the College of New Jersey (later becoming Princeton University), and with his coming to America he introduced “Scottish common-sense-realism” for the first time to American religious and intellectual life.¹ The founder of this school of philosophy, which views religious truths and man’s conscience as self-evident realities, was Thomas Reid, who just four years earlier published his first major work.² In Reid’s thinking, truths can be reduced to propositions, the truth of which are either self-evident or are dependent upon other propositions. Ultimately, as one undergoes a process of uncovering one proposition underlying another, one will arrive at “first principles,” which are of two types: necessary and contingent. The contingent first truths are dependent upon the powers of the senses and human memory for their verification. One need not hold the infallibility of the human mind to be able to arrive at truth.³ Evangelicalism has emphasized the propositional nature of truth in its biblical view of revelation and also has relied upon the power of the human mind to ascertain truth. This is especially displayed in the writings of one its chief exponents, Carl F. H. Henry.

John Witherspoon’s introducing of Common Sense Realism to Princeton in the eighteenth century left its permanent mark on Princeton theology in the nineteenth century

¹Edward H. Madden, “Common Sense School,” *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward Craig (London: Routledge, 1998), 2:446. Witherspoon “converted” the presidents of other American colleges and universities, such as Brown University, University of Michigan, and Oberlin College, to common-sense realism, thus making sure it was well-planted on American soil. One of its key features was its opposition to the determinism of Calvinism because of its emphasis on man’s free will. It also strongly rejected idealism because of its “infidel” tendencies. Rogers and McKim, *The Authority and Interpretation of the Bible: An Historical Approach* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1979), 245.

²Thomas Reid, *An Inquiry into the Human Mind on the Principles of Common Sense* (1764), which is described as “Reid’s clearest statement of his views about common sense” by Roderick M. Chisholm, “Commonsensism,” *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (London: Routledge, 1998), 2:455.

³Roger Gallie, “Thomas Reid (1710-1796),” *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (London: Routledge, 1998), 8:178-179.

and into the early twentieth century through a succession of outstanding theologians,¹ starting with Archibald A. Alexander, who founded the Presbyterian seminary at Princeton in 1812.² Charles Hodge studied under Alexander, and Benjamin B. Warfield in turn studied under Hodge. It was Hodge and Warfield who, working in close cooperation, hammered out what is known as the “Hodge-Warfield view of inspiration,” based upon the propositional nature of revelation, the self-evidential nature of biblical truths, and the inerrancy of Scripture. Such laid the foundation for the evangelical view of inspiration in the twentieth century.³

One could then define the evangelical movement as a loosely organized, inter-denominational entity that is characterized by a belief in an infallible Scripture, serving as the controlling principle of faith and practice. Historically, this is identified as a movement that has its roots in Scottish Common Sense philosophy as expressed within nineteenth-

¹Rogers and McKim (244-247), trace the impact of Witherspoon’s thought and work on Princeton and upon the issue of inerrancy of Scripture. *The Authority and Interpretation of the Bible*, 244-247.

²Mark A. Noll, “The Princeton Theology,” in *The Princeton Theology, 1812-1921: Scripture, Science, and Theological Method from Archibald Alexander to Benjamin Breckinridge Warfield*, ed. David F. Wells (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1989), 15ff.

³Most scholars and historians of the evangelical movement see a definite link between nineteenth-century Princeton theology and twentieth-century evangelicalism. For example, note Mark Ellingsen’s discussion of Princeton theology in *The Evangelical Movement*, 73-80, and especially 77, where he credits Princeton with endowing the fundamentalist movement of the nineteenth century with its view of inspiration that combined a scholarly approach to Scripture with a high view of the Bible’s truthfulness and integrity. McKim and Rogers also support this thesis: “Thus Witherspoon brought from Scotland to America the apologetic approach to Scripture that led to conflicts between Scripture and emerging science in Switzerland and England. He prepared the groundwork on which the nineteenth-century Princeton theology would be built. The later fundamentalist-modernist controversy over the inerrancy of Scripture in the twentieth century was, in principle, already set in motion.” *The Authority and Interpretation of the Bible*, 246. The relationship of evangelicalism to Common Sense Realism is also spelled out by historians Marsden and Noll. See George M. Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 14-21, and Mark Noll, “Common Sense Traditions and American Evangelical Thought,” *American Quarterly* 37 (1985): 216-238. Seventeen bibliographic references are cited in John William Stewart, “The Tethered Theology: Biblical Criticism, Common Sense Philosophy, and the Princeton Theologians, 1812-1860,” (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Michigan, 1990), 244-245, n. 12, also in support of this thesis.

century American Presbyteranism or Calvinism. It is a movement with a high view of the authority of Scripture as well as a high view of the role of scholarship. On this latter point, evangelicalism can be differentiated from American Fundamentalism, which likewise had a high view of Scripture, but by contrast had a negative view of the role of scholarship.

Issues within the Evangelical Doctrine of Revelation

The Hodge-Warfield view of inspiration in its fledgling stage needed to face two major developments in the world of scholarship: the rise of biblical criticism and the impact of Darwinian evolution. Although both developments had totally independent origins—the one arising in the realm of biblical scholarship and the other in the realm of scientific discovery—they merged in the 1860s, immediately after the publication of Darwin's *On the Origin of Species* in 1859. The best example of the coalescing of these two developments is to be found in the publication of the widely read *Essays and Reviews* in England in 1860, whereby seven Oxford scholars attempted to bring church members up to date on the latest developments in the world of biblical scholarship.¹ Readers soon learned that Moses was not the author of Genesis; Daniel was written in the second century B.C., not the sixth; Paul was not the author of Hebrews, but perhaps Apollos; and 2 Peter was neither apostolic nor canonical. Thus, "*Essays and Reviews* provoked a major crisis in the Church of England and Ireland," resulting in 8,500 clergy signing a petition requesting the Archbishop of Canterbury to bring the essayists to church trial.² German higher criticism thus had been

¹Reginald H. Fuller, "Historical Criticism and the Bible," in *Anglicanism and the Bible*, ed. Frederick H. Borsch (Wilton, CT: Morehouse Barlow, 1984), 146.

²Ibid., 147-148. Fuel was added to the flames of theological controversy in 1861 by a publication of John William Colenso, Bishop of Natal, on the Pentateuch and Joshua, in which he questioned the accuracy of census figures, for example, as well as their Mosaic authorship. Ibid., 148-149.

imported full-scale into England. This event—the publication of *Essays and Reviews* in 1860—could very well be considered the birth date of the modernist/liberalist debate within conservative Christianity, although its roots were certainly manifest already in the eighteenth century with the effects of the Enlightenment. The question to be considered is the degree to which the rise of modern scholarship made its impact upon the evangelical doctrine of revelation.

The Impact of Historical Criticism upon Revelation

Important to this study is the question of the impact of historical criticism, otherwise known as the historical-critical method for biblical study, upon the evangelical doctrine of revelation. An evangelical definition views the historical-critical method as being “grounded in an historical criticism which asserts that reality is uniform and universal and that one’s present experience supplies an objective criterion for determining what could or could not have happened in the past.”¹ The biblical writings are judged by the same canons of critique and evaluation that are applied to other ancient pieces of literature, and the supernatural origin of the Bible is not taken into account in its interpretation, nor are miracles considered to be a valid explanation of biblical events.

The rise of biblical criticism paralleled the rise of modern science because both are based upon similar methodologies involving the use of the “scientific method.”² This method involves discovery of a problem, observation, creating a hypothesis, collecting of

¹R. L. Schultz, “Higher Criticism,” *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, 2nd ed., 555.

²“Modern biblical criticism began in the period of the Enlightenment. At that time the new methods of empirical science were applied to the study of all disciplines, including the Bible.” William Baird, “Biblical Criticism,” *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 1:730.

data relative to the hypothesis, testing of the hypothesis by means of relevant data, revision or refinement of the hypothesis, and then further testing. In the end the hypothesis is accepted unchanged, is modified, or is completely rejected, and if found consistent with similar hypotheses may be elevated into a theory, and in turn that theory finally into a law.¹ Historical criticism was said to be a scientific approach to Scripture that eliminated much of the personal bias that is inherent in most academic pursuits, including biblical studies.

Evangelicals wrestled with higher criticism or “biblical criticism” as it was known in the nineteenth century. They were aware of the claims of Benjamin Jowett, the Oxford classicist, that the Bible can be effectively studied like any other ancient book.² Princeton theologians early in the nineteenth century were opposed to biblical criticism, as in the case of Charles Hodge. Although the full development of higher criticism in Germany came after “Hodge’s sojourn [there] in 1826-1828, he was appalled by what he termed the ‘rationalist’ and ‘pantheist’ approach to the Bible that he found there. He followed it closely all of his life and determinedly opposed all attempts to subject the Bible to the same analysis as other books.”³

The Princeton patriarch Archibald Alexander in his last article in the *Princeton Review* in 1850 before his death a year later, warned that biblical scholars cannot bring Scripture “under entirely the same methods of criticism” as secular works, nor can the

¹Trevor H. Levere, “Science,” *Collier’s Encyclopedia*, ed. Lauren S. Bahr (New York: Collier’s, 1997), 498A-499, noting especially the section, “Methods and Philosophy of Science,” 498B-F.

²Benjamin Jowett, “On the Interpretation of Scripture,” in *Essays and Reviews* (London, 1861), 337, quoted in John William Stewart, “The Tethered Theology,” 26, n. 48.

³Rogers and McKim, *The Authority and Interpretation of the Bible*, 279.

approaches of modern science be applied to Scripture without “any limitations” whatever.¹

Even though both Archibald Alexander, the founder of Princeton Seminary, and Charles Hodge, his protege, appeared to reject historical criticism or at least its more radical exposition by German theologians, they essentially accepted the use of a “scientific approach” to Scripture in harmony with their affirmation of Scottish Common Sense Realism. The biblical exegete in the eyes of Hodge is a scientist who collects the “facts” of Scripture, carefully arranges them into a coherent framework, and then draws deductions from them. This is the Baconian approach to Scripture. The following often-quoted statement of Hodge illustrates this: “The Bible is to the theologian what nature is to the man of science. It is his store-house of facts; and his method of ascertaining what the Bible teaches, is the same as that which natural philosopher adopts to ascertain what nature teaches.”² This approach is inherently inductive, in contrast to a purely deductive approach that would start with its major premises derived from Scriptural statements and then illustrate those premises with the “facts” of Scripture as supporting evidence. Evangelicals in the nineteenth century were not opposed to using a scientific approach to biblical study, nor were they opposed to historical criticism per se, as long they could employ its methods without adopting its anti-supernaturalistic presuppositions.³

¹Archibald Alexander, quoted in Stewart, 203.

²Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology* (1887), 1:10, quoted in Rogers and McKim, 293. Just as natural science does not teach astronomy or chemistry, so the Bible does not teach systematic theology, but provides facts for forming a systematic theology. Hodge, 1:3.

³An example of a Princeton theologian who adopted biblical criticism was William Henry Green, who “published four monographs to uphold the ‘supernaturalist’ perspective in American biblical criticism,” and who advocated adopting “believing criticism,” a new name for a sanctified approach to historical criticism. Stewart, 207-208. Green continually upheld the views of inerrancy held by his colleagues, and his answer to a Hegelian approach to the Old Testament was the adoption of the concept of “progressive revelation.” *Ibid.*, 212.

Evangelicals, however, were not united in the choice of a method for biblical study and criticism. Charles Hodge advocated the “inductive method” to studying Scripture “because it agrees in everything essential with the inductive method as applied to the natural sciences.”¹ In the latter part of his career, when Darwinism was being accepted even by Christian scholars, Hodge shifted in his view of what constituted the “facts” of Scripture—they now became deductions derived from Scripture. That is, “verbal propositions extracted by the theologians from Scripture were equated with objects observed by the scientist in nature.”² A purely inductive approach to Scripture could no longer meet the onslaughts of Darwinian thought! Hodge’s student and successor at Princeton, Benjamin B. Warfield, also relied heavily upon induction as an approach to Scripture, but included within induction the clear, positive statements of Scripture that supported theological truths and led to the adoption of other truths (via a process of deduction).³ The difference between induction and deduction as approaches to developing a doctrine of revelation becomes even more important in twentieth-century evangelicalism, as will be noted later in my examination of Bernard L. Ramm and Carl F. H. Henry.

¹Hodge, 1:9, cited in Rogers and McKim, 289, who continue by stating that “Hodge adopted the naive inductive method of [Francis] Bacon as mediated through the Scottish realists.” Ibid.

²Rogers and McKim, 297. This was a mixing of deduction with induction, so that the two became part of the same process, as in the case of Hodge’s close friend, Samuel Tyler, who wrote for the *Princeton Review* in the period of 1840-1870. Ibid., 294.

³According to W. Andrew Hoffecker, “Benjamin B. Warfield,” in *The Princeton Theology*, ed. David F. Wells (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1989), 85, Warfield followed the inductive approach to Scripture and should not be classed as a “presuppositionalist,” even though he included “doctrines” as part of the “facts” gleaned from Scripture. Hoffecker’s point is supported by the conclusions of Peter M. Van Bemmelen in his analysis of William Sanday, who pursued the inductive approach to Scripture. See “Issues in Biblical Inspiration: Sanday and Warfield” (Th.D. dissertation, Andrews University, 1987), 377-380.

The Impact of Scientific Chronology on Biblical Studies

The length of the days of creation and the age of the earth are two separate, but closely related, issues within the understanding of Scripture in its relation to science, especially the science of geology. If biblical chronology is viewed as accurate and firm, then it would be most difficult to expand the days of creation into a period of thousands or millions of years.¹ This study has already examined how Christian scholars since the New Testament era have interpreted the days of creation down to the nineteenth century; now it must briefly take note of the nineteenth-century evangelical response to the findings of geology, especially its greatly expanded chronology.

Many evangelical studies defending a short chronology for the earth in the nineteenth century put the age of the earth within the time frame of a prophetic history. The date for the origin of the earth and its life is needed to establish a date for the end of the earth. Biblical protology and eschatology are linked together by a common biblical chronology. For example, Smith B. Goodenow established a chronology one hundred years longer than that of Archbishop Ussher. He states: "The current Usher chronology has it [the creation] 4004 years; but the most reliable reckoning of the Hebrew increases it to 4104 years. So that 6000 years from Adam expire in A.D. 1897," thus inaugurating the start of the millennium.² Other chronologists, all of whom were millennialists, viewed the

¹The only exception is the "ruin-restitution" or "gap theory," which does allow for an earth of about 6,000 years of age, but suggests that millions of years occupied the period prior to the six days' creation as described by the Hebrew as a period *tohu vabohu* in Gen 1:2. However, among evangelicals today the ruin-restitution theory is a mostly discredited and little-used model for harmonizing Genesis and geology. It is much more popular among Fundamentalists today.

²Smith B. Goodenow, *Bible Chronology, Carefully Unfolded* (New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1896), 327. He continues by saying: "This expiration, within a few years from now, of *the six week days* of human history (since 'one day is with the Lord as a thousand years.' 2 Pet. iii:8), is drawing some attention

end of the 6,000 years as the end of the world.¹

Evangelical chronologists of the nineteenth century became less and less certain about the validity of biblical chronology the further back in history they went. We find this especially true of the leading Bible dictionaries, which were conservative and/or evangelical. Smith's *Dictionary of the Bible* (1863) doubts whether any of the figures in the genealogies of Gen 5 and 11 are genuine, due to variations between three text types (Septuagint, Masoretic, and Samaritan) that "are the result of design not accident."² Hasting's *Dictionary of the Bible* (1898), after noting that there are "three different lengths assigned for the period from the creation to the Flood," each of which are defended by various scholars, concludes: "But these numbers, whichever table may be regarded as the original, cannot, in any case, be accepted as historical, and hence for a real chronology of the early ages of man they are valueless."³ *The Popular and Critical Bible Encyclopedia* (1901), being produced at the same time, reaches the same conclusions, after noting the problem of missing names from genealogies.⁴ The purpose of the tables in Gen 5 and 11 is

to the speedy opening of the seventh thousand years, or *Sabbatic day* of human history, as a supposed *millennial epoch* described in Revelation xx:1-7." Ibid., emphasis original. This view is based upon typology: "The Creation Week was thus regarded [by early Christians] as a type of the creation's duration, and God's rest on the 7th day as a type of Messiah's reign." Ibid., 338.

¹See, for example, the Episcopalian R. C. Shimeall, *Age of the World, as Founded on the Sacred Records, Historic and Prophetic* (New York: Swords, Stanford & Co., 1842), and the Anglican William Hales, *A New Analysis of Chronology and Geography, History and Prophecy* (London: C. J. G. and F. Rivington, 1830), 4 vols.

²"Chronology," *A Dictionary of the Bible*, edited by William Smith (London: John Murray, and Walton and Maberly, 1863), 1:319.

³Owen C. Whitehouse, "Cosmogony," *A Dictionary of the Bible*, ed. James Hastings (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1908), 397.

⁴"The students of these patriarchal tables, after observing the carelessness of Hebrew genealogies with their frequent omissions, will find himself obliged to say of the genealogies prior to Abraham that in them we have probably only the more important names of the lives of descent, the purpose of their trans-

viewed as genealogical, not chronological.

As in Bible dictionaries, evangelical periodicals likewise were not looking to biblical genealogies of the book of Genesis to reconstruct the age of the earth. The most influential of periodical articles was an 1890 *Bibliotheca Sacra* article by William H. Green that influenced the entire evangelical world to be wary of extracting an exact chronology from biblical genealogies, due to the fact that many generations are often missing.¹ His conclusion is unambiguous: “On these various grounds we conclude that the Scriptures furnish no data for a chronological computation prior to the life of Abraham; and that the Mosaic records do not fix and were not intended to fix the precise date either of the Flood or the creation of the world.”²

Green’s article, which gave example after example of incomplete genealogies in the Old Testament, was not a bombshell in evangelical circles as perhaps expected, but instead it gradually paved the way for the acceptance of a much greater age of the earth than traditionally assigned to it by biblical chronology. About two decades later, Benjamin B. Warfield, the upholder of verbal inerrancy at Princeton, endorsed Green’s views and mentioned Green’s 1890 article specifically.³ By the time the conservative *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* (1939) was published, Green’s views had become well

mission not being history in our modern sense, but to show a line of descent.” Samuel Willard, “Chronology,” *The Popular and Critical Bible Encyclopaedia and Scriptural Dictionary*, ed. Samuel Fallows (Chicago: Howard-Severance Co., 1909), 418.

¹William Henry Green, “Primeval Chronology,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 47 (1890): 285-303.

²*Ibid.*, 303. In the ten years after the publication of this article, there were no unfavorable comments directed against it in the journal *Bibliotheca Sacra*, but only supportive comments.

³Benjamin B. Warfield, “On the Antiquity and the Unity of the Human Race,” *The Princeton Theological Review* 9 (1911): 1-25, especially noting p. 3 where Green’s article is called “illuminating.”

established within evangelicalism, as they remain to this day.¹

The issue of the age of the earth in nineteenth and early twentieth-century evangelicalism is significant, in that a willingness to accept a much more expanded view of biblical chronology based upon “missing links” within the patriarchal genealogies may have led to the adoption of a more flexible approach to the creation days. Certainly the converse is true—if we can establish through the best methods of biblical, archaeological, and historical studies that creation occurred a few thousand years ago, then it is much more likely that the days of creation should be interpreted in the traditional sense as being literal.

The Bible Considered to Be a Textbook of Science

The book of nature and the inspired Word were considered by nineteenth-century evangelicals to have the same divine Author and thus could not help but be in harmony.² There can be no discrepancies between the two books. Charles Hodge in pursuing the thought of Archibald Alexander asserts: “And yet revelation does not present one single

¹Note especially the articles, “Antediluvian Patriarchs,” “Antediluvians,” “Chronology,” *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1939) 1:139-143, 143-144, 635-644B. Green’s influential 1890 article has been reprinted nearly a century later in its entirety in the appendix of a popular book written by evangelicals: Robert C. Newman and Herman J. Eckelmann, *Genesis One and the Origin of the Earth* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1977), 105-123. A search of evangelical doctoral dissertations in the twentieth century uncovers only one that defends the chronological value of the Genesis genealogies: Travis R. Freeman, “The Chronological Value of Genesis 5 and 11 in Light of Recent Biblical Investigation” (Ph.D. dissertation, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1998).

²Trained in both theology and geology, John Pye Smith wrote: “The study of revealed religion, thus pursued, cannot but be in perfect harmony with all true science. The works and the word of God are streams from the same source.” *The Relation between the Holy Scripture and Some Parts of Geological Science* (Philadelphia: Robert E. Peterson, 1850), 18. Another academician trained in both theology and geology, Edward Hitchcock, quotes Henry Melvill as follows: “Science may scale new heights and explore new depths, but she shall bring back nothing from her daring and successful excursion which will not, when rightly understood, yield a fresh tribute of testimony to the Bible.” *The Religion of Geology and Its Connected Sciences* (Boston: Phillips, Sampson, and Co., 1857), 31.

positive statement which is not consistent with all the *facts* known to men, in any department of nature.”¹ This ingrained belief in the ultimate harmony between geological discoveries and biblical truths led to concordism, the attempt to interpret the first few chapters in Genesis in light of science, showing the complete harmony. This raises the question of whether the Bible is a textbook of science.

While Augustine, Calvin, and Luther stated that it was not the purpose of Scripture to teach science or be a textbook of science, as in astronomy, Charles Hodge “instead held to the notion that it was the purpose of the Bible to convey information on scientific matters.”² For him it was a critical issue in preserving the inerrancy of Scripture. The important thing for him was not what the biblical writers *thought* about natural science, but what they *taught* about natural science: “For example, it is not the question Whether they thought that the earth is the centre of our system? But, Did they teach that it is?”³ This raises the issue of authorial intent: Did the biblical authors intend to teach, for example, that the days of creation are twenty-four-hour days? Did they intend to teach that all of plant, animal, and human life came into existence within a four-day period—the period from day 3 through day 6 of creation week? Ever since Hodge made the fine distinction between what the Bible writers intended to teach and what they personally may have believed, evangelicals have struggled with the issue of to what degree the Bible may or may not be a textbook of science, that is an inspired book that teaches scientific truths.

¹Rogers and McKim, 307-308, emphasis original.

²Ibid., 287.

³Hodge, 1:169, cited in *ibid.*

Summary

The history of the belief in the seven days of creation indicates that theologians down through the centuries have treated the days at times with a certain amount of ambiguity, due to philosophical and scientific pressures being brought to bear upon the theological interpreter. Evangelicals in the nineteenth century have harmonized Genesis with geology either by means of a non-literal approach to the creation days, such as the day-age view, or a literal approach that allows large drafts of time to be inserted between the initial creation (Gen 1:1) and the six days of creation (Gen 1:3ff.). When it comes to the doctrine of revelation, nineteenth-century evangelicals developed a view exalting the inerrancy of Scripture in combination with an inductive or scientific approach to Scripture influenced by Scottish Common Sense Realism. They have not held that inerrancy demands completeness of the biblical records. For example, biblical genealogies may be missing an unknown number of names, thus rendering the quest to determine the age of the earth impossible from a biblical standpoint. But they have upheld Scripture as teaching certain scientific truths that cannot be altered by any discoveries of science.

CHAPTER 3

BERNARD L. RAMM ON REVELATION

AND CREATION

Introduction

In lists of the most influential evangelical theologians of the twentieth century invariably the names of Carl F. H. Henry and Bernard L. Ramm arrive at the top.¹ While evangelicalism in the first half of the twentieth century was largely swallowed up by Fundamentalism, Neo-evangelicalism emerged in the 1940s as the new scholarly force within conservative Protestant theology. Its two foremost leaders are considered to be Henry and Ramm.² In 1992 Stanley Grenz and Roger Olson set forth these two as the “representative voices” or spokespersons for evangelicalism since the 1940s.³ In

¹For example, Price, 315, and Henry H. Knight, *A Future for Truth: Evangelical Theology in a Postmodern World* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1997), 32, both of whom list Ramm and Henry together along with E. J. Carnell as leading pioneers of the neo-evangelical movement. Trueman broadens the listing to include others: “Among the leaders of this movement were E. J. Carnell, Bernard Ramm, George Eldon Ladd, Harold Lindsell, Harold Ockenga, and of course, Carl F. H. Henry himself.” Carl R. Trueman, “Admiring the Sistine Chapel: Reflections on Carl F. H. Henry’s *God, Revelation and Authority*,” *Themelios* 25 (2000):48.

²Anderson in his recent assessment of twentieth-century evangelical theology, describes “Bernard Ramm [as] perhaps the most significant American evangelical theologian alongside [Carl] Henry.” Ray S. Anderson, “Evangelical Theology,” in *The Modern Theologians: An Introduction to Christian Theology in the Twentieth Century*, ed. David S. Ford (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1997), 492. John R. Muether has made the observation that “Carl Henry’s stature as contemporary evangelicalism’s foremost theologian is firmly established.” “Contemporary Evangelicalism and the Triumph of the New School,” *Westminster Theological Journal* 50 (1988): 339. This is still true today.

³Grenz and Olson, 288.

fact, while both Henry and Ramm remained loyal to their Baptist faith, they both addressed concerns that have transcended their own denominational boundaries. In a more recent evaluation Stanley J. Grenz, one of the more prominent voices among today's evangelicals, notes that their "Christian identity" is more aligned with evangelicalism because of its emphasis on the "essence of the Christian faith" than with their Baptist roots, giving them a greater voice in the new movement than any other two individuals.¹

This study begins with Bernard Ramm, not that he has been more influential than Carl Henry, but because he was the first to enter the arena on the debate over creation. Ramm's book, *The Christian View of Science and Scripture*, considered by many to be the most influential and at the same time most controversial evangelical work on science and religion in the twentieth century,² appeared in 1954, while Henry's first formal writing on the subject of science and religion was published in 1957, exhibiting a pronounced reaction against the views in Ramm's 1954 work.³ In addition, nearly all of Ramm's works on the topics of revelation and biblical hermeneutics were published prior to the publication of Henry's magnum opus, the six-volume set, *God*,

¹Stanley J. Grenz, *Renewing the Center: Evangelical Theology in a Post-theological Era* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 2000), 85. He speaks of the two in these glowing terms: "But perhaps none of the early theologians of the [neo-evangelical] movement had more impact upon the theology of 'card-carrying evangelicals' than Carl F. H. Henry and Bernard Ramm."

²Of the twenty books that Ramm authored, *The Christian View of Science and Scripture*, had perhaps the widest impact upon both fundamentalists and evangelicals. (Cited throughout as *CVSS*.) "It caused an enormous stir in fundamentalist circles when Ramm advocated what he called 'progressive creationism' . . . and an old earth," according to W. A. Elwell, "Bernard Ramm," *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, 2nd ed., 980-981. This one book "catapulted him into the evangelical limelight." Grenz, *Renewing the Center*, 104. It also "unleashed a firestorm," mostly in the fundamentalist camp. *Ibid.*, 106.

³Henry, "Science and Religion," 247-282.

Revelation and Authority.¹ Thus, what Henry has written on both creation and revelation is viewed either as a reaction at least to what Ramm had written earlier on these topics, or as a dialog with a variety of evangelicals, including Ramm, on the issues of the nature of revelation and the relationship between revelation and creation.

Ramm's concept of divine revelation will be described in detail, followed by the manner in which he relates his view on creation to his doctrine of revelation. Finally the possible impact that his formulation of revelation and creation may have had upon his understanding of the days of creation will be uncovered. One would expect that with Ramm as with other evangelicals the doctrine of revelation, which is so fundamental to theology, should have a direct impact upon the way that the days of creation in Gen 1 are explained, whether literal or figurative, whether historical or theological in nature.

Ramm's Development of the Doctrine of Revelation

For Bernard Ramm the doctrine of revelation is the most fundamental doctrine of the Christian faith. He surmises that "if there were no revelation there would be no possibility of the knowledge of God, for . . . there would be no autobiography of God," resulting in the absence of a foundation for both individual "Christian piety" and the whole "Christian Church."² Revelation is so vitally important because, for Ramm, it serves as the starting point for the discussion of every major doctrine of the Christian

¹Carl F. H. Henry, *God, Revelation and Authority*, 6 vols. (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1976-1983).

²Ramm, *Special Revelation*, 19. Within the same context Ramm also summarizes Hermann Bavinck on the subject: "Bavinck was correct when he wrote that 'with the reality of revelation, therefore, Christianity stands or falls.'" Ibid.

faith, including the doctrine of creation. Theology cannot exist as a discipline without the doctrine of revelation; thus a study of theology begins with a study of revelation.¹

Two Approaches for Developing a Doctrine of Revelation

Ramm has observed that two approaches can be followed for establishing a doctrine of revelation and in a related sense a doctrine of inspiration.² The first approach is to peruse Scripture and select all the passages that deal directly with revelation and thus formulate its definition. From these a theology of revelation is constructed. This Ramm labels the “a priori method.” The second approach is more analytical in that it examines closely the data of Scripture, called by Everett Harrison its “phenomena,” to observe how revelation occurs and how inspiration is involved in the preservation of revelation. This Ramm labels the “phenomenological approach.” He makes clear which methodology he favors: “I prefer to take the second approach and say: ‘Given the phenomena of Scripture, this is how we understand its theological attributes.’”³

¹Revelation is not only “the source of Christian theology,” but is also the “norm of Christian theology,” serving as a means of distinguishing what is true from what is not true. Bernard Ramm, “Where Did ‘God Is Dead’ Theology Come From?” *Eternity*, August 1966, 8.

²These two approaches are explicated in Bernard Ramm, “Scripture as a Theological Concept,” *Review and Expositor* 71 (1974): 149-150. He treats revelation as being more significant theologically than inspiration, the latter being defined as “a *conserving* and a *forming* work performed by the Holy Spirit,” resulting in a trustworthy written body of Scripture. *Special Revelation*, 175-176. Inspiration can be viewed as a means to the end, the end product being defined as revelation as embodied in Scripture.

³*Ibid.*, 150. Elsewhere Ramm portrays the work of a theologian as similar to that of a scientist who gathers his data in order to construct a theory; for the theologian the “data” would be the texts of Scripture. He advocates this inductive approach for developing a systematic theology. *Protestant Biblical Interpretation: A Textbook of Hermeneutics for Conservative Protestants* (Boston: W. A. Wilde Co., 1956), 153-154. This approach was developed by the Princeton theologians of the nineteenth century, thus influencing modern evangelicalism. “Charles Hodge patterned his approach after that of the scientist. Just as the natural scientist uncovers the facts pertaining to the natural world, he asserted, so the theologian

The first approach is deductive, in that it moves from the broad generalizations of Scripture to their applications in specifics, whereas the second approach is inductive, in that it starts with the specifics of the biblical text and infers broad generalizations from those specifics.

Definition of Revelation

It is essential to know how Ramm defines revelation. Although he is more interested in focusing on special revelation as distinguished from general revelation, he does offer this definition of revelation itself: "In the broadest sense revelation is the sum total of the ways in which God makes himself known."¹ Revelation is that which leads to a knowledge of God, and the "knowledge of God is a map of the spiritual order."² A map indicates the various means, or "modalities" as Ramm designates them, by which we arrive at a knowledge of God.³ The variety of modalities can be classified according to general revelation or special revelation, while the major modalities—"divine condescension," "divine speaking," "historical event," and "incarnation"—are all subsumed under special revelation.⁴

brings to light the theological facts found within the Bible." Grenz, *Renewing the Center*, 225.

¹*Special Revelation*, 17.

²*Ibid.*, 14. Cf. the following definition: "*Revelation is the autobiography of God*, i.e., it is the story which God narrates about himself." *Ibid.*, 17, emphasis original.

³In the first half of his *Special Revelation and the Word of God* Ramm expounds on four major modalities through which God communicates with man: 1) "the modalities of the divine condescension," 2) "the modalities of the divine speaking," 3) "the modality of the historical event," and 4) "the modality of the incarnation." *Special Revelation*, 31-122 (chaps. 2-5).

⁴*Special Revelation*, 9. In this work Ramm discusses both special and general revelation, prior to a consideration of the divine modalities and products of revelation in two separate sections. A broader listing of the modalities by which God communicates includes nature, miracles, human experience, God's mighty

General Revelation

According to Ramm, “general revelation is that knowledge of God that man may derive from creation, man, and providence.”¹ It is the “presupposition of special revelation, for general revelation in all its forms or kinds [i.e. modalities] is both the fundamental witness of the Creator *to* the creature and the primal witness of the Creator *in* the creature.”² General revelation is considered prelapsarian, in that it was the dominant modality before the Fall, while special revelation is postlapsarian, becoming dominant after the Fall. The former paves the way for the latter and takes priority only in terms of time, not in terms of authority.³ General revelation is called “general” because it “is God’s witness to himself for all men.”⁴

Special Revelation

For Ramm “special revelation is *special*. It is not general or impersonal but . . . it is historical, concrete, and personal.”⁵ His understanding of special revelation rests upon the following three propositions: (1) Special revelation is remedial or redemptive, in contrast with general revelation that offers no salvation; (2) it is necessitated both by

acts in history, the written Word, the incarnation, illumination, and God’s speaking through the conscience. See Bernard Ramm, *Protestant Christian Evidences: A Textbook of the Evidences of the Truthfulness of the Christian Faith for Conservative Protestants* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1953), 157.

¹Bernard Ramm, *A Handbook of Contemporary Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1966), 110.

²*Special Revelation*, 18, emphasis original.

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid., 17.

⁵Ibid., 19, emphasis original.

God's incomprehensibility and transcendence, that is, his sovereignty, in line with John Calvin's thought; and (3) God's nature is portrayed in personal terms, meaning that he makes himself known only by his choosing.¹

In *Special Revelation and the Word of God*, Ramm places great emphasis on the variety of "modalities," by which God reveals himself to mankind. The more notable ones found in Scripture are the casting of lots, Urim and Thummim, deep sleep, dreams, visions, theophanies, and angels.² Such are manifestations of special revelation that happened infrequently and in specific circumstances. They are not as significant as three additional modalities that form the major channels for revelation: divine speaking, historical events, and the incarnation.³ All modalities of special revelation, whether major or minor, are a result of the divine accommodation, of God bending down to man in order to adapt divine truth to human understanding.⁴ Throughout his writings Ramm has emphasized the human side of divine revelation under the rubric of "accommodation."

Differences Between Special and General Revelation

Ramm astutely observes that general revelation never has come and never will come to anyone in written form or with an audible voice, based on his finding that the

¹Ibid., 21-25.

²Ibid., 44-47.

³The major modalities are extensively discussed in chaps. 3-5, *Special Revelation*, 53-122.

⁴Ibid., 65. Elsewhere he portrays special revelation as "anthropic." By anthropic he interprets it to mean "that it is *marked by human characteristics throughout.*" Ibid., 36, emphasis original.

more accurate translation of Ps 19:3 is: “no voice is heard.”¹ While general revelation is for all to see and observe, if they are spiritually discerning, special revelation has been given to a particular people living at a particular time, thus lending itself well to taking on a written form and offering the message of salvation.² Ramm interprets Rom 1:17-32 as stating that “humanity proves itself sinful by persistently misreading the witness of creation to a powerful, spiritual Deity.”³ He obviously does not accept natural theology, whereby God’s revelation to humanity outside of Scripture is sufficient to offer salvation without the recipient of the revelation having heard the gospel of Jesus.⁴ As I will note later in this study, Ramm builds the doctrine of creation not upon natural theology, due to its inherent limitations, but rather on Scriptural exegesis and theology in connection with informed dialog with the natural sciences.

As Ramm explains it, special revelation, as the source of our knowledge of God,

¹Ibid., 17. Ps 19:3 in the received text states: “There is no speech nor language where their voice is not heard.” The NRSV in line with other modern versions translates it: “There is no speech, nor are there words; their voice is not heard,” in reference to the revelation of Deity in the things of nature.

²According to Ramm, general revelation is not sufficient of itself to offer salvation to humanity; that is why special revelation is needed. It can only point out the malady of sin and the need for a Saviour, according to Ramm’s interpretation of Acts 14:7 and Rom 1:20; 2:14-15; thus it paves the way for the reception of the Holy Spirit as the remedy for this malady that has darkened the mind of man. Bernard Ramm, *The Witness of the Spirit: An Essay on the Contemporary Relevance of the Internal Witness of the Holy Spirit* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1959), 66.

³Bernard Ramm, *Offense to Reason: A Theology of Sin* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1985), 42.

⁴In his dissertation R. Alan Day makes this observation: “Ramm’s view of general revelation may be identified with that of Berkouwer and Brunner. All three claim to have followed Calvin on the subject. There is a revelation, but there is not recognition of revelation and, thus, no natural theology.” “The Concept of Revelation in the Theology of Bernard Ramm” (Th.D. dissertation, New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, 1979), 97. This is corroborated by Ramm’s discussion of natural theology in *A Handbook of Contemporary Theology*, 87-88, in which he recommends G. C. Berkouwer’s *General Revelation* on the subject. By siding with Berkouwer and Brunner, he definitely differs with Barth on this point.

is not a mere “piece of religious intellectualism.”¹ He recommends that the “knowledge of God” be “not divorced from the worship of God or the service of God.”² His own testimony and life-long defense of the Christian faith as a scholar shows that Christianity goes beyond intellectual pursuits, but involves a total commitment to Christ as a personal Saviour and total subservience to the authority of the written Word of God. In this sense Ramm is truly evangelical. He is also evangelical in that he finds a useful purpose for general revelation, but rejects the Roman Catholic view that natural theology provides an independent means for attaining a saving knowledge of God.

The Five Major Issues on Revelation

In a 1970 article Bernard Ramm lists the following seven characteristics of revelation in developing his theology of revelation: It is (1) supernatural, (2) soteric, (3) doctrinal, (4) inscripturated, (5) inspirited, (6) Christological, and (7) accommodated.³ Such are the core requirements of a “historical Protestant position” on the nature of revelation. In addition to these, Ramm gives attention to more modern concerns among evangelicals, who see revelation as insight, as special configuration, as encounter, as interpreted event, and as composed of images.⁴ Even this fuller listing is

¹*Special Revelation*, 14-15, where he defines “religious intellectualism” as a case where a person believing correct doctrines and doing theology in the correct way supposes that “he has thereby met all the spiritual demands required of him.”

²Ibid.

³Bernard Ramm, “How Does Revelation Occur?” *Spectrum* 2 (Winter 1970): 7-21. The seven qualifiers of what revelation is are listed in the order and with the enumeration as given by Ramm. In his discussion of these seven he pays closest attention to the sixth and the seventh, thus indicating a logical order to the sequence with a climax toward the last portion of the list.

⁴Ibid.

not exhaustive; more emphasis could have been placed on the historical character of revelation. Thus I have decided to group these and other important elements in Ramm's doctrine of revelation into five broad categories: (1) God, man, and revelation; (2) Christ and revelation; (3) Spirit and revelation; (4) language and revelation; and (5) history and revelation. These five broad categories indeed are representative of the major issues Ramm wrestles with throughout his voluminous writings and long writing career. The first topic to be discussed is the relationship between God and man in a process called revelation.

First Topic: God, Man, and Revelation

As with many evangelicals, Ramm's starting point for the development of his theological system is the doctrine of God, which leads quickly into the doctrine of revelation.¹ A central point in the doctrine of God for a Reformed theologian—and Ramm is a Reformed theologian through and through—is God's sovereignty. The utter transcendence of God implies that He is unreachable by any human effort of the will, or reason, or logic. As in the words of Zophar to Job: "Can you find out the deep things of God? Can you find out the limit of the Almighty? It is higher than heaven—what can you do? Deeper than Sheol—what can you know."² God's unknowability demands some type of initiative on his part to reach mankind. That initiative takes the form of revelation, which is the "unveiling" of the divine mind, enabling the human race to

¹Stanley Grenz finds that Millard Erickson has followed the lead of his mentor, Bernard Ramm, in presupposing "the self-revealing God," and from there has proceeded to develop "an entire theological system." *Renewing the Center*, 126.

²Job 11:7-8. Ramm cites 1 Tim 6:15-16 and Ps 139:6 in support of the incomprehensibility of God, according to *Special Revelation*, 22.

grasp the things of God. The whole process of God reaching out to man requires a well-defined doctrine of God in addition to a solid doctrine of revelation. Ramm does not get embroiled in the evangelical debate of whether to begin with a doctrine of God or a doctrine of revelation in one's pursuit to develop a theological system. Perhaps it is because the doctrines of God and revelation are inseparably intertwined.

The Doctrine of God within the Context of Revelation

Ramm's doctrine of God is well in line with the evangelical view with its roots going back to Calvin's treatises on the nature and works of God. God is omniscient, omnipotent, omnipresent, all-loving, totally fair, and totally good.¹ As with his approach to revelation and other doctrines, Ramm unfurls his doctrine of God in the form of an apologetic, which finds its well-developed roots in the Old Testament. The Old Testament establishes four criteria or "differentia" to identify the one true God as opposed to any god of another religion. First, God is described as the Creator of the heavens and the earth—a theme woven continuously throughout the Old Testament and mentioned more than one hundred times. Second, the God of the Old Testament is the One who guides history and controls the affairs of mankind, in contrast with powerless pagan gods. Third, God has manifested himself in various ways, but most of all personally. This self-manifestation of God at his own initiative is the supreme proof of the existence of God advanced by Old Testament authors. And fourth, God stands out

¹Ramm finds many of the attributes of God expressed in the theology and narratives of the book of Exodus, where God is described as compassionate, glorious, holy, sovereign, spiritual (or a Spirit being), and personal. Bernard L. Ramm, "The Theology of the Book of Exodus: A Reflection on Exodus 12:12," *Southwestern Journal of Theology* 20 (February 1977): 63-65.

as God because of the “futility of the opposite”—the impotent pagan gods of surrounding nations.¹ It may prove significant that Ramm’s concept of God was refined in the crucible of apologetics, as was his doctrine of revelation. To know who God is and what he is like is more important than proving by means of apologetics that he exists.²

True to the tradition of Reformation/Calvinist thought, Ramm upholds man’s inability on his own to arrive at a correct knowledge of God. This stems from the “doctrine of the incomprehensibility of God” which is closely allied with the “doctrine of the transcendence of God.”³ Both doctrines make revelation or a revelatory event imperative. The gap between God’s incomprehensibility and God’s transcendence can be bridged only through divine revelation, complicated by the fact that certain limits have been imposed upon human nature at creation and superimposed as a result of the Fall. “The incomprehensibility of God means that man’s knowledge of God is at best fragmentary and limited,” states Ramm.⁴ On a more positive note, he perceives God’s incomprehensibility as an invitation to know God.

¹Bernard Ramm, “The Apologetic of the Old Testament: The Basis of a Biblical and Christian Apologetic,” *Bulletin of the Evangelical Theological Society* 1 (Fall 1958): 16-20. All of the differentia are applied in order to “differentiate the true and living God of Israel from the dead and powerless gods of the pagans.”

²“Thus,” says Ramm, “the issue is not the existence of God but the knowledge of God, the presence of God, the encounter with God, in short the reality of God.” Bernard Ramm, quoted in David W. Miller, “The Theological System of Bernard L. Ramm” (Ph.D. dissertation, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1982), 104.

³*Special Revelation*, 21. Karl Barth sees God’s transcendence as one of the most important aspects of the doctrine of God, which may be one reason Ramm was attracted to Barth.

⁴*Ibid.* The incomprehensibility of God also puts a limiting factor upon the degree to which natural or general revelation can witness to the characteristics of God. See *ibid.*, 22.

The incomprehensibility of God necessitates mediated revelation; that is, the concept that no revelation takes place apart from some form of modality.¹ It means that the process of revelation begins with divine initiative, rather than a human quest to discover God. The ultimate end product of God's divine initiative in bridging the gap between infinite God and finite man is a written record of that revelation.²

Nature of Man and the Fall of Man

In bridging the gap between an infinite God and finite man, one must be cognizant of the nature of man, especially the degree to which a fall from perfection may have affected the image of God in man. For Ramm, it is easier to state what the image of God is not than what it is. The reason he offers for this is that Gen 1:27 and 2:7 do not provide enough information to form a picture of the process of the creation of man. "The creation of man must remain a concept about which we can form no pictures."³ Any attempt to draw pictures of this process will lead to anthropomorphisms. This brings us to Ramm's next point: If the image of God is not given as a picture or profile, then the image of God must be much more than the physical. "The Scriptures do not give the doctrine of the *image of God* a biological

¹Ramm states it in this manner: "The incomprehensibility and transcendence of God demands that *any* revelation be mediated, for man cannot see the transcendent God. If *every* revelation is mediated, then all revelation comes by way of a modality." *Ibid.*, 54, italics in original.

²The connection between God's initiative and the written Word as its end product is stated as such: "We believe that the Word of God means that God takes the initiative in making himself known; that God wills that man know 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, "Scripture as a Theological Concept," 154. This is just one modality among several, however.

³Bernard Ramm, "Theological Reactions to the Theory of Evolution," *Journal of the American Scientific Affiliation* 15 (September 1963): 76.

interpretation,” writes Ramm. “Man is not in the image of God because he walks erect, has a big brain, or has such flexible hands.”¹

Does this mean that the image of God consists of the mind of man—the organ through which the Creator communicates with the creature—if the image is not physical? In his discussion of the image of God within contemporary theology, Ramm notes that Paul Tillich believes the image of God is to be found in man’s reason, which is the logos of man in some way connected with the Divine Logos. This Ramm rejects, and instead he agrees with the viewpoint of Berkouwer, that emphasizes that “it is the total man who is in the image of God.”² Nevertheless, Ramm stresses the intellect of man as a distinctive feature of the image of God, which is a key tenet of the neo-evangelical movement. He is somewhat enamored with the approach to truth known as “rationalism,” finding a Scripture base for that in the image of God.³

The fall of man had a definite impact upon the image of God, including man’s reason which is a significant part of that image.

Accommodation of God to Man in Revelation

Any divine revelation from a perfect being must be adapted or shaped in order

¹Ibid., emphasis original.

²*A Handbook of Contemporary Theology*, 63.

³Ramm advocates a type of rationalism, called “authoritarian rationalism,” akin to what was first propounded by Augustine. He describes it in this way: “It is *rationalism* because it is an admission that if man is in the image of God, he bears in his nature the impress of the divine reason which John 1:9 seems to teach.” Ramm, *Protestant Christian Evidences*, 41, emphasis original. According to Grenz, Ramm started as a rationalist, but shifted toward a more experiential approach. He then “sought to move evangelical theology beyond rationalism, which he feared held it captive, and restore to it a profound sense of the mystery of revelation.” *Renewing the Center*, 115. This “sense of mystery” is found in the doctrine of the sovereignty of God.

to fully meet the needs of a fallen human being, whose mind has been affected by his sinful nature. Accommodation is the process whereby the infinite mind of God can reach the finite mind of man in intelligible communication and whereby that revelation can be made appealing to all the senses of man through a use of local culture and customs for its conveyance. Ramm sees the great challenge of understanding the exact nature this local acculturation has upon divine truths: “The most acute theological problem today is to assess to what extent or degree culture determines the character of Scripture, binding Scripture to its own particular historical period.”¹ While not offering a formal definition of accommodation, Ramm has this to say about it: “Holy Scripture is the truth of God accommodated to the human mind so that the human mind can assimilate it.”² It borrows from the culture, the language, the thought-patterns, the literary devices of the day in which it was recorded. “Stated another way, revelation must have an anthropomorphic character.”³

The concept of accommodation has been amplified in detail by John Calvin and those in the Calvinist tradition, such as Abraham Kuyper.⁴ Often accommodation is

¹*Protestant Biblical Interpretation: A Textbook of Interpretation* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1970), 157. The understanding of Ramm’s view of accommodation is absolutely essential to understanding his view of creation and his interpretation of Genesis 1, as I will discuss further on.

²*Ibid.*, 99.

³*Ibid.*, 99. Ramm in this passage warns against taking anthropomorphic expressions too literally, and thus distorting Scripture. *Ibid.*, 100-101.

⁴Ramm attributes his own view of accommodation to the influence of Calvin and to the nineteenth-century Dutch Calvinist theologian, Abraham Kuyper. See for example, *Special Revelation*, 33-34. Elsewhere he summarizes Calvin’s thought on accommodation in these words: “Calvin said that God speaks into the ears of the prophets as a nurse lisps words to a child in teaching it to speak. . . . In their accommodated character, the Holy Scriptures are the ‘lispings’ of God.” Ramm, “How Does Revelation Occur?” 20. One cannot underestimate the influence of both Calvin and Kuyper upon Ramm, as summarized in the words of R. Alan Day, who did his doctoral study on Ramm: “The influence of Calvin

linked with a cultural conditioning of Scripture, whereby erroneous ideas or statements may be found therein because of the influence of local culture. Ramm admits that cultural conditioning does take place due to the inherent nature of language: “Language cannot be disassociated from culture, for language and culture are profoundly intertwined.”¹ God’s speaking through the Hebrew and Greek languages means that God was speaking through the Hebrew and Greek cultures with the limitations of those cultures and languages. The reason that accommodation is needed is that revelation would be meaningless to a person unless it comes to him “in his concrete, cultural setting and speak[s] to him in terms of his specific culture.”²

Ramm employs the imagery of incarnation as the imagery for the process of revelation. Taking his cue from L. S. Thorton, who has written *The Form of a Servant*, Ramm declares that “the form and the spirit of the incarnation is the form and spirit of revelation and therefore of Sacred Scripture.”³ It was necessary that Christ be clothed in human garments and in human flesh in order that he might be seen and be

and Dutch Reformed theologian Kuyper is apparent upon nearly every page of his writings.” “Bernard Ramm,” *Baptist Theologians*, ed. Timothy George and David S. Dockery (Nashville, TN: Broadman, 1990), 591.

¹*CVSS*, 71. He reasons that “it is unrealistic to think that language can be separated from culture.” *Special Revelation*, 39. Only a miraculous, supernatural intervention could spare Scripture from being influenced by the thought patterns and culture of the times in which it is written; that possibility Ramm does not allow.

²*Protestant Biblical Interpretation* (1970), 160. Ramm labels this as the “scandal of particularity”—the idea that divine revelation came “to specific people, at specific times, in specific cultures, in specific languages, and culminated in an incarnation in a specific man.” *Ibid.*, 160-161.

³*Special Revelation*, 34.

understood by the early church.¹ Ramm defends this incarnational model for Scripture on the basis that just as the humanness of Christ—the fact that he hungered, he thirsted, he was tempted, and he died—does not lessen the divinity of Christ, so the “marks of humanity and humiliation” that we find associated with Scripture should not lessen its value.² We find in this process no loss of truth in this cosmic-mediated revelation, although the full truth is not given, nor is the truth that is given fully understood, because we “see through a glass darkly” (1 Cor 13:12).³

Thus far in examining Ramm’s view on God, man, and revelation, we have observed how much the Calvinist concept of revelation has influenced Ramm. A major aspect of the doctrine of God, which is the one aspect stressed in the opening pages of Ramm’s *Special Revelation and the Word of God*, is the incomprehensibility of God—the great cognitive gulf between God and mankind. This gulf necessitates some type of revelation to bring rapport between the Creator and his creatures and to bridge the great cognitive gulf, the distance of separation being due to the effects of a literal fall from moral rectitude. While God has chosen a variety of modes or modalities with which to communicate with mankind, the highest modality is that of the incarnation, which is to be discussed next. Since the Church, except for its first few constituents, does not have the privilege of viewing directly Christ in incarnate form, the highest form of revelation to the Church today is the written Word—the Logos in written form. Just as the divine

¹Ramm states it in this fashion: “The only Christ the Church may then recognize is the Christ clothed in garments of the inspired apostolic witness.” Ibid., 116. Further on Ramm’s view on the relationship between Christ and Scripture will be discussed in greater detail.

²Ibid., 34. As in the incarnation, Scripture comes to us “in the form of a servant.”

³Ibid., 36.

Christ was encumbered with humanity and its liabilities, so the written Word also is encumbered with humanity and its corresponding liabilities. Scripture attests to the great condescension of God in its divine revelation, whereby we hear the very “lispings” of God as “a nursemaid to a baby,” to use the metaphor of Calvin. We find the impress of Ramm’s rich Calvinist heritage thus far in his doctrine of revelation.

Second Topic: Christ and Revelation

Ramm finds an intimate connection between the evangelical doctrine of revelation and the doctrine of Christ, or Christology. Along with his many published writings on the doctrine of revelation, he has one major work on Christology—*An Evangelical Christology*.¹ Theologians have wrestled with the question of what is the center of Scripture over the past centuries, both of the Old and the New Testaments. Many theologians have concluded that Christ is the theological center of both testaments. In the Old Testament one finds Christ foreshadowed through symbols and prophecies, and in the New Testament one finds Christ as the fulfillment of the types and prophecies.

Bernard Ramm has been attracted to, and influenced by, this Christocentric approach to Scripture, for he elevates the concept that “theology is Christological and incarnational” as “the central motif of Scripture which furnishes the principle of organization for Christian theology.”² Biblical evidence supports his thesis: “According

¹Bernard Ramm, *An Evangelical Christology: Ecumenic and Historic* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1985).

²Ramm, *The Evangelical Heritage* (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1973), 143. He notes within this context that evangelicals stand within the Reformation tradition, as well as within the more recent emphases of neo-orthodox theologians, in advocating a Christocentric center to theology.

to Hebrews 1:1-3, Christ is God's highest and final revelation. If that is true, then all revelation must be oriented around its supreme manifestation."¹

Of all the modalities through which God has chosen to reveal Himself to humankind, the supreme modality is that of Jesus Christ.² This is because Christ is the "image of God" (2 Cor 4:4, Col 1:15), He has existed in the "form of God" (Phil 2:6), and He has been set forth as "the effulgence of God's glory and the impress (*character*) of His person."³ This revelation leads to a special kind of knowledge called a "saving knowledge of God," so that Scripture itself becomes the instrument or vehicle for the transmitting of the gospel.⁴

According to Ramm's thought, Christ is not only the vehicle for the revelation of God, but he is also the content or object of divine revelation, as we have already seen, the very center of all of Scripture. For him the concept of the Logos as the content or object of revelation is very important, as indicated in these words: "It is the Son of God who is the Logos—the uttered speech of God. It is the Son who is the incarnate God. His person is the mirror of the divine knowledge. He is the mediator

¹Ibid. He points out the fact that this Christocentrism is possible only because of the reality of the incarnation.

²He opens his chapter on the modality of the incarnation with these words: "The supreme modality of revelation and the supreme content of special revelation is Jesus Christ." *Special Revelation*, 106. This statement is buttressed by a quotation from Calvin's *Institutes* (1. 13. 7).

³Ibid., 118-119.

⁴Ibid., 119-120. This is in harmony with Ramm's emphasis elsewhere on the "soteric" nature of special revelation, as seen in the redemptive activity of God. The focus of revelation, then, is not philosophical, abstract, or speculative. See Ramm, "How Does Revelation Occur?" 18.

and content of revelation.”¹ The Logos in Ramm’s portrayal is connected with a divine teaching function as part of the work of revealing. Christ is seen as Logos leading to all truth, as Light leading out of darkness, as Prophet speaking for God, and as Teacher who has perfect mastery of his subject.² The Christological nature of God’s revelation to man serves as the foundation for Ramm’s view on the authority of Scripture.³

Ramm’s doctrine of Christology is very much evangelical, although it will be noted shortly that he incorporates elements of neo-orthodox Christology into his own Christology. By way of contrast, he rejects liberal theology’s Christology, which he considers to be a “radical alteration of historic Christology.”⁴

Whereas he clearly rejects liberal Christianity’s version of Christology, Ramm finds in neo-orthodox theology a Christocentric approach that has been sometimes lacking in historic Christianity. The vision of the Reformers has been lost or overlooked, he feels. His admiration for the neo-orthodox approach is quite evident in these following words:

Barth and Brunner have restressed for our generation the Christocentric theology of the Reformers. It is the avowed intention of both of these theologians to pick up where the Reformers left off and as consistently

¹Ramm, *The Witness of the Spirit*, 31. Ramm gives the specifics of how this process of revelation works, in stating that the Son mediates what the Father speaks, and what the Son mediates is “actually spoken into the ear by the Holy Spirit.” Ibid. Here we have a full-fledged doctrine of the Trinity at work within the process of revelation.

²*Special Revelation*, 111.

³Bernard Ramm, *The Pattern of Religious Authority* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1959), 46-47.

⁴*The Evangelical Heritage*, 81. He rejects liberalism’s view for two reasons: 1) It treats Christ as merely an “archetypal man” (or *Urbild*), who has been adopted by God to reveal both the spiritual life that can be obtained by man and the shortcoming that are inherent in our nature. 2) It considers Christ merely as the “first Christian”—the one who first revealed the very essence and spiritual ideals of Christianity. Ibid., 81-82.

as possible reconstruct all theology on a Christocentric basis.¹

Ramm recommends that fellow evangelicals accept Barth and Brunner as models “for making it clear that revelation and its chief product, Holy Scripture, are to be understood and interpreted Christologically.”² In the same breath Ramm is critical of both Calvin and Luther for not making Christology the working basis and central focus of their theology; thus Barth and Brunner are credited with the accomplishment of introducing Christology as the central unifying principle and theme of Scripture.³ While at this point Ramm has the highest praise for the Christological methodology of Karl Barth,⁴ later in his career Ramm cited Barth’s “overburdened Christology” as a serious weakness in his theology.⁵

Christ is the unifying theme of Scripture, for he is closely identified with

¹Ibid., 143. He tempers these laudatory comments, however, by stating that Barth and Brunner “have used this principle divisively.”

²“How Does Revelation Occur?” 20. Some scholars would probably differ with Ramm’s view that Barth and Brunner have placed *both* revelation *and* “its chief product,” namely Scripture, on the same plateau. These scholars who would take exception to Ramm would question whether neo-orthodox theologians even consider Scripture as “a chief product” of revelation.

³Ibid. Speaking of the post-Reformation period, Ramm elaborates: “In subsequent Protestant literature we find statements about the unique character of Scripture as the word of God, and also statements that Jesus Christ is the supreme Word of God, or the Word of God in its highest sense. But the two assertions were seldom if ever correlated.” Ibid.

⁴That is, in 1970, the year that he published the article, “How Does Revelation Occur?”

⁵According to Ramm, Barth exploits all the New Testament passages on Christology to their fullest with the result that he “overloads his theology with Christology,” resulting in a possible Christomonism—the idea that Christology dominates every other aspect of theology. Bernard Ramm, *After Fundamentalism: The Future of Evangelical Theology* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1983), 203. Under the heading of “Christocentrism, Christomonism” in his *Handbook of Contemporary Theology* (p. 24), Ramm offers the following insight into how Barth’s theology has developed: “Barth thus intends to take the Christocentrism or Christomonism of the Reformers and, using Schleiermacher’s principle of coordinating all of theology around one guiding thesis, thus to write his dogmatics.” This may result in the forcing of the biblical text to mean something not originally intended. Elsewhere Ramm has labeled Barth “a Christomonist” for making every doctrine of the faith Christological. *Protestant Biblical Interpretation* (1970), 110.

revelation, creation, redemption, and consummation, according to Ramm.¹ It is proper then to treat his doctrine of Christ as an integral part of his doctrine of revelation as well as his doctrine of creation. Christ is the theme that binds such together and helps to bind evangelicals into a common cause of effort and belief. In Ramm's thought, the evangelical is one who advocates *sola Scriptura* (only Scripture as a base of authority), *sola Christus* (only Christ as our basis of salvation), *sola gratia* (God's attitude towards us as permeated fully with grace), and *sola fides* (only faith as the means by which sinners come to God).² This four-fold balance leads evangelicals in the direction of Christocentrism, not Christomonism.

Third Topic: The Holy Spirit and Revelation

A knowledge of God cannot be rightly attained without the agency of the Holy Spirit. Neither can a knowledge of Christ be rightly attained without the agency of the Holy Spirit. The evangelical understanding of revelation is thoroughly trinitarian, and so is Bernard Ramm's understanding. Evangelicals perceive the Spirit as the primary agent in the process of inspiration and the recording of Scripture, based upon the key passages of 2 Tim 3:16-17 and 2 Pet 1:21. Not only does the Holy Spirit inspire the biblical writers, but the Spirit clarifies Scripture in the minds of the readers in a process called illumination. Ramm, then, is essentially in harmony with the evangelical view when he summarizes the role of the Holy Spirit: "He is the Inspirer of revelation; He is

¹Ramm, *The Evangelical Heritage*, 143, where he states: "The seven theses contained in Hebrews 1:1-3 about Christ identify him not only with revelation but also with creation, redemption, and consummation."

²*Ibid.*, 144.

the Mover in the writing of revelation; He is the Illuminator in the heart of the believer, giving him the grace to recognize revelation and the strength to appreciate it.”¹ It is proper that we examine Ramm’s understanding of the Spirit first in its role as the inspirer of Scripture and then as the illuminator of Scripture.

Scripture as Inspired by the Holy Spirit

Undoubtedly one of the greatest issues with which evangelicals have wrestled during the last half of the twentieth century is the issue of the inspiration of the Bible and the closely related issue of its inerrancy. It is said to be a “watershed” in evangelical theology, or an “enlarging chasm,” separating evangelical views of inspiration.² Price calls it “one of the most explosive issues in the evangelical arena today,”³ and Ramm, speaking of the decade of the 1960s, agrees with this sentiment in stating: “Perhaps the sharpest division of the decade among evangelicals has been over

¹*The Pattern of Religious Authority*, 62.

²“Biblical inspiration is becoming a ‘watershed issue’ in the evangelical world,” observes Michael J. Christensen in his book, *C. S. Lewis on Scripture* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1989), 88. Lovelace speaks of an “enlarging chasm” that separates evangelicals who hold to the traditional position of strict inerrancy and some evangelicals who hold to only limited inerrancy. Richard Lovelace, “Inerrancy: Some Historical Perspectives,” in *Inerrancy and Common Sense*, ed. Roger R. Nicole and J. Ramsey Michaels (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1980), 16. This he calls “the most serious” of the issues facing evangelicals today. Even some denominations with a traditional view on inspiration, such as Seventh-day Adventists, are faced with similar tensions, although they are not involved in the evangelical debate on inerrancy. See, for example, Alden Thompson, *Inspiration: Hard Questions, Honest Answers* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1991), followed by a response, Frank Holbrook and Leo Van Dolson, eds., *Issues in Revelation and Inspiration*, (Berrien Springs, MI: Adventist Theological Society, 1992). For Roman Catholics the issue is more the infallibility of the pope and the church, and less the infallibility of Scripture. See Hans Kung, *Infallible? An Inquiry* (New York: Doubleday, 1971) and Ramm’s review of it, “Hans Kung Questions Infallibility,” *Eternity*, August 1971, 40.

³Price, 315.

the nature of inspiration and inerrancy.”¹ The issue among evangelicals is not whether to accept inspiration, for that is universally accepted among them, but how to define inspiration and especially its derivative, inerrancy.

Although some scholars describe inspiration and revelation as almost synonymous, Bernard Ramm sees a clear distinction between the two. He writes: “Inspiration derives its life and substance from revelation. Revelation is prior in point of time to inspiration, and is the more important of the two doctrines.”² The two have differing functions or purposes: “While it is the function of revelation to bring to the sinner a soteric knowledge of God, it is the function of inspiration to preserve that revelation in the form of tradition and then in the form of a *graphe*.”³ Inspiration has a conserving function, keeping the original revelation authentic, and it also does the producing and shaping of the original document. Revelation is the original happening that produces the need for an inscripturation; it is creative. “Thus inspiration settles the form of Scripture in general, and the language of Scripture in particular.”⁴ For Ramm, inspiration is a vital link or a bridge that spans the gap between the giving of the

¹Ramm, *The Evangelical Heritage*, 138. The nature of inspiration and inerrancy is one issue among seven others that evangelicals were facing at the time of the writing (1973). *Ibid.*, 137-140.

²*Special Revelation*, 175. This seems to contradict what he states elsewhere to the effect that revelation is not more important than inspiration: “Therefore one’s theology of inspiration must be equal to his theology of theology of revelation.” Bernard Ramm, “Authority and Scripture: II,” *Christian Century*, 1 March 1961, 266. However, in this latter case he again sees the two as sequential and necessary. The “revealed Word of God” must become the “inspired Word of God,” otherwise revelation will be handicapped without an accompanying theology of inspiration. He sees both as important here.

³*Special Revelation*, 175-176.

⁴*Ibid.*, 176.

revelation and the recording of the sacred text.¹

Inspiration and Inerrancy

Avery Dulles in his classical study on revelation/inspiration places Ramm within the moderate camp of evangelicals who hold to the Bible's inerrancy in "soteric knowledge," but not in its historical or scientific statements.² But we must allow Ramm to speak for himself on this significant matter that is pivotal for our evaluation of his position both on creation and on revelation. His earliest published statements on inspiration indicate that early on he upheld the "plenary" view of inspiration. "The plenary inspiration of the Bible teaches that the Holy Spirit guided men into truth and away from error."³ This was his position in 1950. His path-breaking 1954 work, *The Christian View of Science and Scripture*, seems on the surface to take the same position:

The author of this book believes in the divine origin of the Bible, and therefore in its divine inspiration; and he emphatically rejects any partial theory of inspiration or liberal or neo-orthodox views of the Bible. If what follows disagrees with cherished beliefs of the reader, be assured it is not a difference over inspiration but over interpretation.⁴

Yet in spite of this glowing affirmation of traditional views on inspiration Ramm in this

¹Ramm, "Scripture as a Theological Concept," 157.

²Avery Dulles, *Models of Revelation* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1983), 40.

³Bernard L. Ramm, *Protestant Biblical Interpretation: A Textbook of Hermeneutics for Conservative Protestants* (Boston: W. A. Wilde, 1950), 55. Plenary inspiration is defined as having at least three essentials: "(1) God is the author of the Bible, in varied ways; (2) the focus of inspiration is the writers of the Bible—there is author rather than text orientation; and (3) the writers have been inspired in all that they have written, though in varied ways." I. S. Rennie, "Plenary Inspiration," *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, 2nd ed., 929. It stands in contrast with "verbal inspiration," that holds that the document itself possesses elements of inspiration.

⁴*CVSS*, 31-32. This is consonant with his attack on the modernist or radical critic "who imagines that the Bible is filled with errors and mistakes of these ancient cultures." *Ibid.*, 48.

1954 work opens the door to a limited inerrancy view of Scripture, especially in scientific matters.¹ He speaks approvingly of Rust's opinion that the biblical writers had "erroneous ideas of cosmology and anthropology," and he concludes that Genesis is wrong on the age of the earth where it comes into direct conflict with geology.² Even though he finds a limited amount of errancy in its scientific statements, he still defends the inspiration and inerrancy of Scripture with these words: "But the theological truths expressed in these outmoded scientific notions are inspired and part of the Biblical witness."³

By 1968 Ramm had come out clearly in favor of the limited inerrancy view of inspiration by setting forth the Bible as "the Church's infallible authority in faith and morals."⁴ Significantly, he does not include natural science, anthropology, or history under the umbrella of the Bible's "infallible authority." The following year, 1969, he discusses in much greater detail his view on the relationship of inerrancy to science in a major article on that very topic.⁵ He begins by remarking that all evangelicals and Christian conservatives advocate "the trustworthiness of Scripture of a very high

¹For example, Ramm suggests that the chronological and numbering systems used in the Bible are not always accurate, and thus are not inspired. He aptly observes that the Old Testament has Semitic methods of reckoning, while the New Testament has Greco-Roman methods. There is no one inspired, sacred method of reckoning. *Ibid.*, 31-32.

²*Ibid.*, 51-52, 123. On the latter point he asserts: "We believe the evidence of the antiquity of the earth from all geological methods of measurement to be overwhelming, and we certainly seek another interpretation of Genesis." *Ibid.*, 177.

³*Ibid.*, 52. This statement is made as part of a summary of E. C. Rust's beliefs on the subject.

⁴Ramm, "Christian Truths," *Eternity*, October 1968, 28.

⁵Bernard Ramm, "The Relationship of Science, Factual Statements and the Doctrine of Biblical Inerrancy," *Journal of the American Scientific Affiliation* 21 (December 1969): 98-104.

order.”¹ But “to some evangelicals this meant the inerrancy of Scripture in all matters of fact and history as well as faith and morals.”² He rejects the views of the latter group of evangelicals at the article’s conclusion, by iterating his belief in the Reformation principle that the Scripture is “sufficient” or “perfect” in the “sense that it teaches all we need to know in this life for salvation, Christian living, and the hope to come.”³

Between these two statements he provides numerous examples of problems with the view that the scientific allusions of Scripture are inerrant—the ancient belief in the sexual powers of the mandrake (Gen 30), the identity of the four rivers in Eden (Gen 2), and the numbers of Israelite men in the exodus (Exod 12), etc.⁴

By 1983 Ramm had even gone a step further than his 1969 view, which allowed for error in the Bible’s scientific statements, and he sided with Barth on the idea that even the Bible’s theological statements may evidence the “humanity” of Scripture, that is, its tendency to error. “Barth really touches bottom on the humanity of Holy Scripture when he says that there are errors in Holy Scripture, even theological errors,” observes Ramm.⁵ He goes on to say in his discussion of Barth that “at no place in our doctrine of Holy Scripture can we spare it from its full humanity. If to be human is to

¹Ibid., 98.

²Ibid.

³Ibid., 103. He ends by stating, “These are the qualities [the Reformation principles of sufficiency, clarity, and efficacy] whereby we really are factually and effectively held to Holy Scripture, for in these matters [Christian life and salvation] the Scriptures do function as the written Word of God.” Ibid., 103-104.

⁴Ibid., 101. The last-named item, the numbering of Israelite males in the exodus, is described as a case of “mathematical hyperbole,” as are many large numbers in the O. T. (p. 102). These examples illustrate his cautious conclusion that “there may be some errors in Scripture.” Ibid., 100.

⁵Ramm, *After Fundamentalism*, 104.

err, then it is a possibility on the human side of Scripture there may be error.”¹ What bothers him is that “evangelicals hedge the humanity of Scripture by surrounding it with the divinity of Scripture,” thus lessening the full humanity of God’s Word.²

Inerrancy, the Essence of Evangelicalism?

Bernard Ramm was heavily involved in the evangelical debate as to what comprises the heart of evangelicalism. In the 1960s and 1970s as a reaction to historical criticism and relativism in their undermining of the full authority of Scripture in constructing a theology, evangelicals began to elevate the inerrancy of Scripture as an absolute norm for orthodoxy. In 1976 Harold Lindsell, who later became editor of *Christianity Today* and successor to Carl Henry in that position, published *The Battle for the Bible*, which became the call to arms for evangelicals who wished to defend the full inerrancy of Scripture versus limited or partial inerrancy. In responding to the great amount of both criticism and praise raised by his thought-provoking book, Lindsell wrote the follow-up book, *The Bible in the Balance*, in which he records the comments on Ramm’s critique of his first book: “Dr. Ramm was unhappy with my book for a number of reasons. He does not think that biblical inerrancy is a watershed for evangelicals.”³ Ramm’s review of *The Battle for the Bible* charges that Lindsell has set

¹Ibid. While Ramm does not come out directly and state that he believes Scripture to possess “theological errors,” he seems to allow Barth to make that statement on his (Ramm’s) own behalf.

²Ibid., 103. “In other words,” states Ramm, “the humanity of Scripture is so protected by the divinity that in effect the humanity is greatly reduced.” Thus “a docetic Scripture is created.” Ibid., 105.

³Harold Lindsell, *The Bible in the Balance* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1979), 44.

up “misplaced battle lines,” that there are more important issues than inerrancy.¹

The year 1976 was also a monumental year for evangelicals for another reason: it was the year that the first volume of Carl Henry’s *God, Revelation and Authority* appeared, and this seemed to add ammunition to Lindsell’s arsenal in his attacks upon those with less than strict views of inerrancy.² Ramm’s review of the first two volumes of Henry’s *God, Revelation and Authority* lists five major points of disagreement between Ramm and Henry, the fourth one being inerrancy.³ He asks the question, What is the first thing a theologian says about Scripture in discussing it as the revealed and inspired Word of God? “Henry says that it is inerrant,” answers Ramm. But for Ramm the first thing and most important thing to be said in a discussion of Scripture is its content, not its inerrancy. In his thinking Scripture is the “Word of God by its content, its message,” for the divinity of Scripture does not rest in its inerrancy.⁴

In 1977, the same year as his review of the first two volumes of Henry’s magnum opus, Ramm wrote an essay entitled, “Is ‘Scripture Alone’ the Essence of

¹Bernard Ramm, “Misplaced Battle Lines,” *The Reformed Journal*, July-August 1976, 37-38. Besides the issue of inerrancy, Ramm discusses the issue of whether there was a historical Jesus, which he feels is much more important.

²See Lindsell, *The Battle for the Bible*, 48-49, where he quotes with approval from Carl Henry’s *God, Revelation and Authority*, vol. 1, a lengthy statement in which Henry attacks Ramm’s view of revelation.

³Bernard Ramm, “Carl Henry’s Magnum Opus,” *Eternity*, March 1977, 58-63.

⁴*Ibid.*, 62-63. Ramm argues his case: “It is possible for a book on history to be completely faithful to all matters of fact and yet not be inspired. It is possible to show that the Bible is remarkably free from errors of fact, yet we would not have necessarily demonstrated its divine origin.” *Protestant Christian Evidences*, 25, emphasis original. Other examples of potentially error-free, but not inspired, works would be a dictionary or a collection of mathematical tables.

Christianity?”¹ His major concern is that among evangelicals “one’s doctrine of Scripture has become now the first and most important doctrine, one’s theory of the *Wesen* of Christianity, so that all other doctrines have validity now only as they are part of the inerrant Scripture.”² The worrisome concern for Ramm is that a doctrine of strict inerrancy, of the type that Benjamin B. Warfield advocated in 1881, should become the litmus test for determining who are the true evangelicals. In this connection he states: “To make one certain theory of inspiration the *Wesen* of Christianity reduces to a very small group the number of people really true to Christianity”—a view which he calls a “narrow” or “Bible-only mentality.”³ He wishes to include all of Christian scholarship in developing one’s theology and not be forced to reject the work of certain theologians because they do not hold to a strict view of inerrancy. Whether or not one holds to a strict doctrine of inerrancy is not a test of orthodoxy and should not affect the quality and integrity of one’s work as a theologian.

Scripture as Illumined by the Holy Spirit

The primary agent in the process of the inspiration of Scripture is the Holy Spirit, not the human spirit, according to evangelicals, based upon such key passages as 2 Tim 3:16-17 and 2 Pet 1:21. Not only does the Holy Spirit inspire the biblical writers,

¹Bernard Ramm, “Is ‘Scripture Alone’ the Essence of Christianity?” in *Biblical Authority*, ed. Jack Rogers (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1977), 107-123.

²Ibid., 112. He continues by saying: “It can be stated even more directly: an evangelical has made a theory of inspiration the *Wesen* of Christianity if he assumes that the most important doctrine in a man’s theology . . . is his theology of inspiration.” Ibid.

³Ibid., 113-122. He also points out that evangelicalism would have to be widened to include cultists who believe in inerrancy, if inerrancy is the foremost doctrine of evangelicalism. Ibid., 114.

but the Holy Spirit clarifies Scripture in the minds of the readers in a process called illumination. Ramm resonates with the evangelical view when he summarizes the role of the Holy Spirit in the entire process from revelation to illumination: “He [the Holy Spirit] is the Inspirer of revelation; He is the Mover in the writing of revelation; He is the Illuminator in the heart of the believer, giving him the grace to recognize revelation and the strength to appreciate it.”¹

Ramm places great stress upon the importance of the work of the Holy Spirit as a key agent in the illumination of Scripture in order for it to be correctly understood. For him, Word and Spirit are inseparable, as in the thought of the Protestant reformers: “The internal witness of the Spirit in the heart of the believer and objectively, in the sense of the point of reference, is in the Word.”² The Spirit is not viewed as an authoritative source of truth in isolation from the Word. Always “the Word has temporal priority, for it is the necessary condition for the work of the Spirit. . . . The Spirit then *repeats* his own word in the human heart by the process of illumination.”³ It is in this statement that we find a possible clue as to why Ramm in his later years became enamored with the neo-orthodox view of Scripture—for Ramm the Spirit is God’s Word speaking directly to the believer in illumination, whereas for Barth the Word itself is God speaking directly to the believer in an encounter. The Spirit is that which gives life. The Holy Spirit “prevents the Scripture from becoming a dead

¹*The Pattern of Religious Authority*, 62.

²Bernard L. Ramm, *The God Who Makes a Difference: A Christian Appeal to Reason* (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1972), 46.

³*The Witness of the Spirit*, 63, emphasis original. This is what Ramm calls the “testimonium” of the Spirit.

book,”¹ “presently speaks to the Church in the Scriptures,”² “expresses his authority in the Scriptures,”³ and “seals the word of God in the heart of man,”⁴ according to Ramm’s thought. Ramm never discusses at length the Charismatic movement, no doubt because the charismatics often look to the instruction of the Spirit in isolation from the Word, unlike the Protestant reformers.

What happens when two sincere Christians, both claiming to be Spirit-led, reach opposite conclusions in their interpretation of Scripture? Ramm views that as a very real possibility due to the fact that sometimes piety becomes a “substitute for study, knowledge, intelligence, [and] information.”⁵ But it is the role of the Holy Spirit to give “internal clarity” to Scripture, for Scripture being a spiritual book must be spiritually understood.⁶ This is in addition to the “external clarity” of Scripture, which is its grammatical clarity that becomes apparent using the best tools of scholarship.⁷ For Ramm the same Spirit who inspired Scripture also unveils its meaning to the believer who combines intelligent scholarship with humble dependence upon God. The role of the Holy Spirit in unveiling the sometimes hidden or misunderstood meaning of

¹*The Evangelical Heritage*, 131.

²*Special Revelation*, 167.

³*The Pattern of Religious Authority*, 34.

⁴*Special Revelation*, 148. This Ramm calls “the great Reformation doctrine of the union of Word and Spirit.”

⁵*Protestant Biblical Interpretation* (1950), 61, n. 12. He goes on to make this striking statement: “We cannot substitute a class of devote, pious Bible teachers for the Catholic infallible Pope.”

⁶*The Evangelical Heritage*, 33.

⁷*Ibid.*, 32.

Scripture brings us to the question of the importance of the language of revelation, or a revelation in language.

Fourth Topic: The Language of Revelation

One of the central theological issues of the twentieth century is regarding the nature of revelation, whether it is to be understood as encounter without the transmission of factual material, or whether it is an exclusively propositional revelation. In reality this dipolarization of revelation is along a continuum. Avery Dulles in his classic, *Models of Revelation*, describes in detail five basic models to explain the revelation process, the first of which is propositional revelation and the fourth is encounter revelation. He astutely observes that the five cannot be harmonized, for each view has some mutually exclusive elements not held by the other views.¹ This is certainly true of the above two models, the first and the fourth of the five. If encounter revelation takes place *with* the transmission of factual information, then it is no longer encounter revelation; it becomes propositional revelation taking place *within* an encounter setting.

Bernard Ramm definitely has promulgated the propositional view of revelation throughout his long career, but as will be noted shortly he clearly shifted in his later years towards a more dialectical or encounter view of revelation and away from a strictly propositional one. Actually, this is partly consistent with his conclusion reached

¹Dulles, *Models of Revelation*, 125-126.

early in his career that not all revelation can be characterized as propositional.¹

Importance of Language in Revelation

Ramm clearly distinguishes between the modalities of revelation—the means by which God communicates with man—and the products of revelation, which would be the tangible results of that communication. For him the end product of revelation taking on the form of writing is the Holy Scriptures. He writes: “The first product of special revelation is language, which carries and expresses the substance of revelation. A second product . . . is *the knowledge of God*.”² These two products are not exclusive, according to Ramm. Language for most people becomes the basis for the knowledge of God; thus language has a certain priority in time.

As an apologist, Ramm is attracted to the mystery or miracle lying behind the creation of language. For example, in examining the amazing advances of language theory and computer linguistics, he concludes that human speech may be a miracle.³ Language then is a creation of God, which is part of the image of God endowed in man from the time of his origin. “In the Genesis account speech appears as the natural power of man and woman in the image of God,” writes Ramm.⁴ From the creationist perspective what separates man from animals is the use of speech, indicating a supernatural act in its formation. The Creation account itself ascribes the naming

¹Ramm questions whether all revelation is “exclusively propositional,” according to *Special Revelation*, 154.

²*Ibid.*, 139.

³Bernard Ramm, “New Light on How God Speaks?” *Eternity*, October 1974, 79-80.

⁴*Special Revelation*, 126.

function to Adam; no animal was to be found as his partner, for no animal had the power of speech, the power to name itself or its counterpart. Thus when Adam named Eve, they became “speech partners.”¹

The importance of language is demonstrated in the fact that theology as a discipline could not exist without language. “If there were no conceptual elements in revelation,” declares Ramm, “there could be no theology.”² Theologians cannot perform miracles in transforming a non-conceptual revelation into one with exact concepts. Language in the opinion of Ramm is the vehicle by which the inner thoughts of a person are shared. The language of prayer is one example of this. Another even more significant one is the cross. Out of one death among perhaps thousands in the first century A.D. upon Roman crosses, why is it that one particular death stands out for all history and all time? “What gives *this* cross its great significance to the human race?” asks Ramm, who moves on quickly to answer his own question. “*It is the inner thought of God about the cross, spoken out in language by virtue of special revelation which raises the cross of Christ above all other crosses and reveals it as the event of world redemption.*”³ It is the power of language to transform an ordinary event into one uniquely extraordinary.

The advantage of having a revelation take the form of language is that this

¹Ibid., 127. The walking of God and man together in the garden is another evidence given that human beings, not animals, were endowed with the power of speech. Speech as an essential aspect for society (and the church as a subsection of society) is revealed in the accounts of the Tower of Babel and of Pentecost. Ibid., 128-129.

²*The Evangelical Heritage*, 130.

³*Special Revelation*, 134, emphasis original.

process lends permanence to the revelation. Ramm is not unaware of this: “When special revelation is cast into written form, . . . it achieves the attribute of *durability*.”¹ The durability of the language then leads to its purity, for it is less apt that the revelation will be altered intentionally or unintentionally if it is in written form. Moreover, a written language achieves greater catholicity, according to Ramm, being circulated more widely, even surmounting ethnic and nationalistic barriers if it is in written form; for it can be translated and thus be brought up to date.²

The Interpretation of the Language of Revelation

Although a revelation being in written form has the advantage of achieving purity and permanence, it has the disadvantage of being misunderstood when language and culture change, especially when written revelation encounters a totally new language and culture. Hence, there is the need for a written revelation to be translated and interpreted. Ramm’s doctrine of revelation is closely tied to his desire to develop a hermeneutical system that would enhance his doctrine of revelation. His hermeneutical method is clearly expounded in *Protestant Biblical Interpretation*, which went through four editions from 1950 to 1970. This influential work, which has been used in practically every conservative seminary and Bible college in North America at some time in the last half century, is actually a theology of hermeneutics, for it often digresses away from a strict study of hermeneutics into other areas, especially into the

¹Ibid., 136, emphasis original.

²Ibid., 136-137, which follows the argumentation of Abraham Kuyper on these points.

areas of revelation and inspiration.¹

Ramm's book, *Protestant Biblical Interpretation*, illustrates eloquently the fact that one's doctrine of revelation (or inspiration) does have a noticeable impact on one's system of hermeneutics. In it Ramm notes the different schools of interpretation, and he clearly favors the historicist school because of its unflagging support for propositional revelation. He reacts negatively against the liberal, the *Heilsgeschichte*, and the neo-orthodox schools of interpretation. All of these schools lessen the divine inspiration of the Bible and treat Scripture largely as a human work using human methods of production. For him, the crux of the issue is inspiration: "The divine inspiration of the Bible is the foundation of historic Protestant hermeneutics and exegesis."² A belief in the plenary inspiration of the Bible, however, does not mean that one is adverse to the use of the various critical methods, including both lower and higher criticism.³

Language of Scripture and Historical Criticism

A major goal of the neo-evangelical movement has been to come to grips with the Enlightenment, as we have already noted, and its impact upon modern theology.⁴ The birth of the historical-critical method took place during the Enlightenment,

¹Note, for example, chapter 8 on inspiration and secular science in *Protestant Biblical Interpretation* (1970), 201-214.

²*Ibid.*, 93. He observes that Jews, Protestants, Roman Catholics, and orthodox Christians can agree on at least this one point—that Scripture is inspired.

³*Ibid.*, 95.

⁴An excellent discussion of this topic is found in Russell, "Coming to Grips with the Age of Reason."

resulting in challenges directed toward the authority of Scripture and hence toward the authority of the Church. The age of rationalism was the age of questioning, and it was the historical-critical method that raised questions about the integrity and authenticity of the entire Scripture record. Evangelicalism has sought to avoid the stigma attached to Fundamentalism for its savage attacks upon “liberalism” and “higher criticism;” thus it has sought to find a way that critical methods could be adopted without jeopardizing a belief in the full inspiration of Scripture.

Early in his career Ramm was largely under the influence of his fundamentalist background and found little in the historical-critical method to recommend. He criticized it (1) for its rationalistic tendencies, putting human reason above the authority of the inspired writer; (2) for its denigration or elimination of inspiration, thus affecting Scripture’s authority; (3) for interpreting the supernatural elements in Scripture in terms of natural, explainable events; (4) for adopting an evolutionary origin to Judaism and Christianity; (5) for applying the principle of accommodation wrongly, so that the Bible’s beliefs and practices are borrowed from neighboring cultures and religions; (6) for over-extending the historical approach until nothing of historical value is left; and (7) for utilizing modern philosophies to reinterpret Scripture, such as Hegelianism.¹

A shift in Ramm’s attitude toward historical criticism can be detected as early as 1957 when he responded to charges that evangelicals are “obscurantists” because of their avoidance of using the critical methods. First, he suggested that evangelicals need

¹Ramm, *Protestant Biblical Interpretation* (1950), 36-41. The sixth point is stated rather bluntly: “The Bible was interpreted historically—with a vengeance,” whereby he is saying that the approach of the liberal is reductionist, resulting in all loss of the uniqueness of Christianity.

to pursue the methods of lower criticism to ensure that they have available the best biblical text for investigation; second, they need a scientific, critical hermeneutic for rightly appropriating Scripture to theological use in keeping with the standards set by Luther and Calvin, and finally evangelicals need to realize that there is no way to avoid using the historical-critical methods once one begins to deal with the Pentateuchal, the Synoptic, and the Johannine problems.¹ The year 1957 was also the year when he first stated that “the interpreter dare not leave unused any tool which might bring to the surface some of the gold of divine revelation.”² Here Ramm is referring to a classic statement by Abraham Kuper that special revelation is like a mine filled with precious gold waiting to be mined through a variety of tools available to the scholar.³

But the greatest shift in Ramm’s thinking occurred in 1983 with the publication of his *After Fundamentalism*, wherein he argues that Barth serves as an ideal model for evangelicals for coming to grips with the challenges of the Enlightenment through a discrete use of historical criticism. Ramm makes the serious charge that evangelicals have ignored the questions raised in the Enlightenment, resulting in a reputation for “obscurantism.” He even suggests that Carl Henry in his monumental work, *God, Revelation and Authority*, “stumbles because he glosses biblical criticism.”⁴ Further on,

¹Bernard Ramm, “Are We Obscurantists?” *Christianity Today*, 18 February 1957, 14-15.

²Ramm, *The Pattern of Religious Authority*, 39. Among the tools of research are the various historical-critical methods.

³Ramm, *Special Revelation*, 155.

⁴*After Fundamentalism*, 26-27. Significantly, in 1957 when writing for Carl Henry in *Christianity Today*, Ramm was defending fellow-evangelicals from the charge of “obscurantism”, whereas by 1983 he himself was making the charge that fellow-evangelicals were “obscurantists!” Besides directing his criticisms at Henry, he directs them at Francis Schaeffer who in his *Genesis in Space and Time* glosses over “an enormous amount of scientific information” relative to “the origin of the universe, the origin of life, and

Ramm sets forth the reasons why evangelicals traditionally use historical criticism only in a guarded or limited fashion, and understandably so, but his major concern is that a failure to recognize validity in its methods, such as form criticism, redaction criticism, and source criticism, will result in obscurantism.¹ He is also concerned that “*there is no genuine, valid working hypothesis for most evangelicals to interact with the humanity of Scripture in general and biblical criticism in particular.*”² Historical-critical methods for most evangelical scholars seem to enhance the humanity of Scripture at the expense of its divinity.

Language of Scripture and Neo-Orthodoxy

Due to evangelicalism’s lack of a clearly defined methodology that takes into account a variety of critical methods in scholarship, Ramm highly recommends Barth’s methodology as a paradigm of how evangelicals can do theology and still come to terms with the challenges raised by the Enlightenment. Speaking autobiographically, he recounts: “I learned that, among all the options for correlating modern learning with the Enlightenment, the best is the theology of Karl Barth.”³ The question can be raised

the origin of man.” Ibid., 26.

¹Ibid., 113-114, cf. 111. The reasons why evangelicals commonly reject most critical methods are threefold: (1) the methods are based on faulty presuppositions, (2) they are biased because of faulty theologies held by the users of those methods, and (3) critical theories are constantly changing.

²Ibid., 114, emphasis original. This statement is consonant with what he refers to earlier in his book, “the fact that so much evangelical scholarship is piggy-backing on non-evangelical scholarship. It does not have an authentic scholarship of its own.” Ibid., 27. This is also brought out in much greater detail by the evangelical historian, Mark Noll, in his book *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind*.

³Ibid., 27-28. Ramm praises Karl Barth as one of the world’s great theologians, perhaps the greatest of the twentieth century. See his laudatory comments on Barth’s genius ability in Ramm, *After Fundamentalism*, 12ff. Barth has coupled historic Protestantism with modern learning, just as Augustine wedded Christianity with Platonism and Aquinas wedded Roman Catholicism with Aristotelianism.

as to how much of Barth's theology does Ramm consider to be evangelical in nature? He does make a distinction between adopting Barth's methodology and adopting wholesale his theology. "My purpose," he writes, "is not to vindicate Barth's theology but to suggest certain ways it may serve as a paradigm for the future of evangelical methodology."¹

The question can be rightly raised whether Ramm has adopted elements of Barth's theology as well, especially his theology of revelation? The issue is the propositional nature of revelation versus the encounter aspect of revelation. For Ramm it is not a question of "either/or," but of "both/and."²

When neoorthodox and existentially oriented theologians deny propositional revelation and assert that revelation is only confrontation with God or a divine-human encounter, then the evangelical pushes to the other extreme and declares all revelation as propositional. Both alternatives are false.³

In this context he asserts, "*It is not of the essence of evangelicalism to believe that revelation is solely propositional or only the conveying of information.*"⁴ He notes the presence of figures of speech in Scripture—similes, metaphors, and hyperbole—and the use of a variety of literary genre—biography, poetry, aphorisms, parables, and

¹Ibid., 30-31.

²In a lengthy article on the theology of Scripture, Ramm concludes: "We [as evangelicals] believe that Scripture speaks of revelation as both a confrontation of God and a revelation of the truth of God. The present debate whether revelation is propositional or an encounter is to us a both/and." "Scripture as a Theological Concept," 161.

³*The Evangelical Heritage*, 130. Elsewhere he states, "The disjunction presented so frequently in modern theology between revelation as either 'information' or 'encounter' is false." *Special Revelation*, 158. Here he is rejecting the dialectical approach to a doctrine of revelation, as well as a fundamentalist view of revelation.

⁴Ibid., 129, emphasis original.

apocalyptic imagery—all of which do not come to us as propositions, that is, in a non-propositional form.¹

Ramm in his earlier years faults encounter theology for its extreme emphasis on revelation as divine/human encounter devoid of verbal or conceptual content. He calls an encounter without conceptual content “a senseless encounter” and “utter confusion.”² He questions whether Barth and Brunner could write their immense theological treatises if revelation were totally devoid of propositional elements, based on the premise that “if there were no conceptual elements in revelation, there could be no theology.”³ His deeper concern was that a “wordless revelation” could easily degenerate into mysticism.⁴

A major shift occurred in 1983 when Ramm moved more in the direction of encounter theology and further away from propositional revelation, although we find that in the early 1970s he gave qualified endorsement to certain evangelical theologians, who are known Barthians, such as T. F. Torrance.⁵ Millard Erickson is just one

¹Ibid., 131. For further support of this, see “How Does Revelation Occur?” 19, where Ramm states that “not all revelation is ‘propositional’ or straight doctrinal statement. . . . Certainly revelation may be in a symbol, in a dramatic event, in the character of a person.” Some of these non-propositional modes of revelation can take place as an “encounter.”

²In 1970 he wrote quite bluntly: “To say that I encounter God and not a doctrine is utter confusion. If I encounter God apart from some concepts, apart from some meanings, or apart from some interpretations, it is a senseless encounter.” “How Does Revelation Occur?” 19.

³*The Evangelical Heritage*, 130. And again he goes on to iterate his “both/and” solution to the dilemma by stating that “the evangelical tradition has always had its witnesses that while revelation may be in words it is also in the divine Presence; it is something spiritual as well as rational; it is confrontation as well as speaking.” Ibid.

⁴*Special Revelation*, 159.

⁵In 1972 Ramm welcomed T. F. Torrance as an evangelical and praised him for adding a “scientific” aspect to Barth’s theology, although he was concerned about Torrance’s disjunction between the “words of Scripture” and the objective Word. Bernard Ramm, “Thomas Torrance: Making Theology

contemporary evangelical scholar among others who have noted this shift.¹ Evidence for this shift comes to light early on his book *After Fundamentalism* when he comes to Barth's defense. He defends Barth from four major criticisms leveled at him by evangelical theologians: (1) that Barth reduces Scripture to a mere witness to revelation; (2) that Barth views revelation as occurring only as an existential encounter, thus overlooking his continuous emphasis on the objectivity of revelation; (3) that Barth teaches that the Word of God becomes the Word of God *only* in an existential moment; and (4) that Barth is an existential theologian or even an outright liberal, even though he recanted from his advocacy of liberal theology early in his career.² In summary, Ramm's defense of Barth's view on revelation is designed to allow criticism a major voice in evangelical theology, to avoid the extremes of a literal, verbal emphasis on revelation found among evangelicals, and to reemphasize the humanness of Scripture.

Language of Scripture and Fundamentalism

Although Ramm can be considered a major advocate of propositional revelation among evangelicals as viewed by Avery Dulles and others, he himself has been bothered by the extremes to which propositional revelation has been taken by its ardent advocates. This underlying worry is evident in his reluctance to use the term "propositional revelation"—the use of this term is "a very unhappy one," he writes,

Science," *Eternity*, February 1972, 46. The next year he again praised Torrance's work. See *The Evangelical Heritage*, 109.

¹Erickson correctly observes: "It is apparent that Ramm has changed his interpretation of Barth from an earlier position." Millard J. Erickson, *The Evangelical Left: Encountering Postconservative Evangelical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1997), 78.

²*After Fundamentalism*, 23-24, cf. 34.

because “*it fails to do justice to the literary, historical, and poetic elements of special revelation.*”¹ He is disturbed by the one frequently repeated criticism that the evangelical theologian is a “literalist.” He does point out, however, that evangelicals are literalists in that they do not apply the allegorical methods of interpretation, so that in a sense all theologians who take the sentences of Scripture seriously are literalists.² But the redeeming factor is that evangelicals as a rule do not advocate “letterism,” that is, advocate a literalistic approach or one that carries a literal approach to the extreme.³

Ramm is critical of Fundamentalism on this very point—that it leads to a literalism that distorts the true meaning of Scripture. For example, fundamentalists take the passage in 1 Tim 6:20 warning against “oppositions of science falsely so-called” as applying to the endeavors of modern science, thus warning against the reliance upon any conclusions of secular science in regards to earth history and origins.⁴ Other examples are that fundamentalists find surreptitious references to the automobile in Nah 1, to the airplane in Isa 50, and to atomic energy in Heb 11:3 and 2 Pet 3.⁵ These interpretations he decisively rejects. His major concern with the fundamentalist (or even evangelical) approach to Scripture is that “if evangelical Christianity retreats into a sort of ‘Bible-belt’ mentality it will become more and more cultic, less and less

¹Ramm, *Special Revelation*, 155, emphasis original.

²Ramm, *The Evangelical Heritage*, 125.

³Ibid., where Ramm defines “letterism”: “By letterism we mean the failure of the interpreter to differentiate prose from other literary genre and figures of speech in Scripture.”

⁴CVSS, 22.

⁵*Protestant Biblical Interpretation* (1970), 212.

influential, and evangelistically powerless.”¹

One theme throughout Ramm’s prolific writing career that became even more strident with time is that evangelicalism should shed its fundamentalist upbringing in regards to the use and interpretation of Scripture. His ever-deepening concern that it had not addressed adequately the issues raised by the Enlightenment led him to recommend Karl Barth’s theological methodology (and even elements of his theology) as a possible paradigm for evangelical theology. His hope has always been that evangelicals can find a middle-of-the-road position that avoids the extremes both of a strictly propositional type of revelation that is literalistic and of a strictly encounter revelation that does not entail the transfer of any objective knowledge. This seems to be his final position as he deals with the relation of language to revelation.

Fifth Topic: History and Revelation

A cursory reading of Bernard Ramm’s writings may lead one to conclude that he perceives history as the starting point for all of theology—that Ramm is a historian, not a theologian, at heart. He declares that the “greatest proof for the reality of God is history.”² For him God is a God who supremely acts in history. His testimony of personal faith includes this sentiment: “We believe in the God who began history, controls history, ends history, and continues an eternal history in the New Jerusalem.”³ Because God is a God of history, then his book, his revelation to mankind, must be

¹Bernard Ramm, “Is Science Knowledge?” *Eternity*, June 1966, 36.

²Bernard L. Ramm, *His Way Out* (Glendale, CA: GL Regal, 1974), 26-27.

³Bernard Ramm, *The Devil, Seven Wormwoods, and God* (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1977), 170.

historical to the core. For Ramm, “the Bible is at its root historical.”¹

Although Ramm in these cases seems to overstate the case for the importance of history in theology, one must recognize that within evangelicalism the historicity of the Scriptures is an important issue, closely related to the issue of the inerrancy of Scripture. It is conceivable that one could have inerrant Scriptures that in part describe events that are *not* historical in nature, perhaps in the literary form of allegory or parable.² Thus inerrancy for an evangelical does not automatically lead one to the historicity of Scripture. Ramm views the historical nature of Scripture as being critically important because Christian theology is not a philosophy that explicates timeless truths divorced from everyday life and reality. He summarizes his thinking on this as follows:

There are important theological considerations which emerge from the historical character of Scripture. It means that there must be a historical impress to our doctrines of revelation and inspiration. Revelation cannot be understood as conveying to us timeless truths uprooted from history, nor is theology philosophy.³

In other words, Scripture would not be authoritative Scripture, if it were not for its historical aspect, in contrast to the scriptures of non-Christian religions, such as Hinduism or Buddhism.

¹Ramm, *Protestant Christian Evidences*, 245. He continues by saying that the sinful condition of man is traced to a “*historical fall*,” all the doctrines of Christianity are based on “*historical events*,” and biblical eschatology will be culminated in “*concrete, historical events*” (*ibid.*, emphasis Ramm’s).

²Early church fathers, such as Origen, who advocated an allegorical approach to Scripture often advocated a revelation that is infallible. The case can be made that the high view of Scripture that these early church fathers had may have propelled them in the direction of allegorism as a means of explaining the seemingly “unhistorical” elements in the Scripture, especially in the Old Testament.

³“Scripture as a Theological Concept,” 151.

The Uniqueness of Biblical History

One important question Ramm addresses is this: Does Scripture offer a kind of history that is unique, that is different from the history found in history books or annals of the nations? His response is that the history of Scripture “is a special kind of history” that operates from a “special kind of historiography,” thus making it “so that biblical history will differ in significant points from the way secular history is written.”¹ This may seem to suggest that biblical historiography is unique and has nothing in common with the historiography of ancient times, but elsewhere Ramm points out that the biblical writers used the literary/historical methods of their day, such that a salvational revelation has come down to us via the adapted methodologies developed by ancient historiography.² If the Bible were written in a special type of history, then it would be in the form of *Heilsgeschichte*, which would not be subject to all the conventions of historical research and criticism.³ Ramm, however, does not go that far in his thinking, but states that the “truth is somewhere between a strict theory of Holy History [i.e., *Heilsgeschichte*] and the view of post-Reformation theologians who stressed emphatically the revelatory character of Scripture itself,” or its theological side without reference to history.⁴

¹Ibid., 150.

²*Special Revelation*, 74.

³The *Heilsgeschichte*, or salvation history, school of biblical interpretation began with J. C. K. Hofmann (1810-1877) and was adopted on the European side of the Atlantic by Oscar Cullmann and on the American side by George Ernest Wright, the Harvard University archeologist. See Dulles, 56.

⁴Bernard Ramm, “Biblical Faith and History,” *Christianity Today*, 1 March 1963, 5. Further on in that article Ramm states that “the Bible is not written by a doctoral candidate in history” (8).

In attempting to walk the narrow line between a unique historical revelation on the one hand and a largely ahistorical revelation on the other hand, Ramm sets forth the following eight descriptive attributes of the Bible as history: (1) It is a *mixed history* with some events that can be investigated by historical methods and with other events that cannot; (2) it is *interpreted history*, showing that its history cannot be isolated from the interpretation given; (3) it is *teleological history*, focusing upon an end or eschaton; (4) it is *Christological history*, focusing upon a divine Savior; (5) it is *credible history*, with some of its events being verified independently (one would not expect that all its events would be verified); (6) it is a *total history*, covering both creation and consummation, both of which are recorded using historical techniques, but which lack historical confirmation; (7) it is *culturally-conditioned history*, thus deeply influenced by local culture; and (8) it is *world history*, related to divine efforts to save all of the human race and thus not limited to any one culture or race.¹

Miracles, the Supernatural, and Revelation

Another question of importance to evangelicals that impinges upon the question of historicity is this: Does one's doctrine of inspiration demand that the records of supernatural events be understood literally and historically? The answer to this question is of great importance to one's doctrine of creation, as we shall note shortly, for creation is a supernatural event. To deny the supernatural aspect of God's revelation to man is to reinterpret divine inspiration as human inspiration. The

¹Ibid. 5-8. This article is a good summary of a more detailed elaboration of the topic that can be found in the chapter "The Modality of Historical Event," in *Special Revelation*, 70-105.

interrelationship of the natural and the supernatural in a particular event, such as the survival of Noah and his family in the ark, or the delivery of the Israelites at the Red Sea, will also impact upon one's understanding of the relationship between the divine and the human in the recording of that event.

Ramm's interest in the supernatural event is sparked by his perceiving it as a tool for apologetics. For him instead of miracles being stumbling blocks in the path leading to faith, they are stepping stones to a full life of faith. Two types of supernatural activities, fulfilled prophecies and miracles, are viewed as direct evidence that the revelation accompanying those events is historical in nature and has been given by a Divine Being.¹ The divine speaking and the divine doing are linked together as part of one process. "For example, when Moses asks God how he [Moses] shall make it clear to the Israelites that he speaks from God and not from himself, he is assured of such miraculous signs as will remove doubt (Exod. 4:1ff.)."² The miracles of Scripture are called "signs" in that they have an intended message to convey;³ thus the accounts of miracles are in part theological in nature and are not limited to history.

While Ramm believes that creation is one of the greatest exhibitions of supernatural activity,⁴ he states that the greatest supernatural event is to be found in the

¹Ramm sums it up: "*The fulfilled prophetic utterance and the accomplished miracle are the indicia of a supernatural revelation and redemption wrought by a Divine Person.*" Bernard Ramm, "The Evidence of Prophecy and Miracle," in *Revelation and the Bible*, ed. Carl F. H. Henry (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1958), 254, emphasis original.

²*Ibid.*, 255.

³*Special Revelation*, 90-91, cf. 86 for a discussion of the "sign of Jonah."

⁴"This *supernaturalism* [God's] is one piece with the supernaturalism of the creative word, and the powers of the age to come." "The Evidence of Prophecy and Miracle," 260, emphasis original. This is further elaborated by Ramm: "In its doctrine of God as Creator the Christian faith has the necessary

resurrection: “The supernatural action of God in the cosmos is in the form of the miracle and supremely in the resurrection of Christ.”¹ In Ramm’s way of thinking a miracle can be defined as the product of supernatural activity, but he clearly recognizes that miracles cannot be classed as “proofs” or compelling evidences, unless accompanied with faith. He climaxes his discussion of the truthfulness of Christ’s resurrection with these words: “If the resurrection of Christ is, as the incarnation and atonement are, a historical-theological truth, it can only be seen as truth when seen through the eyes of God.”² The eyes of God, which are the eyes of faith, are also the eyes of revelation. Each miraculous event has happened only once and cannot be repeated as in a laboratory for others to see. That is why the validity of the historical record is so crucial.

Myth, Saga, and Revelation

A question closely related to the question of the nature of miracles in Scripture is the question, Does Scripture contain legendary or mythical elements in its historical narratives that may on the surface appear to be given as historical fact? Most often such questions are raised in connection with the more supernatural of the biblical events—Noah’s Flood, Sodom and Gomorrah, crossing of the Red Sea and the Jordan River on dry land, Jonah and the whale, etc., recorded in the Old Testament, and the prerequisite of the occurrence of supernatural events in this world.” Ibid., 262.

¹*The God Who Makes a Difference*, 49. Of the resurrection he writes further: “Its eschatological character sets it apart from all other miracles.” Ibid.

²*Protestant Christian Evidences*, 207, to which Ramm adds this comment: “We can drive no man to faith by pure historical considerations.”

many miracles and occasional resurrection events performed by both Christ and the apostles recorded in the New Testament. Ramm rejects the use of myth by Strauss, Bultmann, and other New Testament scholars who wish to deny any supernatural by means of the literary vehicle of myth, but at the same time he redefines myth as a type of symbolic communication of theological truths compatible with evangelical theory and in harmony with modern communication theory.¹ C. S. Lewis and T. S. Elliot are elevated as examples of individuals who do not view myth as being incompatible with truth or the conveyance of truth.² The nineteenth-century evangelical, James Orr, surprisingly made the proposal that any literary form that was acceptable to ancient cultures surrounding the biblical writers would have been acceptable for use by the biblical writers themselves.³

Ramm, however, goes a step further than Orr in that he speaks approvingly of Barth's application of the term "saga" to chapters 1-3 of Genesis, thus relegating these chapters to a special type of history called *Urgeschichte*.⁴ This *Urgeschichte* is a type of history that is not amenable to the any method of historical investigation, whether the

¹*Evangelical Heritage*, 164-165. He aptly observes: "To evangelicals the word *myth* is bad. But what if further studies in communications show that myth is one of the valid methods of representing truth and particularly religious truth?" *Ibid.*, 165, emphasis original.

²*Ibid.*, 165. Elsewhere Ramm observes that C. S. Lewis had "no apprehensions about regarding Gen. 3 as a myth." *Offense to Reason*, 80.

³James Orr quoted in Ramm, *Special Revelation*, 65. Elsewhere Ramm cites Orr to the effect that truth is still conveyed regardless of whether the narrative of Gen 3 is to be categorized as myth, allegory, or history. He also quotes W. H. Griffith Thomas, one-time president of the conservative Dallas Theological Seminary, as saying that even though the form of the narrative (Gen 3) may be myth, its underlying teaching must be fact. *Offense to Reason*, 168-169, n. 10.

⁴*After Fundamentalism*, 83. Prior to 1983, Ramm did not apply the term "saga" to Gen 1-3 and generally accepted those chapters as straight-forward history.

methods of history or of natural science, nor does the history depend upon any type of reality behind the history for it to be meaningful. In this discussion of Barth's definition of saga, Ramm adds that "saga deals with prehistory" and then he quotes from the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* the following definition of saga: "The term saga is confined to legendary and historical fictions, in which the author has attempted an imaginative reconstruction of the past."¹ Once this gigantic step has been taken by an evangelical, it is imperative that one discovers how the application of the terms "myth" or "saga" to Gen 1-3 will alter one's theology of creation from the traditional view, which Ramm considers to be the "pre-Enlightenment view." Ramm has led the way for evangelicals to adopt a different methodology of history for the early chapters of Genesis than for other portions of Scripture, but at the same time he would hold to the significance of the historical event—God as Creator did intervene in the cosmos to create this planet with all the life therein.² Ramm's conclusions beg him to unveil his means of reconciliation between the findings of natural science and the viewing of Gen 1-3 as being a special kind of history.

To summarize, in analyzing Ramm's view of revelation one quickly discovers that every aspect of one's view of revelation is intricately intertwined, so that one cannot discuss just one aspect without discovering how the other aspects impact upon

¹Ibid.

²One of the earliest evangelical defenses of Karl Barth's theology is that of Klaas Runia. But Runia has refused to accept Barth's classification of Gen 1-3 as "saga," for it leads to the unraveling of the historicity of those chapters. Klaas Runia, *Karl Barth's Doctrine of Holy Scripture* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1962), 100-103. Runia, however, advocates accepting Barth's methodology for handling the inerrancy issue of Scripture. He concludes that when it comes to "the whole doctrine of Scripture, its inspiration, its authority and its infallibility . . . Barth certainly has shown us the way." Ibid., 114. In this latter point Ramm and Runia have much in common, and Ramm in 1983 was aware of Runia's book.

it. For example, to advocate inerrancy, even a form of limited inerrancy as does Ramm, immediately necessitates discussing the historicity of the revelation, and vice versa. The issue of whether the revelation event itself is only personal raises the question as to whether factual information can be transmitted in a personal encounter. The issue of the Christocentric nature of revelation leads to the question of whether some portions of Scripture that are clearly not Christocentric are irrelevant or a product of their time, that is, culturally derived. And to take it a step further the principle of accommodation as a means of preserving the integrity and divinity of Scripture and of its Divine Author brings one face to face with the question of relativism—is Scripture relative rather than absolute, and is truth relative? And finally, if accommodation to the literary tools of ancient peoples suggests that one categorize Gen 1 as either saga or myth, this is bound to impact one's doctrine of creation. The next question that must be address is, In what ways is this impact felt?

The Impact of Revelation upon Creation

Bernard Ramm does not offer us a doctrine of creation in the classic sense, whereby the doctrine is developed from its Scriptural base and systematized, using the categories of philosophy to address the important issues. His only book devoted to creation, *The Christian View of Science and Scripture (CVSS)*, is not a systematic theologian's approach to the subject,¹ but rather it is the approach of a philosopher of

¹For an example of a systematic theologian's approach, see Augustus H. Strong, *Systematic Theology*. Ramm gives evidence of being thoroughly familiar with Strong's theological treatise. In most systematic theologies the doctrine of creation is subsumed under the doctrine of God, but Ramm employs another approach.

science who wishes to harmonize his philosophy with the biblical record. His book is organized, not around the categories of Scripture or of philosophy, but the categories of natural science. For example, the last four chapters deal with astronomy, geology, biology, and anthropology respectively—the four areas where we find the greatest conflict with Scripture. His book is issues-oriented and takes on the aura of an apologetic, rather than a systematized theology.

Ramm offers evangelicals a well developed, carefully researched view known as “progressive creationism” that seeks to find total harmony between science and Scripture. He traces its origin back to Augustine: “Progressive creation was taught as early as Augustine,”¹ and finds it to be based upon two fundamental concepts: (1) “creation *ex nihilo*” as seen in the formation of matter out of non-matter and in some miracles (such as, water to wine); and (2) “the *formation* or *administration*” of creation, in which matter is given new properties and form.² The first stage can be called primary creation, and the second secondary or derivative creation.³ The term “progressive creation” of course was not used by Augustine, but apparently it was first used by evangelicals in 1929, being proposed by Melvin Kyle as a way of taking the best of the day-age view and combining it with the best of the revelatory-days view,

¹CVSS, 77.

²Ibid., emphasis original.

³Ibid., 78-79. The first stage can be defined as a single act or action, punctiliar in nature, and the second as a process, leading from unity towards diversity. Ramm calls the second stage “creation by law.” The second stage is in harmony with evolutionary processes, thus explaining why Ramm has been accused of being a “theistic evolutionist,” as we will observe shortly.

and as a better alternative for evangelicals than theistic evolution.¹

Evangelical scholars have sometimes charged Ramm with being a theistic evolutionist. Throughout his long career he denied advocating theistic evolution, but rather saw creation as distinctive, brief acts disbursed throughout the geological ages.² The difference between the two is that theistic evolution is an immanent process whereby God's spirit and power work through nature to bring out new forms of life gradually, while progressive creation is both an external and an internal process whereby God on occasion has intervened to create new forms of life *de novo* in a

¹Kyle elaborates: "The use of the word 'evolution,' in the sense of orderly progress, does not seem to me properly to express 'evolution' at all, but simply progressive creation, as does the first chapter of Genesis." Melvin Grove Kyle, "The Bible in Its Setting," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 86 (1929): 316. Evolution is a random, usually haphazard, natural activity, that cannot in most cases be characterized as "progress." Ramm was aware of this article by Kyle; see *CVSS*, 175, n. 64. While the terminology, "progressive creation," did not appear in common parlance among evangelicals until after the 1920s, the concept itself was held throughout the nineteenth century under the label of "progressionism." For documentation, see Loren Eiseley, *Darwin's Century: Evolution and the Men Who Discovered It* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1961), 114-115. Progressive creation became popular among evangelicals with the formation of the American Scientific Affiliation in 1941 and with the publication of its first book in 1948. In it Gedney gives perhaps the earliest formal definition of progressive creation: "Many of the students of the last century adopted a third view which came to be known as the progressive creation theory. The proponents of this view interpreted the word 'day' in the first chapter of Genesis as signifying a period of time rather than a twenty-four-hour day. The hypothesis implied the origin of the earth by six or seven stages, or periods, of indefinite and not necessarily equal duration, in which the present world conditions were produced by a series of creations or creative acts separated by considerable time intervals, with intervening development [i.e. evolution] and change of species." Edwin K. Gedney, "Geology and the Bible," in *Modern Science and Christian Faith*, ed. American Scientific Affiliation (Wheaton, IL: Van Kampen Press, 1948, 1950), 49-50. The common denominator of all progressive creation variations is that God has intervened in earth history with creative acts interspersed over vast time periods. Recently Van Till has confused the picture on the above definition by applying the term "progressive creationism" to what was formerly known as "theistic evolution," and he has applied the term "old-earth episodic creationism" to what has been defined above as "progressive creationism." Howard J. Van Till, "Creationism," *Encyclopedia of Science and Religion*, ed. J. Wentzel Vrede van Huyssteen, 2 vols. (New York: Macmillan, 2003), 1:189-190. A radical rewriting of definitions is not the best scholarship.

²Ramm declares: "The writer is not a theistic evolutionist." *CVSS*, 205. Evangelicals have often mislabeled Ramm as such, for example, Grenz and Olson, 305. When Ramm was asked to respond to questions at a Society of Biblical Literature symposium in his honor (New Orleans, Louisiana, November 1990), some in the audience pressed him as to whether his position had progressed to that of theistic evolution, since progressive creation is somewhat close to theistic evolution. His answer was an emphatic "No," making it clear to the audience that he had not moved on to theistic evolution and had found no compelling reason to do so (Warren H. Johns, personal recollection).

pattern of increasing complexity over the aeons of geological time.¹ The last great act of creation in the latter is the creation of man *de novo*, not from a preexisting anthropoid. Both views are in agreement on this one point: life must have taken millions of years to reach its present plateau of complexity. Ramm criticizes evolutionary theory on the following four points: (1) its belief in the self-creation of nature, (2) its elevation to the status of an established theory or even law used to explain the entire universe, (3) its attempt to explain away all evidences of design in the universe, and (4) its non-recognition of the transcendent in mankind—man’s esthetic nature, his conscience and his ability to reason.² On the other hand, progressive creation does allow for a great deal of evolution on a minor scale following the many successive acts of creation throughout geological time.

The net effect of adopting a view of creation that sprinkles creative events throughout an immense period of time is that one has to re-evaluate and revise the meaning of Gen 1, which appears to record a Creation week composed of six twenty-four-hour days in a consecutive, uninterrupted sequence.³ Evangelicals have offered a variety of methods for harmonizing the long geological ages with the Genesis record: “the day-age view,” whereby each day is interpreted as symbolic of a geological era or geological eras; “the ruin-restoration view,” which hypothesizes a gap of millions of years between Gen 1:1 and 1:3 consisting of a demolition of the earth just prior to the

¹Ramm declares: “This [progressive creation] is not theistic evolution which calls for creation from within with no acts *de novo*.” *CVSS*, 155.

²*Ibid.*, 192-197.

³The literal nature of the six days has recently been exhaustively studied and re-affirmed by Gerhard F. Hasel, “The ‘Days’ of Creation in Genesis 1,” 5-38.

beginning of six literal days of re-creation; “the multiple-gap theory,” which treats the days as literal but as non-consecutive, each day being interjected between millions of years of history; “the framework hypothesis,” that proposes that the days are merely a literary structure or device for organizing the narrative; and “the revelatory-days view,” that looks at the days as prophetic days in reverse, projecting its view backwards in time through visions given to the biblical author, perhaps Moses.¹

Bernard Ramm consistently throughout his career held to the revelatory-days view, which was not original with him, but has a long history starting with the mid-nineteenth century. One of the major nineteenth-century proponents of this view was J. H. Kurtz, who describes his concept of the days of creation as “prophetic-historical tableaux,” which are unfolded in scene after scene “before the vision of the prophet.”² This “prophetic vision” explanation of the creation days was widely promulgated in England and reached the shores of America through the writings of the Scottish

¹For a summary and evaluation of these various attempts at harmonizing Genesis with geology, see Warren H. Johns, “Strategies of Origins,” *Ministry*, May 1981, 26-28; Steve Bishop, “A Typology for Science and Religion,” *Evangelical Quarterly* 72 (2000): 35-56; Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 298-307, where it is stated that “both ‘old earth’ and ‘young earth’ theories are valid options for Christians who believe the Bible today, *ibid.*, 298; Ryrice, *Basic Theology*, 181-188; Davis A. Young, son of OT scholar E. J. Young, “Genesis: Neither More nor Less,” *Eternity*, May 1982, 14-19; and Donald England, *A Christian View of Origins* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1972), 116-117. These studies are only a representative sample of the studies available on the subject from an evangelical point of view.

²Kurtz states his interpretation of Gen 1 in these words: “It consists of prophetic-historical tableaux, which are represented before the eye of the mind, scenes from the creative activity of God, each one of which represents some grand division of the great drama. . . . One scene unfolds itself after another before the vision of the *prophet*, until at length, with the seventh, the historical progress of the creation is fully represented to *him*.” John Henry Kurtz, *The Bible and Astronomy* (Philadelphia: Lindsay and Blakiston, 1857), 110-111, emphasis original (first printed in 1842 as *Bibel und Astronomie*). Later advocates of the revelatory days view stated that Moses was given seven visions on seven different days on top of Mt. Sinai (cf. Exod 24:6), but Kurtz is silent as to whether the visions occurred at once or on different days.

stonemason and churchman, Hugh Miller,¹ and it was also advocated in French-speaking Europe at the same time by Frederic de Rougemont.² Kurtz, Miller, de Rougemont and other nineteenth-century reconcilers of science with theology laid the foundation for Ramm's presentation of Gen 1 as portraying in broad strokes on the canvas of history the days of creation in terms of prophetic-revelatory days.

Creation and the Uniformity of Nature

The uniformity of nature is important for at least two reasons. First, it raises the issue of how miracles can take place if natural law prevails. Second, it leads to a discussion of the length of the days of creation if the processes of geology are interpreted as being tightly constrained by the uniformity of nature. Both issues center upon the interface between science and theology and are discussed at length by Ramm.³ He defines "uniformity" in terms of divine law: "The Bible clearly teaches that the

¹See Hugh Miller, *The Testimony of the Rocks* (Boston: Gould and Lincoln, 1857), which was one of the most popular works published in the nineteenth-century on harmonizing the newly-founded science of geology with the Bible. Note especially chap. 4, "The Mosaic Vision of Creation." Contemporaneous to Hugh Miller, Dominick M'Causland advocated the same revelatory days theory in his *Sermons in Stones* (London: R. Bentley, 1857), and he helped disseminate even more widely this view in his article, "Creation," *A Cyclopaedia of Biblical Literature*, ed John Kitto, 3rd ed. (Edinburgh: A. and C. Black, 1869), 1:571-580. Frederick D. Maurice, professor at King's College, London, and later at Cambridge, also promoted this view. See Maurice, *The Patriarchs and Lawgivers of the Old Testament* (London: Macmillan, 1867).

²Frederic de Rougemont, *Histoire de la Terre d'après la Bible et la Géologie* (Genève: Joel Cherbuliez, 1856). He summarizes his interpretation of Gen 1 as follows: "En résumé, la vision cosmogénique est un livre q'un savant du plus haute mérite a commencé a l'usage des ignorants, et dont il a tracé le plan en le divisant en sept chapitres." For him Gen 1 is like a prophetic book with seven chapters, each day of creation being one chapter with accurate scientific description of geological activity.

³Ramm devotes two lengthy chapters to a discussion of miracles in his *Protestant Christian Evidences*, 125-162.

*regularity of Nature is the constancy of God, and the laws of Nature are the laws of God.*¹

This view is in keeping with the strongly Calvinistic position that all of creation is under the watchful eye of God, who superintends his creation by natural law. Thus, the pursuit of the natural sciences is a legitimate activity whereby the investigator is led to “think God’s thoughts after him,” and the whole purpose of man is to “glorify God forever.” Science cannot operate without the uniformity of nature, and in the Calvinist view “leads from God and back to God again.”

The first of the two issues with regards natural law, its relationship to miracle, is vitally important to Ramm because creation is one of the greatest miracles of the ages, only to be superseded by the resurrection of Christ. He correctly notes that “Christian apologists are divided as to how a miracle is to be related to natural law”—the one group insisting that a miracle is an invoking of a superior or unknown law, which we do not understand, and the other group advocating each miracle as an act of creation or similar to a creative act.² Ramm clearly distinguishes his own views from those of the first group because all laws, whether known to us or unknown to us, are an evidence of periodicity and of regularity, whereas a miracle is not a regular event that repeats itself. While he does not identify himself with the second group, he later states that a miracle

¹*CVSS*, 58, emphasis original. Examples he gives of the uniformity of nature as upheld by Scripture are (1) Gen 1 and the usage of *min* to show that all life is produced with order (“after its kind”); (2) Gen 8:22, where the regularity of seasons, cycles, and harvests is established; (3) Gen 9:1-17, which states that nature would be held in check, such that a Flood would never again occur; (4) Jer 5:24 and Job 28:26, which uphold the regularity of rain; (5) Jer 31:35-36, 33:20, which affirms the regularity of day and night; (6) Job 38:8-11, Prov 8:29, and Jer 5:22, which describe the oceans as prescribed by bounds; (7) Jer 8:7, which portrays the regularity of the migrations of birds; and finally (8) Prov 8, which in a number of ways upholds the regularity of God’s power in nature. In addition, he cites many examples in both the OT and the NT of God’s providential care of nature. *Ibid.*, 58-59.

²*Protestant Christian Evidences*, 127.

is a non-repeatable event, such as the floating of an axe head, not subject to scientific inquiry, and is indeed a supernatural activity, that is supernatural or transcendent.¹ Yet at the same time he stresses that miracles are dependent upon the uniformity of nature, and natural law is a necessary component for the detection of miracles.² What Ramm is opposed to is the substitution of natural law as an explanation for miracle, or the approach of the liberal who abandons the literal interpretation of the miracle story in favor of a theological interpretation. This latter problem he calls “a retreat from history.”³ He accepts the actual fact of the occurrence of miracles, which are placed within the context of all the operations of natural law.

The second issue pertaining to natural law is the issue of natural law as it occurs with respect to acts of creation and the days of creation. Ramm extrapolates the uniformity of nature as a God-given, natural law and applies it across the board to all the sciences, including the geological sciences. The crux to understanding his underlying principle or *modus operandi* for the science of geology is found in the following assertion:

The laws of Nature are His [that is, God’s] laws, and the regularity of Nature is a reflection of God’s faithfulness. This strong creationism and theism of the Bible must then be imported at this point into our consideration of the geological record. *All life, all forms, all geological*

¹Ibid. 146-147. Apparently we do not find Ramm in this discussion defining miracle as “the suspension of natural laws.”

²Ibid., 40, 48-49. If all of nature’s activities were characterized by irregularities, then it would be impossible to detect an occurrence of an irregularity from the occurrence of a miracle.

³Ibid., 71. In responding to this form of liberal attack, Ramm states: “Whatever may be said against the supernatural, this can be said for it: *It endeavors to put truth squarely and unmistakably in history.*” Ibid., emphasis original.

*changes, all geological laws ARE OF GOD.*¹

Once the biblically-derived principle of the uniformity of nature is applied to the natural sciences, it becomes the reigning principle for the understanding of the entire geological record. The present uniformity of nature, processes, rates of change, speciation, etc., are extrapolated back into the past history of the earth. The result is that Ramm is forced to conclude that eons of geological history have taken place as established by modern geology, including the development and diversification of life into all its life forms. In recommending the adoption of the scientific method he proposes that this method depends on the “orderliness of nature,” that is, upon the uniformity of nature: “The future will be like the past,” he states. “Oxygen will behave today like it did yesterday. Geological processes are similar today to what they were millions of years ago, and will be the same in time to come.”² If they are the same today and always have been the same, then immediately one must address the nature of the days of creation, which if portrayed as twenty-four-hour days, would come into direct conflict with a geological history occupying eons of time and millions of generations. This will be discussed in the last section of this chapter, but first other aspects of Ramm’s doctrine of creation must be examined.

¹*CVSS*, 154-155, italics and capitalization original.

²*Protestant Christian Evidences*, 53. One must note that this work that emphasizes the regular, unchanging operations of natural law even with the occurrence of miracles was published in 1953 and laid the foundation for his 1954 work, *The Christian View of Science and Scripture (CVSS)*, which represents his attempt to harmonize the scientific method, the discoveries of modern science, and the regularity of nature with the creation record in Gen 1.

The Problem of Evil and the Fossil Record

Once the principle of uniformity is recognized as prevailing during earth history, then the theory of catastrophism as an explanatory tool for the *modus operandi* of the geological record no longer becomes the prevailing paradigm, at least in the thinking of Bernard Ramm. The outcome is that the geological strata demand an age of the earth far in excess of the 6,000 years of traditional biblical reckoning in the absence of world-wide catastrophism to explain the strata on a short time scale. This immediately raises the question of whether death and disaster prevailed for millions of years prior to the creation of man, as postulated by Ramm's revelatory-days model (or progressive creationism) for earth history.

Ramm appears to be acutely aware of the problem of having affliction, disease, suffering, and disasters throughout the long geological history prior to the fall of man, when traditionally these types of evils were explained as a result of Adam and Eve's sin. The underlying issue is whether a world pronounced "good" at the end of Creation week (Gen 1:31) can be harmonized with the evidence of predation and death throughout the fossil record? But the even deeper issue is the character of God—would a loving Creator construct a perfect world with endlessly repeating cycles of birth and death as the building blocks for the continued existence of all living things? Is death a necessary prerequisite of life?¹

Bernard Ramm addresses these significant questions in three different passages in his writings, the first two being in *The Christian View of Science and Scripture*. The

¹A corollary to this question is the related issue: Is sin the necessary prerequisite to grace? This we find discussed in NT theology (as in Rom 5:20-6:2) and thus lies outside the arena of our discussion.

first passage deals with the question of death prior to the sin of man as it relates to the evidence of death in the fossil record,¹ the context being a critique of the gap theory as explicated by C. I. Scofield, George Pember, and Harry Rimmer.² Gap-theorists, being cognizant of the necessity for a link between sin and death in the natural world, speculate that the fall of Satan from heaven, and not the fall of Adam in Eden, was the precise cause of death in the fossil record over a period of millions of years.³ Ramm replies to the three affirmations of gap-theorists that “(a) *all* death comes from sin; (b) fossils are evidence of a judgment; and (c) that ugliness of animals as indicated by fossil remains is a result of judgment” by concluding: “*The Bible ascribes death from sin to man alone*. Plant life had to die even in pristine Eden. To insist that all carnivora were originally vegetarian is another preposterous proposition. Why such huge teeth and sharp claws?”⁴ Ramm views death as part of the normal processes of nature, and thus fossilization is to be considered natural, since it is still ongoing and is not considered a product of divine judgment today. This suggests that Ramm accepts the existence of “natural evil.”

The second discussion of issues raised by the relationship of the fossil record

¹See *CVSS*, 143-144.

²*Ibid.*, 135-144.

³Ramm reacts to the concept of a pre-Creation week Satanic fall, blighting all of life on earth, with these words: “The references to an elaborate theory of angelology and demonology derived from Isa 14 and Ezek 28 and *inserted here in the Genesis account* we judge as erratic exegesis.” *Ibid.*, 141, emphasis original. Ramm does allow for an angelic fall, but views the gap-theorist’s position as precarious when he inserts such into Gen 1:2 of the Creation narrative.

⁴*Ibid.*, 143, emphasis original. Ramm carries the argument too far here by treating the death of animals and the death of plants as being equal. Scripture nowhere ascribes to plants a “living soul” (*nephesh hayah*), nor does it anywhere suggest that plants can “die” in the same sense that animals “die.”

and the fall of man takes place within the context of the creation of man and biblical anthropology.¹ After discussing the evidence of the fall of man—the biblical evidences, the psychological (in that every human being has moral imperfections), and the historical (in that human history is a history of the effects of the Fall)—Ramm concludes: “The Fall is the silent hypothesis of human history.”² He discovers no evidence for the results of the Fall in the natural sciences, nor in geology.

Ramm’s solution to the challenge raised by the traditional belief that the sin of Adam produced natural calamities in the geological realm and death in the animal world is a two-fold thrust based upon strict limitations. First, he limits the curse of death only to Adam’s posterity, and second he limits the perfections of Eden only to the garden, thus allowing imperfection in the created world. This is reminiscent of how he limits the Flood (Gen 6-9) to a local area, most likely Mesopotamia.³ After designating the location of the garden of Eden as somewhere in the ancient near East, perhaps at the head of the Persian Gulf, Ramm deals with the argument that “before Adam sinned there was no death anywhere in the world and that all creatures were vegetarians,” by raising an objection: “But this is all imposition on the record. Ideal conditions existed only in the Garden. There was disease and death and bloodshed in Nature long before

¹Ibid., 232-233.

²Ibid., 232.

³In discussing the three major views on the Flood held by evangelicals, he selects one: “A third view, and the one which we hold, is that the *entire record* must be interpreted phenomenally. If the flood is local though spoken of in universal terms, so the destruction of man is local though spoken of in universal terms. The record neither affirms nor denies that man existed beyond the Mesopotamian valley. Noah certainly was not a preacher of righteousness to the peoples of Africa, of India, of China or of America.” Ibid., 163, emphasis original. He adopts J. W. Dawson’s suggestion that the Flood covered the area observable to those on the ark, thus giving the appearance of universality. This most likely was somewhere in the ancient near East, because of it being the place for the origin of civilization. Ibid., 231.

man sinned.”¹ He then reminds the reader that he has already responded to the argument that death, disease, and bloodshed is to be traced back to the fall of Satan and observes that nowhere does Scripture ascribe death to the fall of Satan.² And as for the fall of man, he remarks that “the curse fell upon man, the woman, and the serpent,” and not upon the entire earth.³ His argumentation then moves into the area of natural theology when he suggests that the “balance of nature” supports the concept of predation as part and parcel of the created realm apart from the fall of man. Without predation, for example, the world would become overpopulated with fish and insects because of the large number of eggs laid by each.⁴

Ramm saves a discussion of the relationship of the curse to all of mankind for a later publication, *Offense to Reason: A Theology of Sin* (1985). This third passage dealing with the question of sin and death in relation to the fossil record addresses a fundamental question not dealt with in the previous two passages: How can one reconcile a belief in death and predation over the lengthy period of deep time with the traditional belief in the historicity of the narrative of Gen 3, the story of the Fall? If Gen 3 is historical, then we would expect it to contain some historical/literal truths about the origin of sin, and its subsequent spread into the entire human race. Ramm

¹Ibid., 233.

²Ibid. His assertion is unequivocal: “There is not one clear, unequivocal, unambiguous line in the entire Bible which would enable us to point to the vast array of fossil life and state that all the death here involved is by reason of the sin and fall of Satan.” Ibid.

³Ibid., 232. A key passage for Ramm is Rom 5:12: “Therefore as sin came into the world through one man and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all men sinned.” The word “world” would seem to indicate a universal curse, but for Ramm it applies to a curse within the garden, where perfect conditions prevailed. Outside of the garden “was disease and death and bloodshed.” Ibid., 233.

⁴Ibid., 233.

does not have to confront the question of whether other human beings existed prior to the creation of Adam and Eve, because he has already dismissed the pre-Adamite theory as being without Scriptural foundation.¹

The central point that Ramm makes in regards to the fall of Adam is that the effects of his transgression did indeed spread to the entire human race in the following three ways, based upon an analysis of Rom 5:12-21: (1) *Phenomenologically*, that is, through the reality of sin observed within all mankind, described both in the O. T. and N. T.; (2) *genetically*, that is, through man's conception and birth within sin (e.g. Psa 51:5); and (3) *racially*, that is, on the basis of man's connection with every other human being through a common ancestor, named Adam.² This immediately raises the question of the historicity of Adam and subsequently the historicity of the Fall.

The problem raised by Darwin's theory of the origin of species by natural selection is that it challenges to the very core the biblical portrayal of the origin of sin and death. Ramm acknowledges: "Modern scientific understandings shake up the traditional understanding of Adam. Therefore, the Second Adam, dependent on the First Adam by analogy, is also shaken up."³ He detects considerable confusion in the Christian community about what science has verified as being true. Christians must distinguish between the established data of science (such as "the dating of rocks" and

¹Ibid., 143. In discussing Harry Rimmer's view of the existence of pre-Adamites, a view adopted by most gap theorists, Ramm simply responds, "But of this man the Bible knows nothing."

²*Offense to Reason*, 57. He quotes James Orr approvingly to the effect that the most important of the three is the "phenomenological indictment of humanity," because the pervasive reality of sin and guilt in the world of itself makes necessary redemption from sin.

³Ibid., 64.

“occurrence and sequences of fossils”) and the speculative theory of evolution that connects all inanimate and animate matter in one continuous stream going from molecules to man.¹ The latter Ramm rejects, while accepting the former.

With dating methods placing the origin of *Homo sapiens* at more than 30,000 years ago, modern science has created a “New Adam” replacing the “Old Adam” of traditional thought. “Our problem then is how to correlate the New Adam with the Christian gospel,”² states Ramm. His solution is to be found in narrative theology. One can best reconcile the narrative of the Fall (Gen 3) with the findings of modern paleontology and anthropology by treating it as theology by narration, according to Ramm, which best explains Gen 1-11 as a type of theology also exemplified in the rest of Genesis, in Exodus, and in many parts of the O. T. Narrative theology views history as a vehicle of truth, not the literal message; it interprets history according to the tradition of the author; and it elevates the generic above the specific.³ Thus Adam and Eve were not their actual names, but were designations that were generic for “man” and “woman.”

Ramm’s solution to reconciling the narrative of the Fall with modern science is that the Fall should not be taken as literally as Christians have done over past centuries. For Ramm the narrative in Genesis flows from “universal history” in its early chapters to a specific history of one nation, Israel, called by God for an important mission. The Fall then would be considered both historical and universal in its broadest sense, laying

¹Ibid.

²Ibid.

³Ibid., 70-71.

the foundation for the doctrines of sin and redemption. Ramm's concluding thought in this lengthy discussion is this: "But in view of the incarnation, the time span of Gen. 1-11 is relatively unimportant and hence is greatly condensed and compacted. Such concern with particular details and time spans is inspired by a modern research mentality and not by the viewpoint of the biblical salvation-history approach."¹

The Image of God and Human Reason

Just as Ramm has tackled the challenge of modern science in regards to the fall of Adam, so he has also addressed its related challenge to the concept of the image of God within man. Modern evangelicals have linked the image of God with the power of reason found in man as well as his with his moral awareness of conscience, thus distinguishing man from the lower orders of created life. They have largely rejected the neo-orthodox position that the image of God was lost at the time of the Fall, or defaced to the extent that human reason can no longer be trusted. Carl Henry summarizes nicely the evangelical position: "Evangelical expositors of the biblical revelation find the created image of God to exist formally in man's personality (moral responsibility and intelligence) and materially in his knowledge of God and of his will for man."²

Ramm's thought is in harmony with this evangelical understanding of the image of God, stressing especially man's reason, which is the avenue through which God

¹Ibid., 72-73.

²Carl F. H. Henry, "Man," *Baker's Dictionary of Theology*, ed. Everett F. Harrison (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1960), 340-341.

communicates.¹ While in the latter part of his career, Ramm was heavily influenced by Barthian methodology and even theology, he never fully abandoned the evangelical concept of man being in the image of God. Yet he goes a step beyond the traditional evangelical view in recommending that evangelicals should adopt Barth's dialectic between the "phenomenal man" and the "real man," the former being "all that we know of man from all our human sciences" and the latter being "man as he is known in divine revelation."² In his cautious endorsement of this view he writes: "Under the concept of real man he [the evangelical] can claim all a Christian theologian needs to claim about man being in the image of God, yet not contradict any of the sciences."³

In his recommendation for adopting Barth's dialectical view of the image of God, Ramm may have overlooked the fact that Barth denies to humankind any ability to use reason in relation to revelation. But he probably has not, in that he attempts to prove that Barth is not against reason per se, but against the elevation of reason to a plane higher than God. Ramm feels that "in his *Church Dogmatics*, Barth always stresses that revelation is a reasonable event"—not apposed to reason.⁴ This may be partly true, but Barth denies that reason has any ability to reach out for God or to comprehend God, for according to his dialectic God always takes the initiative in a

¹*Protestant Christian Evidences*, 41. The role of reason within modern evangelicalism and its relationship to Scottish Common Sense Realism has been discussed in chapter 2 in this dissertation.

²*After Fundamentalism*, 155. This is definitely a dialectical view of human nature. Ramm gives only a qualified acceptance of this dialectic, for further on he adds: "This distinction between the phenomenal man and the real man may be too artificial." *Ibid.*, 157.

³*Ibid.*, 157. If Ramm consistently rejects theistic evolution, as noted previously, then his position is inconsistent with this statement that none of the sciences will be contradicted. A non-evolutionary theistic approach *does* contradict the science of modern anthropology, which is evolutionary based.

⁴*Ibid.*, 124.

revelation event. While being attracted to Barth's view, in the end Ramm falls back upon the traditional view of John Calvin for the *imago dei*:

In Calvin's own words, a *residue* of the image of God remains in the fallen sinner. Sin corrupts the image of God but does not destroy it. In human reason "some sparks still gleam". . . . There remains in the breast of every person an appetite for truth, which sin does not annihilate.¹

Ramm's doctrine of creation is heavily influenced by his understanding of the image of God and the role that reason plays as part of that image, which was preserved through the Fall. His approach to a harmonization of science with theology is rationalist in method.² His summary statement on the relation between faith and reason is this: "Again, we assert that a man may be a Christian without the sacrifice of his intelligence."³

¹*Offense to Reason*, 119, emphasis original. One should take note of the fact that this was published two years after his *After Fundamentalism* (1983) and thus represents his final view. This is consonant with his earliest published view on the effects of sin, where he states that "every faculty of man, or every dimension of his personality, is affected in some degree by sin." Bernard Ramm, "An Outline of Evangelical Theology," chap. 7, p. 12ff., an unpublished manuscript cited in Miller, "The Theological System of Bernard L. Ramm," 120.

²In the matter of apologetics the Christian system, argues Ramm, is "authoritarian rationalism," of the same kind taught by Augustine. *Protestant Christian Evidences*, 41. He objects to Thomism because "it does not take revelation as the indispensable starting place" in the search for truth, and at the same time he commends Emil Brunner's *Revelation and Reason*, because it gives priority to revelation over reason. Bernard Ramm, *Problems in Christian Apologetics* (Portland, OR: Western Baptist Theological Seminary, 1949), 23, 39-40. On the other hand, he states that because of "the complete isolation of faith from reason, we disagree with [Blaise] Pascal." *Ibid.*, 27.

³*CVSS*, 238. Note that this statement comes toward the end of *CVSS* as a concluding statement. This sentiment is eloquently iterated elsewhere: "Orthodox Christians [that is, evangelicals] believe in the uniformity of Nature for all practical purposes of science; they believe in revelation verified by the most active and highest use of man's intellect; . . . they believe that a man may be scientist and Christian." *Protestant Christian Evidences*, 157.

The Purpose and Function of the Doctrine of Creation

The Scope of Creation for Modern Times

In discussing the scope of creation we are examining the outer boundaries of the doctrine of creation. Does a doctrine of creation have an assigned role in settling the controversies today in the conflict today between science and religion, or did the biblical teachings on creation have the same role in ancient times, especially as early Christianity began to clash with Greek thought? Are the statements of the Bible on nature intended to be scientific, or are they theological in purpose?

One prominent aspect of American Fundamentalism in the first half of the twentieth century was its antagonism toward evolutionary thinking. To thwart evolutionary reasoning fundamentalists adopted the view that Scripture is a source of modern science that can be used as trustworthy information to defeat all the forces of “science falsely so-called.”¹ For example one of the major arguments against uniformitarianism—the concept that geological processes take place at a uniform rate with respect to time—is the use of a biblical “prediction” that uniformitarians would arise in the “last days”: “Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of his coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation.”² George McCready Price and other fundamentalists used this argument from 2 Pet 3. But then fundamentalists went a step further and found a reference to

¹I Tim 6:20.

²2 Pet 3:3-4.

atomic energy in v. 10: “But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night in which . . . the elements shall melt with fervent heat.” The theory of atomic energy has also been found in Heb 11:3 and the graphic portrayal of atomic explosions in Joel 2:28-30.¹ The use of the Bible to predict the findings of modern science is called “anticipatory science.”

Bernard Ramm commenced writing his book, *The Christian View of Science and Scripture* (1954), at the time when fundamentalists were seeking to find all sorts of anticipations of modern science in Scripture, including the rise of the atomic age. The most influential fundamentalist scientist in America at that time was Harry Rimmer, a largely self-taught scientist and popular lecturer. His book, *Modern Science and the Genesis Record*, claimed to find Scriptural references to dozens of discoveries made by modern science in the fields of geology, botany, meteorology, and zoology.² One of the primary reasons Ramm decided to publish a book on science and religion was to counter the work of Rimmer and other fundamentalists, who, he felt, were leading

¹Atoms are composed of particles so small that they cannot be seen, which fundamentalists have related to Heb 11:3, “so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.” The expression in Joel 2:30, “pillars of smoke” as a sign of the last days, is derived from the Hebrew word for pillars, *timroth*, which also means “palm trees,” and is said to be a reference to the mushroom-shaped cloud of an atomic explosion. See, for example, D. Lee Chesnut, *The Atom Speaks, and Echoes the Word of God* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1951), written three years before Ramm’s *CVSS* and influenced no doubt by the chapter, “The Atom Bomb,” in O. E. Sandeen, *The Bible in the Age of Science* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1946).

²Harry Rimmer, *Modern Science and the Genesis Record* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1937). Other OT anticipations of modern science are found in a companion work, *idem*, *The Harmony of Science and Scripture* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1936). These two books catapulted Rimmer into the fundamentalist limelight.

others to distorted views of Scripture or to using Scripture in illegitimate ways.¹ Thus, Ramm took the position of his evangelical predecessor, James Orr, that there is to be found no anticipatory science in Scripture.²

The Scope of Creation for Ancient Times

Since Ramm has reduced the scope of the doctrine of creation so that it does not include anticipations of science for modern scientists, then it raises the question as to whether its scope should be further reduced for ancient or biblical times as well, so that its original intent and purpose was not to teach science, even ancient science.³ Ramm's starting point in the understanding of ancient "science" in Scripture is that the two, science and Scripture, must harmonize—a position held by evangelicals ever since the Reformation. He offers this synopsis of the Reformation view: "If the Author of Nature and Scripture are the same God, then the two books of God must eventually recite the

¹Bernard Ramm was teaching at Biola College in Los Angeles in the late 1940s at the time when Harry Rimmer was lecturing on that campus. This stirred up Ramm so much that he decided to write a book on science and religion, giving the correct relationship between the two and countering the distorted views of fundamentalists such as Rimmer (Warren H. Johns, interview by author with Bernard Ramm, Irvine, CA, 28 December 1990). Rimmer spent the last decade of his life lecturing across the United States, especially at college campuses, according to Roger Schultz, "All Things Made New: the Evolving Fundamentalism of Harry Rimmer, 1890-1952" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Arkansas, 1989), 363, 370-371. Schultz has this illuminating comment: "Rimmer carried the theme of the biblical anticipation of modern science to dizzying heights in *Modern Science in an Ancient Book*." Ibid., 256. Ramm responds to this "anticipatory science" approach to Scripture with specific examples discussed in *CVSS*, 48, and with this summary statement: "The Holy Spirit . . . did not give to the writers [of the Bible] the secrets of modern science." Ibid., 94. He writes specifically against Rimmer's views in *ibid.*, 137-138.

²Orr declares: "The Bible was not given to anticipate modern physical discoveries." James Orr, *The Faith of a Modern Christian* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1910), 207. Ramm introduces his chapter in *CVSS*, "Anticipations of Science in Scripture," with these words: "If we believe that the Spirit of God did not teach the writers of the Bible final science, . . . we shall not go hunting through the Bible for so-called marvelous anticipations of modern science." *CVSS*, 86.

³One problem here is that the Bible does not use the word science in its modern sense.

same story.”¹ They do not always give the same story from a surface view; thus, Ramm must rely upon the accommodation principle to bring about harmony. Moreover, he must divest Scripture from having any authority in the sciences ultimately. He cites approvingly the caution from Guyot, that we must not “seek from the Bible the science which it does not intend to teach.”² He specifically applies this observation to his doctrine of creation in stating: “We agree with Kurtz when he wrote, ‘The Mosaic history of the creation, as the Bible in general, was by no means designed to give instruction in regard to natural science.’”³ The Bible has no authority in the geological sciences, for it “does not theorize as to the actual nature of things. It does not contain a theory of astronomy or geology or chemistry.”⁴ Ramm thus has not only rejected the idea of there being any anticipations of modern science in Scripture, he has excluded the possibility that there can be any science, whether ancient or modern, in Scripture.

This brings us to the question of origins, whether the Bible gives a valid cosmology for the universe—how it began—or a theory for the origin of life. We move now from a consideration of science in the Bible to the question whether one can derive a philosophy of science from the Bible, that is, a world view that includes all of reality. Ramm believes that “all efforts to derive a full-orbed political theory or economic theory or biological theory from Scripture have ended in failure,” because exegetes

¹Ibid., 25.

²Ibid., 33, n. 15.

³Ibid., 150.

⁴*Protestant Biblical Interpretation* (1970), 210.

have “made Scripture speak to points about which it was never intended to speak.”¹

Ramm ultimately finds Barth’s dialecticism attractive on this point: “The cosmology is not the Word of God, but the message within the cosmology is the Word of God,” so that Barth can conclude that “neither Holy Scripture or Christian theology is involved in teaching cosmology.”² If Scripture as a whole has no reliable cosmology, then neither does Genesis, nor does it have a particular theory of origins. Ramm states it thusly: “Genesis 1 is neither for nor against modern cosmological theories; it is apart from them. They neither confirm nor refute the biblical doctrine of creation. Nor are the six days of creation surveys of the history of geology or biology.”³ Having seen that Ramm limits the scope of Scriptural authority to the areas outside of science, either modern or ancient, and that he does not view the days of creation as a history of geology, then we must address what are the days of creation in Genesis intended to teach, if not a theory of origins?

The Days of Creation

Ramm’s doctrine of revelation, especially his emphasis on the accommodation aspect of divine revelation, has paved the way for considering the days of creation as relative, not absolute in time. Before considering the days of creation as such, we must first examine how Ramm views the biblical understanding of time in general.

¹Ramm, “Baptists and Sources of Authority,” *Foundations* 1 (July 1958): 15, emphasis original.

²Ramm, *After Fundamentalism*, 153.

³Ramm, “The Battle Isn’t over Yet,” *Eternity*, October 1965, 20. Along this line he cites Eric Rust’s opinion approvingly: “Biblical cosmology, zoology, and ethnology are not binding [upon Christian faith].” *CVSS*, 75. See Ramm’s discussion of the limitations of, and errors in, biblical cosmology. *Ibid.*, 96-102.

“The vocabulary for *time* in both the Old Testament and the New Testament is not strict scientific time but the time reckoning methods and units of the cultural period of the Bible writers.”¹ In this quote and in others Ramm views biblical time as relative.

When it comes to the age of the earth issue, he finds Scripture to be silent: “There is no date nor time element in the record except the expression ‘in the beginning.’”² As far as Ramm is concerned, the geological sciences, and not Scripture, can be considered as the earth’s timekeeper since creation.

If Scripture cannot offer a date for creation, then by logical extension Scripture cannot give us an indication as to how long the days of creation were. Science gives evangelical theologians an ultimatum: If there is any validity to the findings of geology and the dates supplied by geology, the creation at 4004 B.C. or even at 40,000 B.C. is an impossibility. Thus, evangelicals must accept one of two alternatives: (a) attempt to totally reinterpret geology and overthrow some of the basic principles and conclusions of modern geology, or (b) seek an interpretation of Scripture different from the long-held, orthodox view. Either geology must be reinterpreted on the basis of Scripture, or Scripture must be reinterpreted on the basis of science. Ramm clearly recommends the latter position: “We certainly seek another interpretation of Genesis.”³ This conclusion has the net effect of viewing the days of creation as other than literal: “With reference to the six days of creation, we reject the literal interpretation because by no means can

¹Ibid., 50, emphasis original. This statement is a recognition of accommodation.

²Ibid., 119-120.

³Ibid., 123.

the history of the earth be dated at 4000 B.C., or even 40,000 B.C.”¹ An alteration of the traditional understanding of the age of the earth has led to an alteration of the days of creation.

Ramm’s Model for the Days of Creation

This mandate for the reinterpretation of the days of creation necessitates that Ramm come up with a viable model or world view for harmonizing his theology with his science. He discusses the five major options available to evangelicals: (1) the day-age theory, whereby the days of creation are correlated with various stages of geological history (sometimes called “strict concordism”), (2) the gap theory, which postulates millions of years of geological history inserted between Gen 1:1 and 1:3 (also called the “ruin-restitution theory” because of a postulated catastrophe prior to the creation of man), (3) the “religious only view,” which simply sees Gen 1 as a theological tractate, (4) the ideal-time theory, which hypothesizes that God created the fossils and strata of the earth during the six days of creation (also called the “apparent-age theory”), and (5) literal creation and Flood geology, which holds to six literal days of creation and a world-wide Flood to explain the fossil record (called by Ramm the “naive-literal view”).² All such theories are rejected by Ramm in favor of

¹Ibid., 150. In his last published book Ramm argued for a minimum of 500,000 years for the development of modern man. See his *Offense to Reason*, 113. We will not discuss the accuracy (or the inaccuracy) of the findings of geology on the age of the earth or on the history of the human race, for such topics lie well outside the scope of this dissertation.

²These are sketched out in greater detail in *CVSS*, 120-149. Two decades after Ramm introduced these five major options to evangelicals, Millard Erickson presented these as the five major options yet available to evangelicals for consideration in harmonizing science and biblical theology. Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1993), 380-382. He incorporated the “literary-framework view” into that of the pictorial-day theory (that of Bernard Ramm’s).

“moderate concordism”: “By *moderate concordism* we mean that geology and Genesis tell in broad outline the same story,” that is, they both start at the same point, a chaotic condition for the earth, and both end at the same point, the appearance of mankind.¹ He goes on to point out that “moderate concordism differs from strict concordism (i) in denying that the word *yom* [Heb. “day”] means period, and (ii) in insisting that the days are not completely chronological in order but part topical or logical.”² The best way to explain the days on a partly literal, non-sequential basis is to advocate the revelatory-days view, which Ramm does. Visionary days do not need to have the same sequence as the geological record, yet they retain a semblance of twenty-four-hour days, which like “prophetic” or “apocalyptic” days can denote much longer periods of time.

Thus, Ramm retains an element of orthodoxy in that he recognizes the days of creation as having a literal aspect. He speaks favorably of P. J. Wiseman’s theory that the events of creation were revealed to the inspired author of Genesis in six visions encompassed within six literal days, written down on six tablets, as it often was customary in the writing of Babylonian tablets.³ Ramm’s views differs slightly from the father-son view of the Wisemans in that he also perceives creation as taking place in progressive fashion, whereby God intervenes at certain points in geological history to

¹CVSS, 154, emphasis original.

²Ibid. He rejects strict concordism because the sequence of Gen 1 is *not* in the same order as the geological record from the lowest strata to the uppermost strata.

³Ibid., 152-153. Cf. P. J. Wiseman, *Creation Revealed in Six Days: The Evidence of Scripture Confirmed by Archaeology* (London: Marshall, Morgan, and Scott, 1958), 3rd ed. (1st ed., 1948). P. J. Wiseman’s archeologist son, Donald Wiseman, advocated the father’s view that the creation days were “days of revelation” in the article, “Creation Time: What Does Genesis Say?” *Science and Christian Belief* 3 (1991): 25-34.

create new life, *de novo*.¹ He sees a visionary aspect in Gen 1, which he considers to be “prophecy in reverse”—a view he held to throughout his career.² In his thinking Gen 1 becomes a window for viewing the progression of life on earth through the vast ages of geological time with the sequence of glimpses through the window not being in chronological order, but being in topical order.

Possible Factors in Ramm’s Selection of a Model

There are several possible factors inherent in Ramm’s theology of revelation and in his doctrine of creation that may have contributed to his adoption of the days of creation as “revelatory days.” Among these factors four stand out:

1. The firm belief that the Bible and nature have the same Author and thus cannot help but give the same message is a strong influence in Ramm’s thought. This, when coupled with the concept of inerrancy, has provided fertile soil for the philosophy of concordism to take root. His slight modification of a concordist view to what he designates “moderate concordism” has the same effect of a strict concordism. It leads

¹Ramm obtained his view on “progressive creation” in the early 1950s from evangelicals who were already advocating it, such as Edwin K. Gedney, “Geology and the Bible,” in *Modern Science and Christian Faith*, 2nd ed., ed. American Scientific Affiliation (Wheaton, IL.: Van Kampen Press, 1950), 23-57, esp. 49ff. The need for progressive acts of creation throughout geological history is forcefully argued on the basis of major gaps in the geological record. Ramm posits an act of creation to bridge each major gap. The esteemed Harvard paleontologist, Stephen Gould, posits rapid, mega-evolution to bridge each gap in a view known as “punctuated equilibrium.” See Stephen Jay Gould and Niles Eldredge, “Punctuated Equilibria: the Tempo and Mode of Evolution Reconsidered,” *Paleobiology* 3 (1977): 115-151. When I once asked Ramm whether he was aware that the secular geologist, Stephen Gould, was advocating a theory of evolution very similar to Ramm’s “progressive creationism,” his reply was “No,” he had not heard of Gould’s view (Bernard Ramm, interview by author, December 28, 1990).

²Late in his career Ramm summarizes his view of Gen 1-3 in five points, the second one being: “It is prophecy in reverse. Just as the prophets spoke of future judgment and/or salvation in terms of Hebrew culture, concepts, and history, so the past history is recovered by a gift of prophecy in reverse. It is the gift of the vision of the Lord to see into the past.” *After Fundamentalism*, 84.

to the position that Genesis and geology must have the same message because both the Bible and the world of science have God as the Originator of all their truths.

2. The influence of John Calvin's principle of accommodation, which was advocated in the sixteenth century after the discoveries of Copernicus began to unsettle people's faith in the scientific reliability of Scripture, must be taken into account.¹ Calvin's means of harmonizing Copernicus' findings with Scripture is through a view of revelation that perceives the Omnipotent God as taking on the "lispings" of humanity with all of its imagery and limitations in order to reach mankind with eternal truths. Ramm finds this as a ready-made tool to refine the rough edges of concordism, so that Scripture indeed offers the same message as modern science.

3. The concept of the uniformity of nature, which was developed by dedicated Christian scientists starting with Sir Isaac Newton in the eighteenth century and moving on through the nineteenth century with the rise of modern geology and paleontology, has shaped the thinking of Ramm.² This view sees the dominance of natural law in all of God's created works. The principle of uniformity when applied to geology yields the aeons of time that are postulated by paleontologists for covering the history of life upon earth. Once a scholar is granted the liberty to adjust the biblical age of the earth to harmonize with the geological eras, then it becomes much easier to adjust the time period designated by the "days" of creation.

4. A personal influence in Ramm's thinking came about with his contacts with

¹Copernicus published his views on the heliocentric theory in his classic work, *De Revolutionibus* in 1543, the year of his death. John Calvin's expanded editions of his *Institutes* were published after 1543.

²Sir Charles Lyell, who was a dedicated Christian, was the first one to apply the principle of uniformity to geology in his classic work, *The Principles of Geology* (London: J. Murray, 1830-1833).

fundamentalists in the late 1940s, who were advocating a position called “anticipatory science”—the Bible has anticipated in various passages the major discoveries of modern science, such as atomic energy. These same fundamentalists were closely allied with the “Flood geology” view being promoted by George McCready Price, Byron Nelson, and Alfred Rehwinkel, along side of the “gap theory” catastrophism of Harry Rimmer. Once Ramm rejected the speculations of “anticipatory science” and “Flood geology,” he went a step further and adopted the view that the Bible does not contain science of any kind, for it was not intended to teach science, ancient or modern. The exclusion of science from the pages of Scripture then paved the way for geology to offer a valid hypothesis for the history of life on earth in contradistinction to the traditional view of Gen 1. Geological time became the dominant influence over biblical time.

Step-by-step Ramm has moved in the direction that Gen 1 cannot offer a scientific explanation for the origin of life on earth, other than declaring that God is the source of all life.¹ He sees Genesis as giving the “why” and “wherefore” for the origin of life, but not the “how” and the “what” in exact processes for its origin.² Once this stance is adopted, then Ramm can allow modern geology to suggest the time-frame for the origin of life on earth, which he harmonizes with the biblical record by means of the “revelatory-days” view of creation.

¹As an avowed progressive creationist, Ramm definitely ascribes the origin of life in its various major forms to the handiwork and power of the Creator, and not to any chance processes. Thus, theistic evolution is ruled out as a valid mechanism to explain the origin of the major types of organisms. On the other hand, he is willing to allow “micro-evolution” to help form and shape the myriad varieties of organisms and plants on the face of the earth.

²CVSS, 104.

Summary

Bernard Ramm has written extensively on the doctrines of revelation and creation throughout his active career of more than forty years,¹ and he has been among the most influential of evangelical theologians of the twentieth century on these topics as well as on others. This study thus far has examined the essential features of Ramm's doctrine of revelation, noting the transition from a more traditional view of propositional revelation early in his career to a more neo-orthodox view of revelation late in his career allowing for elements of myth or saga into divine revelation. It has also examined the impact that major aspects of his view of revelation has had upon his doctrine of creation, and then in particular upon his understanding of the days of creation. The adoption of a more nuanced, less literal view of the days of creation happened early in his career, well before his shift toward Barth as a model for evangelical theology; thus the influence of neo-orthodoxy cannot be deduced as a reason for Ramm's adoption of non-literal days of creation.

The four most pervasive influences found in his doctrines of revelation and of creation that may have contributed to his adoption of non-literal days of creation have been noted: (1) A firm belief in the inerrancy of Scripture and a corollary belief in concordism, the idea that science and Scripture must be in essential agreement on the method and timing of creation; (2) the accommodation view of propositional revelation first explicitly developed in Reformed thought by John Calvin; (3) the principle of the

¹Bernard Ramm died in August of 1992 (see the following obituaries: "Theologian Bernard Ramm," *Christianity Today*, 14 September 1992, 76; "Deaths," *Christian Century*, 28 October 1992, 962). According to *Perspectives in Religious Studies* 17 (1990): 87, Ramm's first work was published in 1949.

uniformity of all nature, as taught in Scripture and as applied to modern science by Sir Isaac Newton and other eminent scientists, leading to the acceptance of long geological ages; and (4) the reaction against the “anticipatory science” and “Flood geology” views of modern Fundamentalism that had emerged full-fledged in the first half of the twentieth century.

CHAPTER 4

CARL F. H. HENRY ON REVELATION AND CREATION

Carl F. H. Henry (1913-2003)¹ has been universally proclaimed as the leading evangelical theologian in America beginning in the late 1940s and continuing through the remainder of the twentieth century. He contributed to evangelicalism's break with its fundamentalist roots with his widely acclaimed *Uneasy Conscience of Modern Fundamentalism* in 1947, which critiqued the Fundamentalist movement for its lack of social conscience and lack of a vision for societal reform.² The year 1947 was a turning point in evangelical circles, not only for the publication of Henry's *Uneasy Conscience*, but also for the founding of its first seminary, Fuller Theological Seminary, and for the choice of a name, "Neo-evangelicalism," for the movement.³

Carl Henry's stature as the leading light in the young Neo-evangelical movement is acknowledged by all, friend and foe alike. Bob E. Patterson, editor of the series *Makers of*

¹Henry died on 7 December 2003 at his Watertown, WI home. See the reports occasioned by his death: Beth Spring, "Carl F. H. Henry Dies at 90," *Christianity Today*, February 2004, 20; and the subsequent tribute, Timothy George, "Inventing Evangelicalism," *Christianity Today*, March 2004, 48-51.

²Carl F. H. Henry, *The Uneasy Conscience of Modern Fundamentalism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1947). Roger E. Olson describes this work as follows: "Henry's first notable book, *The Uneasy Conscience of Modern Fundamentalism* . . . symbolized a decisive break between the newer evangelical theology of Henry and his friends and the older Fundamentalism, which continued to exist in increasingly separatistic isolation from the rest of the world." "Carl F. H. Henry," in *Makers of Christian Theology in America*, ed. Mark G. Toulouse and James O. Duke (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1997), 490.

³R. V. Pierard, "Evangelicalism," in *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, ed. W. A. Elwell (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1984), 381. Harold J. Ockenga selected the name "Neo-evangelicalism."

the Modern Theological Mind, sums up Henry: “Carl Henry is the prime interpreter of evangelical theology, one of its leading theoreticians, and now [as of 1983] in his 70s the unofficial spokesman for the entire tradition.”¹ In the years following 1983 Patterson’s assessment has held true, as Henry has been variously described as “the elder statesman of modern evangelical Christianity,”² “unquestionably the most brilliant living evangelical theologian of our time,”³ “*the* evangelical theologian *par excellence* of the second half of this century,”⁴ “perhaps *the* central figure of American evangelicalism this century,”⁵ and “arguably the most widely acknowledged intellectual voice for the new evangelical movement.”⁶ Henry has been one of the few evangelical scholars who is widely known

¹Patterson, *Carl F. H. Henry*, 9. Patterson goes on to add these commendations offered by fellow evangelicals of prominence: “Billy Graham has called him the most eminent of conservative theologians.” “Kenneth S. Kantzer, former editor of *Christianity Today*, says that Henry is the honored and revered dean of evangelical theologians.” *Ibid.*, 18, 127.

²James R. Newby and Elizabeth Newby, *Between Peril and Promise* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1984), 80. The Newbys add this complementary thought: “A writer and theologian, he has been one of the leaders who has brought this movement from the periphery of life onto main street America.” *Ibid.*

³Leslie R. Keylock, “Evangelical Leaders You Should Know: Meet Carl F. H. Henry,” *Moody*, April 1986, 73.

⁴Kenneth S. Kantzer, “The Carl Henry That Might Have Been,” *Christianity Today*, 5 April 1993, 15, emphasis original. Kantzer goes on to surmise: “I believe that 50 or 100 years from now . . . Carl will be remembered as one person who, in a confusing age, held forth the solid middle of a faith that fortifies the whole human person against the fraying ends of irrationalism and superstition.” *Ibid.*

⁵Carl R. Trueman, “Admiring the Sistine Chapel,” 48, emphasis original. The title of this article is derived from Gabriel Fackre’s statement: “If the twentieth century ‘evangelical renaissance’ in North America has produced a Michelangelo, that exemplar is surely Carl Henry.” Gabriel Fackre, “Carl F. H. Henry,” in *A Handbook of Christian Theologians*, ed. Martin E. Marty and Dean G. Peerman (Nashville: Abingdon, 1984), 583; quoted from *ibid.* The fact that Marty and Peerman place Henry alongside of Karl Rahner, Paul Ricouer, Wolfhart Pannenberg, Jurgen Moltmann, John Cobb, Hans Kung, and other “recent” theologians speaks of the esteem with which Henry is held.

⁶Grenz, *Renewing the Center*, 88.

outside of evangelicalism.¹

Carl Henry's magnum opus as recognized by all is *God, Revelation and Authority*, published in six volumes between 1976 and 1983.² Out of more than twenty who have reviewed this work, one reviewer has stated: "Without doubt it is the most exhaustive evangelical statement on these issues [doctrines of revelation and God] to have been produced in the twentieth century, and, upon its publication, marked the pinnacle of Henry's career as intellectual evangelical leader and spokesperson."³ This epochal publication of Henry's systematic theology elevates propositional revelation as the only valid evangelical view of revelation, while showing the deficiencies of the doctrine of revelation within neo-orthodoxy, existentialism, process theology, and other major contemporary theologies.

God, Revelation and Authority starts out with an extensive prolegomena in volume 1, focusing especially on methodology, followed by a setting forth of "fifteen theses" or propositions summarizing the evangelical position on revelation in volumes 2, 3, and 4.⁴ The doctrine of God is dealt with in volumes 5 and 6, and subsumed within the doctrine of God is the doctrine of creation, which occupies a major portion of volume 6. The central

¹The secular press often took note of Henry's leading role in the new movement. They described him at age 54 as having "emerged as the arbiter in defining and defending conservative Protestantism," and at age 64 as "the leading theologian of the nation's growing Evangelical flank." "Mr. Inside," *Newsweek*, 15 January 1968, 71; "Theology for the Tent Meeting," *Time*, 14 February 1977, 82. Billy Graham was designated as "Mr. Outside" by *Newsweek* at that time.

²Carl F. H. Henry, *God, Revelation and Authority* (Waco, TX: Word, 1976-1983). Since then it has been recently reprinted by Crossway in the U.S. and by Paternoster Publishing in the U.K. Hereafter, it is cited as *GRA*.

³Trueman, 49.

⁴Carl Henry's "Fifteen Theses" are summarized in Appendix B of this study. A more complete summary with accompanying explanation is found in *GRA*, 2:7-16.

issue in the discussion of revelation is epistemology—how we obtain a knowledge of God and his message for us—and the issue concerning the doctrine of God is ontology—what the nature of God is, and how it interrelates with his attributes. The following study begins with Henry’s doctrine of revelation, moves on to his doctrine of creation, and then considers his application of those doctrines in the specific area of the interpretation of Gen 1 and the days of creation.

Henry’s Doctrine of God as Prologue

Methodology

One can hardly separate the doctrine of revelation from the doctrine of God in the writings of Carl F. H. Henry. The two are inseparably connected to each other. This raises the question as to whether the doctrine of God takes precedence over the doctrine of revelation, or whether, vice versa, the doctrine of revelation takes precedence over the doctrine of God. Or, are the two equally significant as a starting point in theology?

In answering these questions, this study begins by allowing Carl Henry’s writings to speak for themselves, juxtaposing two statements of fundamental importance:

1. “Revelation is, in truth, the central pillar of biblical religion. Around the living God’s disclosure of his own reality, purpose, and activity range all the special affirmations of Judeo-Christian theology.”¹ Henry points out that the teachings of creation, a future judgment and future life, salvation, and present hope depend upon revelation.

¹*GRA*, 1:409. Earlier in his career Henry acknowledged that “evangelical scholars are aware that the doctrine of the Bible controls all other doctrines of the Christian faith.” Carl F. H. Henry, *Frontiers in Modern Theology* (Chicago: Moody, 1966), 138. Yet further on in this same work he iterates: “From a certain vantage point, the concept of God is determinative for all other concepts,” and helps to establish one’s world view (175).

2. “The doctrine of God is unquestionably the most important tenet for comprehending biblical religion. The Bible leaves in doubt neither the absolute uniqueness of the self-revealing God nor the specific features that comprise Yahweh’s incomparability.”¹ It is this revelation that enables ancient Israel to distinguish their God as the true God apart from any of the gods of other religions.

In reconciling these two seemingly contradictory thoughts, one elevating the doctrine of revelation as supreme and the other elevating the doctrine of God, Carl Henry develops his theology from a central maxim: The self-revelation of God and of his will is the starting presupposition for all of theology. This maxim does not depend on any other, more basic philosophical or theological presuppositions, thus suggesting that Henry’s approach comports with the philosophical position of foundationalism.² The maxim can be neither proven nor denied through any type of philosophical or theological reasoning. Its chief test is the “law of self-contradiction,” which is an important tool in his rational methodology. Henry’s theological approach has been succinctly summarized in his own words:

Divine revelation is the source of all truth, the truth of Christianity included; reason is the instrument for recognizing it; Scripture is its verifying principle; logical consistency is a negative test for truth and coherence a subordinate test. The task of Christian theology is to exhibit the content

¹GRA, 5:18. This statement was published six years after the first statement.

²Stanley Grenz in his thorough discussion of foundationalism from an evangelical perspective offers this definition of it: “In the broadest sense, foundationalism is merely the acknowledgment of the seemingly obvious observation that not all beliefs (or assertions) are on the same level, but that some beliefs (or assertions) anchor others.” Grenz, *Renewing the Center*, 186-187. Henry’s foundation then is the concept of a self-revealing God, and thus his doctrine of revelation provides the foundation for his entire theological system. The foundation is assumed, not proven, to be true, giving his system the label of “presuppositionalism,” which is defined below.

*of biblical revelation as an orderly whole.*¹

Thus, Henry's theological methodology can be placed within the category of rational presuppositionalism,² which views the human mind and its logic as being patterned after the divine Logos, or supreme intelligent Being. The human mind is not the proof that there is a God, but it is the channel for receiving a knowledge of God and an awareness of his existence. The existence of God is not proven, but it is assumed.³

Presuppositionalism stands in direct contrast with evidentialism, in that it is a deductive, or *a priori*, approach to truth, while the latter is inductive, or *a posteriori*. Carl Henry's chief methodological opponents are the "evidentialists." As one evangelical theologian states it:

Henry reserves some of his most severe criticisms for alternative basic epistemological methods used by some fellow evangelical apologists and theologians—especially "evidentialism." Evidentialists believe it is possible to confirm the truth of orthodox, Protestant Christianity by means of empirical and historical verification.⁴

¹*GRA*, 1:215, emphasis original.

²According to Norman L. Geisler, "The *rational presuppositionalist* also begins with the Trinity revealed in the written Word of God. But the test for whether this is true or not is simply the law of noncontradiction. . . . Gordon Clark and Carl F. H. Henry are rational presuppositionalists." "Apologetics, Types of," *Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1999), 44, emphasis original. This type of presuppositionalism should be distinguished from the "revelational presuppositionalism" of Cornelius Van Til and John Frame and from the "practical presuppositionalism" of Francis Schaeffer. *Ibid.* In another classification scheme, John Voss places Carl F. H. Henry, E. J. Carnell, Clark Pinnock, and Francis Schaeffer all in the same sub-group of presuppositionalists, but admits that his categorization is somewhat arbitrary. E. John Voss, "The Apologetics of Francis A. Schaeffer" (Th.D. dissertation, Dallas Theological Seminary, 1984), 94-95.

³"Presuppositionalists attempt, then, to argue *transcendentally*. That is, they argue that all meaning and thought—indeed, every fact—logically presupposes the God of the Scriptures." Steven B. Cowan, "Introduction," in *Five Views on Apologetics*, ed. Steven B. Cowan (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000), 19, emphasis original.

⁴Roger E. Olson, "Carl F. H. Henry," in *Makers of Christian Theology in America* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1997), 491-2. Bernard Ramm is normally placed in the evidentialist camp, a fact which will help explain the divergences between Henry and Ramm.

Henry is concerned that evidentialists have based the authority of biblical revelation on historical evidences that are fully independent of revelation, thus offering an even more fundamental authority than that of revelation. Evidentialists reply that Henry and other presuppositionalists have an authority that is independent of revelation—the human mind with the laws of logic that accompany it. *God, Revelation and Authority*, volume 1, is designed to demonstrate that evidentialism is “a variant of natural theology,” and natural theology leads to belief in an authority that is independent of Scripture, the supreme authority.¹ Henry clearly sets forth the basis for his theological method: “My premise is the legitimacy of deductive theology and the invalidity of the evidentialist alternative.”² This means that the classical arguments for the existence of God have no validity in developing a theological methodology.

In settling the question of what is more basic as a starting point for theology, the doctrine of God or the doctrine of Scripture, we may take a clue from the title of Carl Henry’s six-volume series, *God, Revelation and Authority*, and suggest that Henry probably would give God first priority in the development of his theological system. A doctrine of revelation presupposes the existence of God, so that we would think that a doctrine of God would take priority. “Is revelation or is the eternal God the basic axiom of the Christian system of truth?” Henry queries as he opens the discussion of the doctrine of God in *God, Revelation and Authority*, volume 5.³ After demonstrating that Karl Barth is ambiguous on

¹Carl F. H. Henry, *Toward a Recovery of Christian Belief* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1990), 56.

²Ibid. One entire chapter, “Presuppositions and Theological Method,” in this work consists of an ardent defense of presuppositionalism and an answer to the criticisms of *GRA*. Ibid., 35-60.

³Ibid., 5:10.

the topic, in some passages stating that revelation takes priority and in others stating that the doctrine of God takes precedence, Henry quotes his mentor, Gordon H. Clark, as saying: “The eternal God precedes his acts of revelation in time.”¹ Then he sets forth unequivocally his solution to the above dilemma: “The living God is the original Christian axiom, both ontically and noetically, for God discloses himself in revelation as the God who is eternally there.”² God is introduced as the “self-revealing God,” thus indicating that he is one who by nature reveals to created beings information about himself and his actions. From a practical standpoint, however, the doctrine of revelation is on equal footing with the doctrine of God as the fundamental axiom of theology.³ For Henry, one cannot talk about God without talking simultaneously about his revelation. Hence, we start with Henry’s concept of God as it relates to the development of a theology of revelation.

Critical Aspects of the Doctrine of God

The Sovereignty and Mystery of God

As a Calvinistic theologian, one would expect that Henry would emphasize God’s sovereignty, that is, his absolute control over the universe as his created domain and his

¹Ibid.

²Ibid. Grenz and Olson (291-292) differ somewhat with this conclusion: “For him [Henry], the foundation for theology can be nothing other than the revelation of God as deposited in the Scriptures.” The statement is made within the context of the discussion of authority, which gives a certain validity to the statement. When it comes to authority, there is no surer foundation than that of Scripture. See parallel statements in Grenz, *Renewing the Center*, 93, 95.

³One can resolve the dilemma as to whether God or revelation is the starting point in Henry’s evangelical theology by suggesting that chronologically speaking the concept of a living God precedes the granting of his revelation, but practically speaking, from the standpoint of the human observer, one must start with God’s revelation in Scripture, his most complete revelation, and move from there to an understanding of the doctrine of God. The chronological and practical starting points are distinct, but complementary.

providential supervision of his creatures and all events in the world. But for him the issues extend into the philosophical realm, when he observes that “the sovereignty of God has become for twentieth-century thought one of the most troublesome aspects of the Christian view of deity.”¹ This issue is engendered because of the problem of evil in the world, not because of the complexity of the world in its relation to the immensity of the universe. If God is all-powerful, why should evil exist in his created domain?

While noting that the Bible does not use the word omnipotence—the closest term is “Almighty” (Gr. *pantokrator*)—Henry finds the concept of God’s unlimited power well substantiated in Scripture. “God’s power is revealed to man by his divine creation and preservation of the cosmos,” he concludes from reading Ps 19 and Rom 1:20.² He agrees with Brunner who states that God’s power means “God’s power over the universe,” which is to say his omnipotence, “always means exercising power over something.”³ What distinguishes the Hebrew faith in Yahweh from all other ancient religions is Yahweh’s control over all aspects of life—from the cradle to the tomb.⁴

Closely related to the sovereignty of God is the subject of God’s providential care

¹*GRA*, 5:307. For a discussion of this issue see “The Sovereignty of God.” *Ibid.*, 5:307-330. God’s sovereignty had been previously treated at length under the title of “The Sovereign Fatherhood of God,” in Carl Henry, *Notes on the Doctrine of God* (Boston: W. A. Wilde, 1948), 92-102, where he unites the seeming disparate concepts of God’s fatherhood and his kingship.

²*GRA*, 5:308.

³*GRA*, 5:311. But Henry is critical of Brunner’s approach that views God only in relational terms, not in terms of his very essence.

⁴*GRA*, 3:308. This observation is made within a discussion of wisdom in Proverbs.

over the world and its creatures, including humankind.¹ The subtitle of Henry's systematic treatment of the doctrine of God in *God, Revelation and Authority*, volumes 5 and 6, is "God Who Stands and Stays." He explains why he has chosen this particular subtitle: "God who *stands*—who eternally exists—and who *stoops*—first in voluntarily creating the finite universe and then in voluntarily redeeming his fallen creation—is also God who *stays* to preserve and to renew and finally to consummate his purposive creation."²

Preservation and consummation are the key elements of divine providence. But providence should be clearly distinguished from God's action in creating the world. Henry laments the fact that Walter Eichrodt characterizes the Old Testament view of providence as *creatio continua*, or an ongoing act of creation, as does Karl Heim as well.³

One of the great evidences of God's sovereignty is his power at work in creation and in providence, two quite different activities. As pointed out by Henry, "the Bible clearly distinguishes God's preservation of the universe from his creation of it, although both creation and preservation are works of divine omnipotence."⁴ Modern society eliminates the supernatural, including all miracles, and the power of prayer to change lives and events, which is one reason why "contemporary thought opposes the doctrine of divine

¹Interestingly the following two critical studies on Carl Henry fail to include a substantial discussion of Henry's incorporation of sovereignty into his doctrine of God: Thomas R. McNeal, "A Critical Analysis of the Doctrine of God in the Theology of Carl F. H. Henry" (Ph.D. thesis, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1986), 180-183, cf. 288-303, which lightly touches upon God's omnipotence in contrast to dwelling at length on his providence; and Bob E. Patterson, *Carl F. H. Henry*, 149-159, which focuses heavily upon God's providence, but not on his sovereignty as such. Of course, one can argue that his providence is an evidence that he is sovereign.

²*GRA*, 6:455, emphasis original. Bob Patterson aptly observes: "The 'God who stands, stoops and stays' could well have been the subtitle for Henry's Volumes V and VI." *Carl F. H. Henry*, 128.

³*GRA*, 6:456.

⁴*Ibid.*

providence more than almost any other biblical doctrine.”¹ The marvels of science, technology, and modern medicine have obviated the need for miraculous intervention. Divine providence is undermined by neo-orthodoxy, existentialism, and process theology and is entirely negated by Marxism. Henry not only answers the contemporary objections to providence, but he turns the objections into a positive note by emphasizing God’s hand in history and in nature through general revelation, although not going as far as natural theology.² The concept of divine intervention in the affairs of humankind, even in the lives of the unconverted, is an integral part of God’s universal revelation.

The Knowability of God

The question is whether God is capable of being known due to the limitations of the human mind or the sinfulness of the human character. Certainly the mystery surrounding God will forever shroud his fullness from the comprehension of any of his created beings. “Finite man cannot exhaustively define the nature and activity of the infinite God. The great creeds of Christendom all affirm this in their statements on divine incomprehensibility,” avers Thomas R. McNeal in summarizing Henry.³ Henry elaborates further on this point by stating that “God’s incomprehensibility in no way implies God’s

¹*GRA*, 6:463. The contemporary mind has objected to the miraculous on the basis of the “*absolute regularity of nature*,” according to Carl Henry, *Remaking the Modern Mind* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1948, c1946), 82, emphasis original. This will be discussed in greater detail below.

²Henry chides G. C. Berkouwer for stating that apart from the Christian faith there can be “no true knowledge of God, nor of His Providence.’ If that were true, then unregenerate mankind cannot be held culpable for rejecting the light of general revelation. While general revelation is an incomplete disclosure, it is nonetheless a universal revelation, one that sinful man blurs.” *GRA*, 6:480. Henry’s rejection of natural theology is explained in *Notes on the Doctrine of God*, 66-67.

³McNeal, 186.

unknowability, however.”¹ The fact that man bears from creation the image of God means that he has the rational ability to conceive of deity, even though his capacities are finite; God is knowable by virtue of creation.² Thus Henry rejects the idea proposed by neo-orthodoxy that the infinite gap between God and man will keep the converted from having an objective knowledge of God and will prevent the unconverted from being able to have an awareness of God apart from special revelation.

The Timelessness of God

Ever since early Greek philosophers posed the question, scholars and theologians have debated whether the eternity of deity means that God lives outside of time or within time. Does eternity signify “timelessness” or “unending time”? The issue of whether God dwells outside or within time has been dwelt with extensively by Carl Henry with the result that he sides with the former option, God dwelling outside of time.³ First, he reviews the various theological attacks on the traditional teaching of God’s timelessness, whether from neo-orthodoxy, process theology, or modern Protestantism. Second, he examines the biblical teaching on the question of God’s eternity with the somewhat surprising conclusion

¹*GRA*, 5:375.

²Henry proposes the following: “If man bears the image of a rational God, and by creation is made for the knowledge and obedience of his Maker, then the scriptural representations of God, however tapered they may be to man’s finite faculties, nonetheless provide human consciousness with truths that adequately depict the Creator.” *GRA*, 5:381.

³Three chapters in *GRA* are devoted to the subject: “Divine Timelessness or Unlimited Duration?” *GRA*, 5:235-251; “The Modern Attack on the Timeless God,” 5:251-267; and “Divine Timelessness and Divine Omniscience,” 5:268-285. McNeal, in “A Critical Analysis of the Doctrine of God in the Theology of Carl F. H. Henry,” fails to devote a section of his dissertation to this significant topic.

that “the Bible’s explicit teaching about the nature of divine eternity . . . is inconclusive.”¹

And third, he discovers that from an examination of God’s omnipotence the logical inference is that God must be timeless if he is to be omnipotent.² One of the greatest challenges to the omnipotence of God within evangelicalism is process theology, which views God as self-limiting his foreknowledge, that is, his omniscience, as part of the concept of a God who is less than omnipotent.³

Henry makes explicit his siding with the classical view of God’s timelessness, as opposed to “the popular notion” that eternity is simply an extension or multiplication of present-day time. He muses:

Almost invariably the popular notion of God’s eternity is synonymous with endlessness of temporal existence. On first impression this notion of the deity’s infinite duration in time is plausible enough. Yet, as Lewis H. Farnell notes, both classic and modern religious philosophy show marked preference for the alternative view that God is a Being who

¹*GRA*, 5:268. Elsewhere he notes the paucity of “relevant biblical passages” and the lack of “philological resources” for clarifying the issue of God’s timelessness. *GRA*, 5:242.

²This three-phased approach to God’s timelessness is developed in three chapters in *GRA*, 5:235-285. Elsewhere Henry adds a fourth argument for God’s timelessness and that is his omniscience. “Divine omniscience implies that God knows all things in a single whole, independent of a temporal succession of ideas.” Carl F. H. Henry, “Eternity,” *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, 2nd ed., 398. But he does not pursue this argument further.

³When launching his formal critique of process theology in “The Resurgence of Process Philosophy,” *GRA*, 6:52-75, Henry does not give any indication that he is aware of a distinct drift of neo-evangelical theologians toward the camp of process theologians, Clark Pinnock being one outstanding example, who has more recently contributed to the volume *The Openness of God: A Biblical Challenge to the Traditional Understanding of God* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1994) and has edited the volume *Searching for an Adequate God: A Dialogue between Process and Free Will Theists*, ed. John B. Cobb and Clark Pinnock (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000). For an assessment of the impact of process theology upon evangelicalism see Robert A. Morey, *Battle of the Gods: The Gathering Storm in Modern Evangelicalism* (Southbridge, MA: Crown, 1989), and John P. Nyquist, “An Evaluation of the Inroads of Process Theology into Contemporary Evangelicalism” (Th.D. dissertation, Dallas Theological Seminary, 1984). On the other hand, Henry continually warned evangelicals of the dangers of adopting process theology. For example, note his two-part critique of process theology, “The Reality and Identity of God,” *Christianity Today*, 14 March 1969, 3-6; 28 March 1969, 12-16.

transcends time or is outside time.¹

Then Henry continues by making it clear that he holds to the historic or classical view of God's timelessness: "The God of Christian orthodoxy is timelessly eternal as mainstream theologians like Augustine, Anselm, Aquinas, the Protestant Reformers, and in fact, most Christian theologians affirm."² A major reason why Henry cannot accept anything other than the classical view of the doctrine of God is that he feels that any attempts to restore the "biblical view" of a doctrine of God that depicts him as being other than timeless has been tainted by modern theologies, such as process theology.³ He finds no evidence, for example, that the biblical words for eternity (Heb. *'olam* and Gr. *aionios*) denote eternity as unending time.⁴

A somewhat different approach was pursued by Henry in addressing the timelessness of God in his 1948 work, *Notes on the Doctrine of God*.⁵ After pointing out that the Christian view of God's timelessness is distinctly different from the Greek view of his timelessness, he notes that a doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo* means that God creates not only space, but also time, thus implying that God is above time. Yet the biblical testimony is that God works continuously with time and through time, one example being prophetic

¹*GRA*, 5:239.

²*GRA*, 5:239.

³Henry detects a variety of influences that lead to the abandoning of God's timelessness: "The motivation for modifying the traditional doctrine of divine timelessness derives from many influences: hurried ascription of the medieval view to Greek sources; larger preoccupation with time in modern philosophy and contemporary technology; writings of process theologians and of salvation history theologians; . . . and certain philosophical problems thought to be associated with the inherited view of God's eternity." *GRA*, 5:241.

⁴The biblical terms are discussed in *GRA*, 5:242-249 as well as in "Eternity," 396-398.

⁵See the chapter, "Time and Eternity," *Notes on the Doctrine of God*, 124-136.

reckoning. For Henry, writing in 1948, the incarnation is the supreme example that God indeed works within time, for the simple fact that he sent his Son at “due time” to be born of a woman (Titus 1:3). The incarnation is the evidence that God is sovereign over time, not the servant to time. Creation also is evidence that God can intervene in time and has power over it. The sum and substance is that Henry affirms that “God is supreme over time not by annulling it, but by working out His purposes within it.”¹

The Doctrine of God as a Foundation for Revelation

Whatever Carl Henry expounds upon in his doctrine of God as found in *God, Revelation and Authority* has been shaped intensely by his doctrine of revelation. One could consider this from another viewpoint and state that his doctrine of God has been selectively treated so that the elements in that doctrine which best support his doctrine of revelation are emphasized. The sovereignty of God is critical to Henry (and to all conservative Reformed and Baptist theologians) because it provides a rationale for God’s intervention in the process of the reception and recording of Scripture, such that Scripture is not merely “man’s words,” but indeed “God’s words.” Recent evangelical scholarship has pointed to the fact that as evangelicalism is moving away from a doctrine of divine election toward a free-will position, hence away from God’s absolute sovereignty in the affairs of humankind, then the impact of one’s doctrine of inspiration is felt, leading to a

¹Ibid., 133. This approach of uniting incarnation and creation together as evidence that God can intervene into a time-bound universe in a miraculous way is briefly touched upon in *GRA*, 5:257, where Henry asserts: “I insist, of course, that the eternal Logos of God stepped into history as God-man; this is a central emphasis of the New Testament.” Likewise in creation God could step into history without abandoning his timelessness.

movement towards partial inerrancy.¹ The foreknowledge of God manifests itself in the prophetic passages of Scripture, so that foreknowledge is affected once absolute sovereignty is either diminished or entirely rejected. Henry concludes: “The theme of divine knowledge therefore necessarily involves consideration also of divine sovereignty.”²

One’s concept of the timelessness of God also has a direct impact on one’s concept of inspiration. Clark Pinnock is set forth as an example of one who started questioning “God’s timelessness, immutability and impassibility” in the 1970s, followed by his “restatements of divine omniscience and sovereignty” in the 1980s at the same time that he underwent his shift away from inerrancy.³ Only a God who stands outside of time and who is omnipotent can intervene within time and can direct a process of inspired revelation that leads to an absolutely trustworthy record—at least in the thinking of Henry.

Once his view of the doctrine of God as it relates to his doctrine of revelation has been clarified, then those aspects of his doctrine of revelation that pertain to his doctrine of creation will be discussed. I will especially be concentrating upon his “fifteen theses.”

¹The evangelical shift towards a moderate or soft position on inerrancy has been accompanied by the impact of process theology, especially the concept of the “openness of God.” The doctrines of predestination, perseverance of the saints, limited atonement, etc., have been modified as a result, thus leading toward the concept of a God who allows more free will for humankind in the matter of salvation and greater free will for the biblical author in the choice of words for Scripture. One of the more heated debates within evangelicalism at the start of the twenty-first century is concerning “open theism.” See Bruce A. Ware, “Defining Evangelicalism’s Boundaries Theologically: Is Open Theism Evangelical?” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 45 (2002): 193-212. Clark Pinnock is an outstanding example of this evangelical shift towards openness theology and away from strict inerrancy. See Barry L. Callen, *Clark H. Pinnock: Journey Toward Renewal* (Nappanee, IN: Evangel, 2000), 101ff., and Ray C. Roennfeldt, *Clark H. Pinnock on Biblical Authority: An Evolving Position* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1993), especially the foreword written by Pinnock, xv-xxiii.

²*GRA*, 5:285.

³Nathan MacDonald, “From Augustine to Arminius, and Beyond,” in *Reconstructing Theology: A Critical Assessment of the Theology of Clark Pinnock* (Carlisle, Cumbria: Paternoster Press, 2000), 21, 22. See also Roennfeldt, *Clark H. Pinnock on Biblical Authority*.

Henry's Doctrine of Revelation

Five Critical Aspects of the Doctrine of Revelation

Carl Henry's doctrine of revelation is best explicated in volumes 2, 3, and 4 of *God, Revelation and Authority* (1976-1979).¹ These three volumes (along with the others in the set) are considered by scholars to have been Henry's magnum opus, having taken twelve years to produce starting in 1967.² These three volumes are centered around "fifteen theses" that set forth succinctly the rationale for his doctrine of revelation (see Appendix B for a complete listing of the fifteen theses).

The fifteen theses can be easily grouped around five major topics answering the following questions about revelation: Why? What? Who? How? and What for? The first three of the fifteen theses introduce the belief that revelation is a divinely initiated activity, given for the benefit of human beings, that ultimately preserves God's transcendence.³ These three factors together demonstrate the great need for divine revelation, and answer the question, *Why* does God reveal himself through this process called "revelation"? Man does not search out God through this process, but it is God who seeks man and communicates with him throughout the process.

Theses 4 through 7 deal with defining the nature of divine revelation and answer the

¹*GRA: God Who Speaks and Shows, Fifteen Theses*, 3-4 (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1976-1979). While our major concentration in the following discussion will be on these three volumes, additional material will be incorporated into the discussion from Henry's other writings.

²*GRA*, 5:9. For a recent evaluation of Henry's *GRA*, see Grenz, *Renewing the Center*, 93.

³The first three theses are elaborated upon in *GRA*, 2:17-68.

question, *What* exactly is divine revelation?¹ Revelation is defined as a unity, not a plurality, of sources of information about God and his purposes for humankind. Because it is a unity, then there can be no independent sources of revelation outside of God's written word, the Bible, and the incarnated Word, Jesus Christ; there is no natural theology, although there is general revelation in nature, history, and providence that can be perceived and appreciated by humankind due to the "image of God" in man. Revelation is historical and thus is objective, rather than subjective, yet it is also personal because it is communicated by a Person to persons.

The next two theses, 8 and 9, put the proper perspective on revelation by focusing upon the central Personhood of divine revelation; thus it asks and answers the question, *Who* is the object of revelation?² The grand climax of revelation is Jesus Christ Himself, who is God incarnate in the flesh and the source of all revelation. Christ also is the eternal and universal Logos, which communicates with humankind through the mind as part of the image of God, as set forth in thesis 5.³ Theses 8 and 9 raise the question of whether God can communicate through Christ the Word in a direct encounter as proposed by neo-orthodox theology.

Theses 10, 11, and 12 are designed to show *how* God communicates—the methods and means he employs in making a revelation to his children on earth.⁴ The first point he makes is that God communicates rationally and verbally; that is, all divine revelation found

¹Theses 4 through 7 are elaborated upon in *GRA*, 2:69-334.

²Theses 8 and 9 are found in *GRA*, 3:9-247.

³See chap. 10 in *GRA*, 2:124-142, "The Image of God in Man."

⁴Theses 10 through 12 are expounded in *GRA*, 3:248-487 and 4:7-475.

in Scripture has been communicated in word-form, not just in concepts. This is Henry's answer to "encounter theology." The Bible is the exclusive repository of this revelation apart from tradition or personal experience, and it is the work of the Holy Spirit that both inspires the original revelation and illuminates that revelation in the mind of the inquiring searcher.

The final three theses, 13, 14, and 15, are designed to answer the question, *What is the purpose for divine revelation?*¹ What benefits does it bring ultimately, both to the individual and to the church? Henry concludes that the benefits are, first of all, personal salvation for the individual; second, the experiencing of God's kingdom on earth through the church; and third, the ultimate manifestation of the kingdom through the judgment of evil and the establishment of righteousness. The progression here is a movement from the individual (i.e., humankind) to the church and ultimately to the kingdom of God. Thus Henry's doctrine of revelation culminates with a discussion of eschatology. The setting up of God's kingdom on earth is the capstone demonstration of the efficacy of God's written revelation, or the power of the Word within and through the words of the human authors.

Before examining these five major aspects of Henry's fifteen theses, I begin by defining what Henry means by "revelation." His concept of revelation is forged from the fires of conflict with competing theologies of the twentieth century, especially the views of neo-orthodoxy. Hence he offers the following definition: "Revelation is that activity of the supernatural God whereby he communicates information essential for man's present and

¹Theses 13 through 15 are found in *GRA*, 4:476-614.

future destiny.”¹ By contrast, neo-orthodoxy takes the position that no actual information or statements of fact are communicated in the divine-human encounter.

1) The Need and Purpose for Revelation

The Challenge of God’s Transcendence

Divine revelation is absolutely essential in the thinking of Henry for two reasons: First, the transcendence of God places him out of the reach and observation of humankind, and second, man’s own limitations, such as his sinfulness and the limitations of the human mind, make it unlikely that he can discover God through his own efforts. While the problems are twofold, they are rooted in one common denominator—the great gulf between Creator and creature, between a holy God and unholy humans. The biblical record is clear that God’s ways cannot be known through human effort alone.² How then can a hidden, transcendent God be discovered and discoursed upon by fallible human beings? Henry’s answer is that nothing can be known about Deity unless he reveals it to his creatures. “Our knowledge of God’s nature and purposes is limited by his disclosure; not a morsel of information can be confidently asserted about God and his will beyond what he has chosen to reveal.”³ Even the fact that God exists cannot be ascertained without divine insight.

¹*GRA*, 1:457. Elsewhere he states that “the term is used primarily of God’s communication to humans of divine truth, that is his manifestation of himself or his will.” Carl F. H. Henry, “Revelation, Special” *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, 2nd ed., 1021. These definitions may be interpreted as equating revelation with Scripture, but elsewhere Henry argues that “the terms ‘revelation’ and ‘Scripture’ are not synonymous. No era of Christian thought has made the egregious error of equating them absolutely,” based upon the fact that the living Logos has always been differentiated from the written Logos. *Idem*, “Divine Revelation and the Bible,” in *Inspiration and Interpretation*, ed. John F. Walvoord (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1957), 254.

²Deut 29:29; Isa 40:13, 28. Cited in *GRA*, 2:49. One could also add Job 11:7: “Canst thou by searching find out God? Canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection?”

³*GRA*, 2:49.

“Apart from divine initiative man could not perceive even God’s existence, let alone his perfections and purposes.”¹

God’s hiddenness can become a major challenge to the evangelical understanding of the doctrine of revelation. First, if evangelicalism is the heir to the Reformation, as it claims to be, then it has inherited a firm conviction that God reveals himself through nature in a process known as general revelation. Even if all the Bibles in the world were banned or burned, then humankind would learn from the book of nature that there is a God who is all-powerful and all-caring, according to Reformation thought. Thus the challenge is to be able to harmonize God’s transcendence and hiddenness with the fact that we can learn at least a little about God through his handiwork. Second, the hiddenness of God needs to be differentiated from the false concepts of gods held by mystery religions, leading to the idea that only those who are initiated can have a correct understanding of God or gods. Is Christianity then a religion of the initiated and of secret knowledge? Third, the hiddenness of God needs to be differentiated from the concept advocated by neo-orthodox and certain existentialist theologies that God, often defined as the Wholly Other, is so far removed from humanity that man cannot obtain objective knowledge about God, but can only deduce the reality of God through personal encounter or mystical experience.

The Emphasis on Divine Initiative

Henry directly addresses the three challenges to evangelicalism revolving around

¹*GRA*, 2:18. This statement appears at first to eliminate the possibility of even general revelation leading one to a belief in God, but Henry allows for general revelation on the basis that God takes the initiative in that revelation. Henry goes on to quote the Berkeley Version of Job 11:7, “Can you fathom God’s secrets?” and then cites the RSV of 1 Cor 1:21, “The world did not know God through wisdom.”

the belief in both the transcendence and hiddenness of God. The challenge of harmonizing a hidden God with the fact of natural revelation (or general revelation) is resolved with the understanding that all revelation involves divine initiative, as opposed to human effort. This is brought out in a portion of the quote given above—Henry’s conclusion that “apart from divine initiative man could not perceive even God’s existence.”¹ The absolute nature of God means that he is the absolute determinant of what is to be made known about him. In Henry’s own words, “The very nature of divine reality and truth are such that, apart from divine initiative and disclosure, they remain intrinsically hidden. The God of the Bible is wholly determinative in respect to revelation.”² On this point Henry finds some common ground with Karl Barth. “In Barth’s words, the God of the Bible is ‘the God to whom there is no way and bridge, of whom we could not say or have to say one single word, had He not of His own initiative met us as *Deus revelatus*.’”³ The use of the word “revelation” (Gr. *apokalupsis*, or “unveiling”) itself implies divine activity in making God known to others. “Revelation in the Bible refers first and foremost to what God himself unveils and that which would otherwise remain concealed.”⁴ God’s revelation in nature is not forever hidden, but has been open to all generations through all times in all places of the earth to behold; that is, “God is universally and ongoingly revealed in his creation.”⁵ This

¹GRA, 2:18.

²GRA, 2:19.

³GRA, 2:18. Citation from *Church Dogmatics*, I/1, p. 368.

⁴GRA, 2:21.

⁵GRA, 2:22. Ps 19 and Rom 1:17ff. are referenced here. In advocating the validity of general revelation Carl Henry is taking exception to Karl Barth’s rejection of general revelation as a means of gaining any knowledge about God. For a fuller understanding of Barth’s view on the subject, one is directed to his *Nein! Antwort an Emil Brunner* (Munich: C. Kaiser, 1934), in the well-known Barth/Brunner

qualitative difference between natural revelation and the revelation found in Scripture then resolves some of the issues raised by a belief in the hiddenness of God.

Another potential difficulty encountered by a belief in God's hiddenness is the concept that Christianity is a type of mystery religion whereby only the initiated can have full and complete access to God. Henry responds by saying that all mystery cults assume "that no intrinsic gulf exists between God and man."¹ The religion of the New Testament is not a religion of secrecy and closely guarded knowledge, for the word used for mystery, Greek *mustērion*, although having a root meaning of "being closed" or "hidden," actually is employed by Paul "to signify what God himself has now made plain by divine communication."² Christ is the unveiling of God in human flesh, that is, "God manifest in the flesh."³ The mystery religions of ancient times all base their beliefs upon the idea that man seeks out God, rather than God seeking man and revealing himself to humankind.⁴ One of the key characteristics of biblical revelation is that the initiative is always with God.

The third challenge of evangelical theology in its emphasis on the transcendence of God is the possibility that God reveals no objective, concrete knowledge about himself in the act of revelation. Thus the deposit of revelation, the Bible, becomes a witness of man's experience of God and a record of man's impressions of God clothed in humanly derived

debate on the validity of general revelation. For Henry's analysis of this debate, see *GRA*, 2:88-90.

¹*GRA*, 2:19.

²*GRA*, 2:20. This conclusion is based upon 1 Cor 2:9-10. The emphasis is that what once was hidden has now been made open and plain through Christ.

³1 Tim 3:16, cf. 1 John 1:2 and 2 Pet 1:20.

⁴*GRA*, 2:20.

concepts. This has important implications not only for a doctrine of revelation but also for a doctrine of creation; for if God reveals no objective knowledge about himself in Scripture, then likewise God reveals no objective knowledge about his works or his great acts of creation in his Word.

Henry's answer to this challenge is the doctrine of the image of God as it relates to the doctrine of revelation. Traditionally, the image of God is treated first as part of the doctrine of creation, and then ultimately as part of the doctrine of man, but Henry begins with creation and then moves to the doctrine of revelation as the place where the image of God serves its most useful purpose. Henry observes that many twentieth-century theologians, such as Reinhold Niebuhr and Roger Hazelton, have emphasized the "self-transcendence" of the human spirit that becomes the bridge spanning the seemingly impassable gulf between God and man. He dismisses the idea of self-transcendence as "pure nonsense" because of its inability to define a describable place where one's selfhood ends and where a divine otherness begins.¹ Again, as in Henry's rebuttal of the idea that Christianity is another mystery religion, he stresses that biblical religion is distinguished from all other religions in that its God is a "self-revealing God, who in contrast with the static gods of other religions, speaks and acts intelligibly."² It is a religion in which God takes the initiative in the process of revealing himself, thus revelation need not be posited upon the self-transcendence of the person. While acknowledging the hiddenness of God, Christianity is a religion in which God takes the initiative both in the act of creation and in

¹*GRA*, 2:61.

²*GRA*, 2:62.

the act of redemption. Thus revelation is needed to explain the reality of both events, which cannot be discovered with man's unaided reason.¹ In this manner Henry has offered an intelligible, biblically based, and philosophically based answer to the question, *Why* is an objective, information-laden, divine revelation necessary?

2) The Nature of Revelation

Divine revelation comes to the human race in a variety of forms, so that it is appropriate to ask the question, *What* is the true form of revelation? And secondly, if there are several valid forms of revelation, *what* are the types of revelation by which God chooses to communicate? Are some types of revelation on a higher level of authority than other types? These questions are addressed in these 4 through 7.

First, this study examines the varieties of revelation from the standpoint of the unity of revelation, and second, it focuses upon general revelation, and third, it focuses upon special revelation.

The Unity of Divine Revelation

If God is a unity, then one would expect that his revelation would be a unity as well. How is it that God has spoken in a variety of modes of revelation, sometimes viewed as competing modes, when he is one God? The unity of God's personhood appears to undermine the concept that revelation comes by a variety of means. Henry answers the above question by starting out with Walter Eichrodt's interpretation of the Jewish *Shema*:

¹Henry summarizes the need for revelation to explain both creation and incarnation: "Only because the living God by cognitive disclosure lifts the veil, as it were, on the inner life of the Godhead do we know that from all eternity he decreed to create the temporal universe, proposed the incarnation of the Logos, freely elected fallen sinners to salvation, and much else." "The Living God of the Bible," *The Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 1(Spring 1997): 16-31.

“Yahweh our God is one single God,” which means that he is not to be divided into a variety of divinities and powers, as with the Baals of Old Testament times.¹ The fact that God is creator of all means that all of history is under his direction and supervision, and thus history is “one and undivided.”² If God’s lordship over creation were divided among divinities, as in ancient Near Eastern cosmologies, then it raises the possibility that God’s revelation also is divided and fragmented. That Henry denies.

The problem of the unity of God’s revelation is acknowledged by Henry when he states that “God does not reveal himself in only one way,” but rather in “various forms of revelation.”³ Revelation is often divided into general and special revelation—the revelation of God in nature and in Scripture, respectively. In the words of Henry, general revelation is “the disclosure of God’s eternal power and glory through nature and history,” and special revelation is “the disclosure of God’s redemptive purpose and work.”⁴ In other words, all revelation can be subdivided as “general or universal (i.e., revelation in nature, history, reason, and conscience) and special or particular (i.e., redemptive revelation conveyed by wondrous acts and words).”⁵ The two are often elevated in opposition to one another, as if they are two independent means for knowing God. The method for discovering truth in

¹GRA, 2:69.

²GRA, 2:71. This terminology, “one and undivided,” is taken from Robert J. Blaikie, *“Secular Christianity” and God Who Acts* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1970), 146.

³GRA, 2:73. The three major means of revelation are God’s creation and created works, Christ as God’s Son, and the ultimate revelation in the eschatological kingdom.

⁴GRA, 1:223. Henry continues by noting that Scripture is the only inspired form of revelation. Elsewhere he includes the first advent of Christ in special revelation: “Special revelation involves unique historical events of divine deliverance climaxed by the incarnation, atonement, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.” “Divine Revelation and the Bible,” 254. Special revelation is broader than Scripture.

⁵“Revelation, Special” 1021.

nature is the scientific method, and this method is closely related to a variety of historical-critical methods applied to the study of Scripture, since they all had their origin in the Enlightenment.¹ Henry wishes to bring general and special revelation into a close union, not through the use of a common methodology for their study, but through an emphasis of the common Source for both, that of the Creator-Redeemer God.

On the unity of all revelation Henry is emphatic: "In no way can the distinction between general and special revelation imply dual or rival revelations. . . . Special revelation does not annul general revelation but rather republishes, vivifies and supplements it."² While nature provides a knowledge of divine operation through general revelation, the "Bible nowhere espouses a 'natural theology'" whereby a second pathway leading to God may be found.³ The unity between all forms of revelation is maintained not only in the one God who is the source of all revelation, but also in the unity of the truth that

¹Edgar Krentz, *The Historical-Critical Method* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975), 16ff. The reality of the supernatural cannot be addressed by the historical-critical methods, just as the existence of God and the possibility of miracles are outside the scope of the scientific method.

²*GRA*, 2:72. Elsewhere Henry makes the same point: "Despite the distinction of general and special revelation, God's revelation is nonetheless a unity, and it must not be artificially sundered. Even prior to the fall, Adam in Eden was instructed by specially revealed statutes (e.g., to be fruitful and multiply)." "Revelation, Special," 1021.

³*GRA*, 2:73. Henry in this context rejects the 1870 declaration of the Vatican Council, which suggests that man can reach a valid knowledge of God "through the natural light of reason." He also critiques Quakers who "appeal to an inner light" and Seventh-day Adventists, who "consider Ellen G. White an inspired and inerrant prophet," on the same basis that these manifestations break down the unity of divine revelation. *GRA*, 2:52. It is not surprising, then, that Henry rejects "natural law theory" on the basis that the Reformers rejected such in reaction against Thomism. See Carl F. H. Henry, *Gods of This Age or God of the Ages?* (Nashville, TN: Broadman and Holman, 1992), 238; compare with his extended discussion of natural-law theory, *Twilight of a Great Civilization: The Drift toward Neo-Paganism* (Westchester, IL: Crossway Books, 1988), 152-154.

is the content and object of revelation.¹ The unity of general and special revelation has implications for a doctrine of creation, in that one valid source of information for an understanding of creation would be general revelation, based upon its close relationship to special revelation. Henry's view, as will be developed later, is that general revelation does not offer information about creation that is independent of the revelation in Scripture. The two revelations are the product of one absolutely unified Source.

The Varieties of Revelation

Once he has reached the conclusion that all revelation is a unity, Carl Henry is ready to describe the many varieties of revelation's modes. In introducing these varieties, he sets forth thesis 5: "Not only the occurrence of divine revelation but its very nature, content and variety are exclusively God's determination."² The responsibility for the variety of its modes is placed directly on God himself and thus is not under man's direction and initiative. Henry speaks of "a vast range of descriptive concepts, . . . of diverse modes, and of various aspects of God's revelation."³ He summarizes this "vast range" of revelatory modes as follows: "God has revealed himself in numerous modes—in nature, conscience and history, in prophetic and apostolic utterances and writings, in theophanies, in the plagues of Egypt and the parting of the Red Sea, in the larger history of Israel, and in

¹"The unity of revelational content is not to be found only in the living God who stands at the center of all revelation, as indeed he does, but also in the truth conveyed by the God of revelation." *GRA*, 2:74. Elsewhere Henry speaks of "one comprehensive divine purpose" uniting general and special revelation. *GRA*, 2:98-99.

²*GRA*, 2:77.

³*GRA*, 2:79. He obtains the following list of the various manifestations of revelation from Emil Brunner: angels, dreams, oracles such as Urim and Thummim, visions, locutions, natural phenomena, historical events, providence, and words and deeds of prophets. *GRA*, 2:80.

the life and death and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth.”¹ To this list of revelatory modes, Henry adds “a general anthropological revelation in the mind and conscience of man.”² Even the unbeliever or pagan has the divine law written upon their heart in keeping with Acts 17:27 and Rom 2:14-16.³ This revelation is universal according to John 1:9 (RSV), describing the Logos as the One who “enlightens every man.” Thus general revelation is inseparable from special revelation, in that the former provides light to all humanity and the latter provides the possibility of salvation to all. “A general revelation of the Creator in his creation is integral to Christian doctrine upon Scripture and beyond that upon the factualities of the universe,” being based upon a long history of tradition within Christendom and upon the constant disclosure of a cosmic reality, according to Rom 1:19-21.⁴

The content of general revelation is a greater understanding of the characteristics of God. “In brief, the living God reveals himself in and through nature.”⁵ His power and deity are most often mentioned by Henry as components of God’s revelation in

¹GRA, 2:80.

²GRA, 2:87. Elsewhere in his *God, Revelation and Authority*, he divides “general revelation” into its four major aspects: God “addresses humankind universally through nature, history, and human reason and conscience.” *GRA*, 3:405-406, cf. *GRA*, 4:594. This list has remained essentially the same here (published in 1979) as in his earlier publications (from 1957 and 1948 respectively): “Hebrew-Christian theology emphasizes as an indispensable corollary the general divine revelation given in nature, history, and conscience.” “Divine Revelation and the Bible,” 254. “The Biblical view . . . insists on a general revelation—that God discloses Himself in His works of nature, history and man’s moral consciousness.” *Notes on the Doctrine of God*, 66.

³GRA, 2:84-85.

⁴GRA, 2:83-84. The corresponding OT passage to Rom 1 and 2 that lays the foundation for general revelation is Psalm 19. Other biblical passages that give support to general revelation are the “nature psalms” and passages in Acts, such as 14:17 and 17:26-28. Thus general revelation has a strong biblical basis in both Old and New Testaments. *GRA*, 2:84.

⁵GRA, 2:97.

nature—concepts taken directly from Rom 1:18-20.¹ In addition, God’s will, purpose, divinity, eternity, wisdom, omniscience, and transcendent majesty can all be determined through general revelation.²

If general and special revelation are a unity, then do they have equal authority in unveiling truths about God and his will? Henry, as we have already seen, views the two types of revelation on a continuum in the revelation process and as having unity in light of the unity of Deity, but he sees a danger in subsuming one under the other, either general revelation under special, or special under general. “Special revelation must not be demoted to an inferior position within general revelation, nor may general revelation be stripped of universal significance by special revelation.”³ Nor should general revelation serve as a foundation upon which the “capstone” of special revelation is constructed, for it opens wide the door to criticism of general revelation by unbelieving philosophers.⁴

¹Henry usually prefers the RSV rendering of Rom 1:20: “Ever since the creation of the world his [God’s] invisible nature, namely, his eternal power and deity, has been clearly perceived in the things that have been made.”

²“God makes known his character and will not only in general or universal revelation, but specifically in his salvific disclosure to his covenant people.” Carl Henry, *Christian Countermoves in a Decadent Culture* (Portland, OR: Multnomah Press, 1986), 14-15; cf. *GRA*, 6:111.

³*GRA*, 2:90. He agrees with Berkouwer that general revelation enhances special revelation by reminding the honest inquirer of his need of salvation, which can be satisfied in special revelation.

⁴According to Henry, an example of one who overstated the case for general revelation is James Orr, who as professor of apologetics at the University of Glasgow argued for the validity of both cosmological and ontological arguments for divine existence. *GRA*, 2:116-118. Henry’s criticism of Orr’s approach is summarized: “Such apologists [as Orr] intended to prepare the way for supernatural revelation and miraculous redemption. Their approach, however, left biblical theism suspended grotesquely in midair when philosophers not only exposed the inability of merely empirical analysis to provide the expected theistic supports, but also readily correlated the data with nonrevelational speculative premises that led to contrary inferences.” *GRA*, 2:118.

The Limitations of General Revelation

Although Carl Henry deems both general and special revelation as having equal validity and as having a single divine Source, he presents the weaknesses and limitations of general revelation itself rather than highlighting the weaknesses and limitations of both general and special revelation.¹ For him general revelation is not to be equated with natural theology—the concept that clear enough revelation of God and his attributes can be viewed through nature that man can achieve salvation through the light of nature. This Henry categorically rejects: “To be sure, the Bible nowhere encourages the idea that sinful man can translate God’s general revelation into a natural theology that bridges to special revelation and to the gospel.”² The reason for the impossibility of finding salvation through the light of general nature is not due to the defects of that revelation, but is due to the sinfulness of man’s will and nature. Based upon Rom 1:18, humankind “suppresses” or “stifles” the truth of the revelation obtainable through nature.³

Without exception, the revelation of God through nature is distorted by sinful humankind. “The history of religious and philosophical thought doubtless indicates that, except as special revelation has insinuated itself as a corrective, man *volitionally*—and invariably so—distorts the disclosure of God in the cosmos and in history.”⁴ The key word

¹The reason Henry is loath to describe the weaknesses and limitations of special revelation, and especially Scripture, is due to his belief in the complete inerrancy of Scripture and the propositional nature of revelation.

²*GRA*, 1:400.

³*Ibid.* Henry interprets *katechō* (KJV “hold fast,” Rom 1:18) in its negative sense to “hold back” or to imprison oneself, as it likewise is used negatively in Rom 7:6. The RSV rendering, “men who suppress the truth,” is considered more accurate.

⁴*GRA*, 2:123, emphasis added.

here is “volitionally,” which Henry selects on the basis of his understanding that sin has distorted the will of man, not the mind of man. As we will discover shortly, Henry’s view of God’s image in man is based upon the inability of sin to distort and warp man’s mind and reasoning powers to such a degree that he cannot accurately receive knowledge from God. Elsewhere Henry states that “because of sinful alienation from God, fallen man culpably thwarts the ongoing general revelation of God in nature and history, a revelation which constantly invades even his mind and conscience.”¹ If God’s revelation cannot be conveyed accurately, then human beings are not culpable for sinful actions and thoughts.

The Image of God and General Revelation

Carl Henry’s understanding of the image of God lays the foundation for his concept of general revelation as well as his understanding of the rationality of special revelation, the latter topic being examined in greater detail below. The basis for God’s communication with created beings is the rationality of the human mind, the avenue through which Deity communicates with humanity. If the process of communication involves an experiential, non-rational encounter between God and man, as in neo-orthodoxy, then one can question whether specific, objective information about God and his will for humankind is transmitted to the inspired writer or prophet. If no objective information is conveyed in this process, then revelation is non-propositional, and if non-propositional, then the door is opened wide to the errancy of Scripture. This series of relationships between rationality, revelation, and inspired product explains why the concept that revelation must be rational

¹*GRA*, 1:223. Elsewhere Henry sets forth the evangelical position on the historical nature of revelation, one of which states “that the biblical revelation is epistemically foundational in enabling man in sin to perceive revelational meaning undistorted by his volitional rebellion.” *GRA*, 2:310.

and must have a locus in the image of God is critically important in the thought of Henry. In Henry's thought the rationality of humankind is rooted in the image of God, which is subsumed under the doctrine of revelation and specifically under the doctrine of general revelation.

Henry concurs with theologians who list the various aspects of God's image in humankind as "rational and moral aptitudes," "his capacity for self-transcendence," "his exercise of will," "his immortality," "physical aspects," and his dominion over the earth and over the animal kingdom.¹ Henry personally defines the image of God as "a cohesive unity of interrelated components that interact with and condition each other," which "includes rational, moral and spiritual aspects of both a formal and material nature."² It is appropriate for scholars to isolate and analyze the various aspects of the image, but one aspect must be allowed to overshadow all others. According to Henry's thinking, "it should be clear that the rational or cognitive aspect has logical priority."³

The rationality of God's image in man is derived primarily from John 1 and the understanding of the divine Logos, according to Henry. The biblical concept of Logos is what unites all forms of revelation into an inseparable unity. In the words of Henry, "the Biblical view traces both the general and special revelations to the Logos, Jesus Christ."⁴ The Logos is that which unites the doctrines of creation, revelation, and incarnation into a

¹*GRA*, 2:125.

²*Ibid.* Elsewhere he offers this more generalized definition of the "image of God": "The doctrine that humanity is in certain respects created in the divine likeness." Carl F. H. Henry, "The Image of God," *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, 2nd ed., 591.

³*GRA*, 2:125.

⁴Henry, "Inspiration and Interpretation," 254.

unified whole—Christ is creator, redeemer, and both the source and content of Scripture.¹

Carl Henry finds Scriptural support in John 1:4, 9 for the concept that the divine image includes intelligibility and gives priority to intelligibility among all the aspects of the image of God.² The Logos, or divine Word, could not lighten the whole world unless it can address the intellect of humankind. This forms the basis for general revelation, the word “general” indicating that it is accessible by all humanity. Henry also finds in Rom 12:1 that our “logical service” is to present our bodies as a living sacrifice to God.³

It is appropriate to note here the connection between Henry’s emphasis on the laws of logic and his emphasis on Logos. The former presupposes the latter. And so Henry can assert: “All distinctively human experience presupposes the law of noncontradiction and the irreducible distinction between truth and error; man cannot repudiate these logical presuppositions without sacrificing the intelligibility of . . . his own mental coherence.”⁴ The laws of logic apply equally to the unconverted mind as to the converted mind, since sin has not distorted the logical aspect of the human mind. Henry acknowledges that the scientist cannot perform his work without the intelligibility of the universe, as supported by general revelation, and without the laws of logic, which trace their origin back to the divine

¹“As the divine revealing agent in creation and preservation He [the Logos] manifests God in the general revelation of nature, history and conscience. By the Sacred Scriptures, divinely outbreathed through the Holy Spirit to prophets and apostles, He discloses truths about God and His redemptive purpose, inclusive of that salvation history consummated at last by the incarnation and atonement.” Ibid.

²*GRA*, 2:125-126. Elsewhere Henry speaks of “the rational image of God” being a “link to that structural rationality which God had imposed upon the created world.” Carl F. H. Henry, *Giving a Reason for Our Hope* (Boston: W. A. Wilde, 1949), 52. He finds a universal rationality in nature.

³*GRA*, 2:126.

⁴Ibid. Henry’s succinct summary of the relationship between truth and the laws of logic with the manner in which truth is tested is found in *GRA*, 1:215.

Logos. Henry writes: “The scientist is faced not only by light from the outside, but by an inner light; the Logos is manifested in the conscience and mind of man, not simply in nature and history.”¹

We must keep in mind that Henry’s view on the image of God is largely indebted to the influence of his mentor, Gordon H. Clark, who was his professor of philosophy at Wheaton College during his undergraduate years. Henry writes glowingly of his mentor: “Gordon Clark is . . . one of the profoundest evangelical Protestant philosophers of our time.”² The extent of his admiration for Clark is seen in the fact that Henry was asked to write the introductory essay for the *festschrift* for Gordon Clark.³ Henry’s view on the image of God is heavily influenced by Clark, who argues that the key characteristic of the image is man’s reason.⁴

¹“Science and Religion,” 274, cf. 262. One can detect from the language used in this quote that Henry has John 1 in mind as his biblical source for this concept.

²An endorsement of Gordon H. Clark’s *The Biblical Doctrine of Man* (Jefferson, MD: Trinity Foundation, 1984), the statement appearing on the back cover of this work. In his preface to the *GRA* series Henry has this also to say about his indebtedness to Clark: “To no contemporary do I owe a profounder debt, however, than to Gordon Clark, as numerous index references will attest.” *GRA*, 1:10.

³Carl F. H. Henry, “A Wide and Deep Swath,” in *The Philosophy of Gordon H. Clark: A Festschrift*, ed. Ronald H. Nash (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1968), 11-21.

⁴Gordon Clark writes: “The identification of the image with reason explains or is supported by a puzzling remark in John 1:9: ‘It was the true light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world.’ How can Christ, in whom is the life that is the light of men, be the light of every man, when Scripture teaches that some are lost in eternal darkness? The puzzle arises from interpreting light in exclusively redemptive terms.” *The Biblical Doctrine of Man* (Jefferson, MD: Trinity Foundation, 1984), 17. Rather than viewing John 1:9 as being soteriological, Clark finds it describing the origin of man’s intellectual or rational capacity. Clark concludes: “Thus the Logos or rationality of God, who created all things with a single exception, can be seen as having created man with the light of logic as his distinctive human characteristic.” *Ibid.*, 18-19. Then Clark makes this amazing paraphrase of John 1:1: “And if anyone complains that the idea of *ratio* or debate obscures the personality of the second person of the Trinity, he should alter his concept of personality. In the beginning [*sic*], then, was Logic.” *Ibid.*, 67. For Clark, God and logic are not two separate principles, because if separate then one must be prior to the other. They are one and the same principle, “for John wrote that Logic was God.” *Ibid.*, 68. Walter E. Johnson in his doctoral dissertation concurs with my assessment of Henry’s indebtedness to Clark: “At Wheaton there was one who left a permanent mark [on Henry], the gifted philosopher, Gordon H. Clark. Clark’s influence on Henry was

One of the critical issues regarding the image of God is whether that image was so distorted by humankind's fall into sin in Eden that no human being is able on his own volition to interpret aright the message of general revelation. We have already detected from Henry's writings that he categorically rejects a natural theology whereby the light of general revelation is able to lead humankind to a saving relationship with God. This means that special revelation is made absolutely necessary. Henry, in keeping with evangelical thought, differentiates two aspects to God's image, the formal and the material. Sin affected these in differing ways. He summarizes: "Evangelical expositors of the biblical revelation find the created image of God to exist formally in human personality (moral responsibility and intelligence) and materially in his knowledge of God and of his will for humanity."¹ How does the Fall affect these differently? Henry answers: "The fall of humanity is not destructive of the formal image (human personality), although it involves the distortion (though not demolition) of the material content of the image."² The formal aspect of the image includes man's mind, his reasoning powers. While Henry acknowledges his indebtedness to the thought of the reformers—Calvin, who "held that sin obscures almost everything about God, except man's knowledge that God exists," and Luther, who "believed that the fall totally destroyed the moral *imago* because it corrupted

primarily his insistence that Christianity appeals to the intellect, and a rigorous use of logic." "A Critical Analysis of the Nature and Function of Reason in the Theology of Carl F. H. Henry" (Th.D. dissertation, New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, 1989), 9.

¹"The Image of God," 593.

²Ibid. Henry goes into considerable detail on what the image of God was like before and after the Fall in *GRA*, 2:134-135. Elsewhere he discusses the image of God in relation to the fall. *GRA*, 6:244ff.

man's will,"¹—he appears to be most heavily influenced by his mentor Gordon Clark on the differing effects of the Fall upon the image of God. He notes that Clark's "argument is persuasive. 'While no act of will can be moral in the unregenerate man, . . . it does not follow that no intellectual argument can be valid.'"² While sin does distort even the reason of humankind, it has an even greater effect on man's will. Thus man's volition is affected seriously, his cognition less seriously, but the laws of logic are left unaffected. "Sin . . . does not affect the laws of valid inference," Henry concludes.³ This explains the great inadequacy for general revelation of itself to lead to a correct knowledge of God. By extension, general revelation cannot lead to a correct doctrine of creation unless totally absorbed into the doctrine of special revelation.

Thus far, it is noted that general revelation in Henry's thought is part of a continuum with special revelation in that it derives from the same divine Source, but it is ineffective without the aid of special revelation due to the distorting and limiting effects of sin upon the mind of man and upon the whole image of God in man.⁴ Now I will discuss two additional reasons why Henry considers special revelation to be superior to general

¹*GRA*, 2:135. He goes on to commend Lutheran theologians, who may disagree on what aspects of man are affected by the fall, but are all agreed on this one point: "None of them exempts the intellect from the effects of the fall." *Ibid.*

²*Ibid.* In Clark's thinking (and in Henry's) sin does not affect the laws of logic and reasoning, although it can affect the way humankind uses those laws.

³*Ibid.*

⁴A good summary on the distorting effects of sin upon the mind of man is this: "Yet man in sin distorts this intelligible revelation of the divine presence and caricatures it, whether in terms of polytheism, atheism, or some other perverse alternative. . . . The rebellious sinner deflects universal divine revelation and also deliberately turns aside from it. Sin so warps the divine image in man that fallen man is no longer able to ascertain reliable derivative propositions merely by psychological analysis of general revelation." *GRA*, 3:460. That is why special revelation is urgently needed.

revelation: (1) It is personal, and (2) it is historical.

The Personal Nature of Special Revelation

Carl Henry firmly believes that many of God's qualities have been revealed to all humankind through general revelation and that this concept is taught in the Bible, both in Old and New Testaments. His view can be summed up as follows: "The Bible depicts God as communicating general revelation to the *mind* of all human beings, making known to them the reality of his personal presence, power, deity and eternal judgment (Rom. 1:19-20, 32)."¹ While Henry never asserts that God can be known as a person through the light of general revelation, he so much as intimates such in that he believes general revelation puts the *mind* of man in touch with the *mind* of God, and one quality of personhood is that of mind. An inadequacy of general revelation is that it cannot tell us whether the Higher Power it attests to is malevolent or benevolent. While it can inform us that we are sinners, it cannot inform us that there is a Saviour and that he is a loving person.²

Special revelation has the function of making up for the inadequacies of general revelation, as has been just mentioned.³ It is a revelation that is intensely personal. In Carl Henry's presentation of the personal nature of revelation, he is fully cognizant of the

¹Ibid., emphasis original.

²Henry applies the terms "saving revelation" and "redemptive revelation" to special revelation—never to general revelation. Ibid.

³A good summary of need for special revelation because of the inadequacies of general revelation is this: "Without special revelation in inspired Scripture, people in revolt against God do not infallibly distinguish between what assuredly belongs to general revelation and what reflects human suppression and distortion of that revelation. . . . Special revelation not only clarifies and reinforces general revelation to the rebellious spirit of humans, but it also does so in the momentous context of God's offer of redemptive grace." *Gods of This Age or God of the Ages?*, 238-239. One should note Henry's recognition elsewhere that special revelation is necessitated because sinful man cannot interpret general revelation in the same way that unfallen man would have been able to, *Notes on the Doctrine of God*, 68.

direction that neo-orthodoxy takes the concept of a personal revelation—namely, to the idea that a revelation of God in a personal encounter, either with the prophetic/apostolic writer or with the non-prophetic/apostolic believer, is superior to the revelation in the words of Scripture. One’s personal perception of the Word is superior and more authoritative than the mere words of the Bible. In other words, the Word behind the words of Scripture is the truest form of revelation, according to neo-orthodoxy. Henry is critical of its disjunction between personal and propositional revelation. His discussion of the personal nature of revelation is within the context of the challenges brought by contemporary theologies.

Carl Henry finds support for the self-revelation of God through the description of theophanies throughout Scripture, which are an embarrassment to modern theologians—one case being Pannenberg, “because he allows only God’s indirect revelation through historical acts.”¹ Any contemporary theology that denies God’s self-revelation to humankind undermines the concept of personal revelation, as Henry recognizes: “If man understands the indispensable priority of God’s self-revelation for his knowledge of God, he will blanket modern philosophy of religion with a huge question mark because it virtually denies that God as personal Subject takes any significant initiative in revelation.”² Henry summarizes the views of Wilhelm Herrmann, “Barth’s most revered teacher,” on self-revelation as a four-step process: (1) The act of God’s self-revelation, (2) the correlation of the human and divine selves through inner experience, (3) the non-objectification of our knowledge of God, and (4) an ongoing experience that continues to

¹*GRA*, 2:154.

²*GRA*, 2:156.

link revelation, action, and religious knowledge.¹ Here one can detect the essential points of Karl Barth's theology of revelation, which, according to Henry, undermine the personal nature of revelation.

Barth's view of God's self-revelation, according to Henry, is fourfold: (1) The event of God's supernatural self-revelation, (2) this event being known by God's internal action, not through man's faith in the inner reception of that revelation, (3) this event viewed as redemptive, non-propositional communication, and (4) this event also viewed as ongoing, sporadic activity in continuity with the experience of prophets and apostles, the latter holding only chronological priority over the former.² Henry's concern about this new interpretation of revelation is that it denies that which he deems central to Scripture:

Yet shorn of any grounding in the objectivity of God and precluding all objectifying statements about him; shorn of intelligible propositional character and of verbal mediation by chosen prophets and apostles; shorn of every connection with an external divine activity in nature, history, or a universal *imago Dei* in mankind, God's revelation must here necessarily be something very different from the biblical understanding.³

This summarizes well the differences between Carl Henry's and Karl Barth's understanding of the nature of revelation. Barth's view on the very personal nature of revelation is that it cannot have objective knowledge. Henry's answer is that it can indeed have objective knowledge in that God himself frequently communicates his divine name(s) to the biblical

¹*GRA*, 2:158.

²*GRA*, 2:158-159. Henry makes a clear connection between Barth's fourfold development of revelation and the four aspects of revelation as set forth by Herrmann: "Barth expounds his doctrine of God's self-revelation initially in the essay on 'The Principles of Dogmatics according to Wilhelm Herrmann' in *Die Theologie und die Kirche*." *GRA*, 2:158.

³*GRA*, 2:159. Henry did not launch major critiques against Barth early in his writing career. For example, he commends Barth for his trinitarian approach to theology. *Notes on the Doctrine of God*, 114, 120-121.

writer, thus indicating his personal essence.¹

The Historical Nature of Special Revelation

Having established the position that special revelation is personal and involves the personal communication of God with the prophet or apostle, especially seen in the communication of the divine names, Carl Henry next must establish the historicity of that divine communication. Whether discussing Scripture's personal nature or its historical nature, he is reacting against neo-orthodox and encounter theologies that advance the view that revelation is an encounter between God and man in a very personal way without the communication of factual information. The encounter theologies do not equate revelation with canonical Scripture, while Henry does.² His goal in discussing the historical aspects of revelation is to lay a foundation for the acceptance of the historicity of the greatest revelation event—the coming of Christ in flesh on earth in the first advent—and then to defend the view that this supreme revelation is mediated to us through the propositions of Scripture that have divine origination and inspiration. If one cannot establish the historicity of revelation in Scripture, then one would find it next to impossible to establish the propositional nature of Scripture.

¹For Henry's discussion of God's self-naming in connection with the variety of divine names in both the Old and New Testaments, see *GRA*, 2:151-166, chap. 12, "Divine Revelation as Personal"; 2:167-183, chap. 13, "The Names of God"; 2:184-209, chap. 14, "God's Proper Names: Elohim, El Shaddai"; 2:210-225, chap. 15, "God's Proper Names: Yahweh"; and 2:26-46, chap. 16, "Jesus: The Revelation of the New Testament Name."

²"The Bible nowhere protests nor cautions against identifying Scripture with revelation, but rather approves and supports this turn." Carl F. H. Henry, "Revelation and the Bible: Part I," *Christianity Today*, June 9, 1958, 7. But in a companion article he clarifies that it is not an exact one-to-one correlation: "Special revelation is itself broader than Scripture." Idem, "Revelation and the Bible: Part II," *Christianity Today*, 23 June 1958, 15.

Henry introduces the topic of a historical revelation with thesis 7: “God reveals himself not only universally in the history of the cosmos and of the nations, but also redemptively within this external history in unique saving acts.”¹ We notice immediately that Henry distinguishes here between a universal revelation in nature and a revelation in his mighty deeds or “saving acts” in human history, meaning that the latter only has historical value and connotations. The very first act of God recorded in the Bible is the act of creation: “The Bible opens with the Creator God in action as the sovereign, purposive maker of the world and man.”² All through his long writing career, Henry has treated creation as a historical event, not a cosmic myth recorded by ancient people, in keeping with his conviction that all of God’s great acts recorded in Scripture are historical.³

Carl Henry categorically rejects the mythological understanding of Gen 1 that is inherent in the Wellhausian and other critical methods without taking recourse to an extensive discussion of these methods as applied to Gen 1 and 2. He states:

Critical and mediating schools of thought either have dismissed Genesis 1 to 3 *in toto* as legend, or have allowed the creation account and that of the fall only a poetic and allegorical sense, or more recently have assigned it a cryptic mythical meaning. On the other hand, evangelical Christianity has insisted that the creation narrative addresses scientist and historian no less than theologian and moralist.⁴

¹*GRA*, 2:247.

²*GRA*, 2:250.

³From the time Carl Henry was producing his first major works, he was defending the historicity of the early chapters of Genesis. As evidence for this, see *The Protestant Dilemma* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1948), 138-139; and Henry’s summary of his 1948 comments in *The Drift of Western Thought* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1951), 136. Henry concurs with fundamentalists, who reject the idea that the Creation account is “legendary and mythical.” See “Dare We Renew the Controversy? Part II, The Fundamentalist Reduction,” *Christianity Today*, 24 June 1957, 25.

⁴Carl F. H. Henry, “The Bible and Modern Science,” in *The Holy Bible* (Philadelphia: A. J. Holman, 1962), 1191. Here as well as elsewhere he treats Gen 1-3 as both historical and scientific.

In discussing the historical nature of the Bible, this study must examine its scientific aspect as well because Henry does not differentiate between the two. In his mind, if the Bible is historical, then it is scientific. After critiquing the mythological and non-historical approaches to the early chapters of Genesis, he then finds fault with the “older liberal Protestant view” because it “dismissed Genesis as scientifically irrelevant, while prizing it as a reliable source of eternally *valid spiritual principles*.” But, he adds, “the sacred writers made no such distinction between their trustworthiness in spiritual and in scientific-historical matters; indeed, the two are often inextricably inter-woven.”¹ As I will discuss later in greater detail, Henry does not perceive Scripture, however, to be a book of science.²

The historicity of the biblical record is based upon the reality and meaning of God’s great acts in history. All of Christianity, in Henry’s thought, stands or falls with the historicity of these great events. “Because God made peace and achieved spiritual reconciliation through ‘the blood of the cross’ (Col. 1:20), to surrender his activity in history would forfeit the Christian faith.”³ The greatest act and grandest revelation of all is that of Christ appearing in human form and dying on the cross, which will be examined in considering thesis 8. Henry goes on to state: “The distinctive nature of the Christian revelation of God rests upon the *historical* life of Jesus of Nazareth who definitively

¹“Science and Religion,” 276, emphasis original. One should take note of the fact that he employs the adjective “scientific-historical” as a compound term, indicating the close relationship of the two—the scientific and the historical.

²For example, “The Bible does not supply technical knowledge and general laws about the universe, but leaves this to the revisionary judgments of science.” *Ibid.*, 273. While Henry denies that Scripture is a “science textbook,” elsewhere he portrays it as a “historical sourcebook.” “The Old Testament, and the New Testament no less so, are at the same time a primary resource of redemptive faith and a historical sourcebook.” *GRA*, 2:256.

³*GRA*, 2:255.

manifests in word and deed the nature and will of the living God of prophetic promise.”¹

The uniqueness of Christianity among the great religions of the world is that it records not only God’s actions intervening in human history, but also God’s words providing the meaning of his actions. Henry notes the importance of the two, the action and the explanation of the action: “And the Bible, while devoting tremendous space to narration—to setting forth divine disclosive acts—presumes to give also the rationale or meaning of these acts.”² For Henry, doctrines are empty teachings without historical events correlated with them, and vice versa the events are devoid of meaning without the explanation by the divine Word. Thus Henry does take exception to contemporary views of history, such as “salvation history,” whereby God’s great actions or interventions in human history are stand-alone revelations without having an accurate portrayal of his acts.

If revelation is historical and if the Bible is a historical document (as well as a theological one), then the question is raised whether the various methods of historical criticism are useful or necessary in gaining greater clarity of its historical aspect. One of the chapters in *God, Revelation and Authority*, “The Uses and Abuses of Historical Criticism,” by its very title intimates that Henry finds much of value in the critical methods as well as much to criticize.³ And that is true. He sides with Robert Preus in pointing out that all methods involve presuppositions, so that one can apply various aspects of the critical methods without adopting the presuppositions of those who use those methods.⁴

¹Ibid., emphasis added.

²*The Protestant Dilemma*, 95.

³“The Uses and Abuses of Historical Criticism,” *GRA*, 4:385-404.

⁴*GRA*, 4:389-390.

The evidence that this is possible is the many scholars who are members of the Evangelical Theological Society or who teach in evangelical seminaries, who also “do, in fact, employ historical-critical method compatibly with biblical infallibility.”¹ One is not surprised to find that he critiques Harold Lindell for suggesting that anyone using the historical-critical methods is denying the infallibility of Scripture, but one can be surprised that he chides Gerhard F. Hasel for almost totally “disowning” those methods while at the same time wanting to retain some value for historical studies.² Henry closes his discussion of historical criticism with a list of ten affirmations that evangelicals can support with regards to the critical methods, the first being: “Historical criticism is not inappropriate to, but bears relevantly on, Christian concerns.”³

Contemporary historical-theological studies, however, provide challenges to evangelical theology. Henry questions the validity of dialectical theology in its handling of historical data—first Karl Barth for placing the revelation event so far out of reach of the historical methods that historical research has no validity, and second Rudolf Bultmann for

¹*GRA*, 4:393.

²See *GRA*, 4:393 for his critique of Lindell, and *GRA*, 4:394 for his critique of Hasel. He concludes his critique of the latter with these words: “He [Hasel] neither wishes to skip the historical, nor to turn faith into a method. But he fails to articulate just what historical method properly achieves, or what faith contributes that has objective validity, and on what basis.” While Henry faults Hasel for failing to describe what the historical method has achieved, one can fault Henry for not providing a full-fledged definition of historical criticism from an evangelical viewpoint, nor for detailing its agnostic historical roots.

³*GRA*, 4:403. Earlier in his career Henry also gave decided support to the historical methods, when properly used. See “Basic Issues in Modern Theology: Revelation in History, Part II,” *Christianity Today*, 4 December 1964, 13-15, esp. 15. For his support of historical and form criticism, see *GRA*, 4:81. Henry was no doubt aware of wide-spread support for a cautious use of historical-critical methods among evangelicals at the time he was writing *God, Revelation and Authority*. Interestingly in 1983 the president of the Evangelical Theological Society, Alan F. Johnson, applauded Henry for his position on historical criticism in *GRA* as a pacesetter for other members in the Society. “The Historical-Critical Method: Egyptian Gold or Pagan Precipice?” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 26 (1983): 13-14.

employing historical methods in order to “de-mythologize” the great events of the Bible including the resurrection, so that the character of Christianity is radically altered.¹ The main concern is what dialectical theology does to one’s understanding of Christ: “The dialectical and existential intent to combine christology with historical skepticism unwittingly negated the crucial center of Christian faith, namely, Jesus of Nazareth.”²

The *Heilsgeschichte* or “salvation history” school of thought also comes under Henry’s critique, not because of its emphasis on the great historical events connected with salvation, but because it places the greatest events, those of creation and the events of Christ’s life on earth, beyond the realm of historical investigation.³ One of the major weaknesses of *Heilsgeschichte*, according to Henry, is “its failure to clarify the connection between redemptive history and universal history.”⁴ He critiques Oscar Cullmann for placing the events of both creation and eschatology as well as the events of the incarnation and the cross in the realm of mythology, which is not a denial of its temporal aspects, but places it beyond the critical reach of the historian. He then critiques Wolfhart Pannenberg,

¹For his critique of Barth and Bultmann, both dialectical theologians, see *GRA*, 2:281-286. Bultmann especially comes under criticism for separating history from faith, the bifurcation between *Geschichte* and *Historie* common to German theological studies in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

²*GRA*, 2:286. Elsewhere Henry writes: “Thus far rationalistic and irrationalistic liberalism alike have failed to discover the authentic historical Jesus.” “Basic Issues in Modern Theology: Revelation in History, Part II,” 14.

³*GRA*, 2:290-291. Henry cites Clark’s observation that Oscar Cullmann, a defender of *Heilsgeschichte*, has replaced Bultmann’s “demythologizing” with his own “enmythologizing” by keeping the great events of God’s intervention in this world completely sealed off from the historian’s gaze. To illustrate this, he quotes Cullmann (*Christ and Time* [Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1950], 98), asserting “that this Jesus is the Son of God remains concealed from the historian as such.” *GRA*, 2:291. Thus the “Christ of faith” is different from the “Jesus of history.” For Henry’s earlier critique of *Heilsgeschichte*, see his “Basic Issues in Modern Theology, Part I,” *Christianity Today*, 20 November 1964, 17-20.

⁴*GRA*, 2:290. Earlier Henry has also critiqued Pannenberg in his “Basic Issues in Modern Theology, Part II,” 13.

not for separating salvation history and universal history, as does Cullmann, but for making all of history universal history. The problem is that the knowledge of this history is dichotomized in neo-Kantian fashion away from a faith-type of knowledge, so that there are two types of historical knowledge.¹ Not surprisingly, he disagrees with Jurgen Moltmann's approach whereby the only valid type of religious history is eschatological history, so the events of Christ's life of earth are pushed beyond the ken of the historian, so that they can be best understood eschatologically, looking backward as well as forward in time.²

After critiquing contemporary twentieth-century views of history in relation to theology, Henry sets forth the evangelical understanding of history that allows for the miraculous and disallows a closed world impervious to divine intervention and governed solely by natural laws. The scope of redemptive history, according to evangelical thought, spans all of time between the two foci of creation and consummation.³ Henry views biblical history as a factual, rationally perceived type of history that can be evaluated through the best methods of historical research and criticism. This is in keeping with his view that biblical revelation is propositional, and that the propositions are rationally understood. Its history likewise is rationally understood and can be rationally tested.

This study has noted that Henry places special revelation on a higher plateau theologically than general revelation, even though both revelations possess equal validity in coming from the same divine Source. The two reasons for his elevation of special

¹*GRA*, 2:298.

²*GRA*, 2:294-296.

³Henry iterates this: "The Bible sets miraculous redemptive history and the secular world history in which it occurs in the context of two governing facts, namely, God's creation of the world and his final consummation and judgment of human affairs." *GRA*, 2:331.

revelation are that (1) it is personal and (2) it is historical. The second reason has crucial importance in that I will be considering whether the events of creation are understood by Henry to be historical and the accounts of creation historically accurate. For now I will examine the question of whether within special revelation there exists an area that is on yet an even higher plateau. Special revelation comes in a variety of forms—is there any type or form that supersedes all other types or forms?

3) The Source and Center of Revelation

Christ as the Supreme Revelation

According to thesis 8, Christ is the center and the source of revelation: “The climax of God’s special revelation is Jesus of Nazareth, the personal incarnation of God in the flesh; in Jesus Christ the source and content of revelation converge and coincide.”¹ Here Henry uses the term “climax” to describe the revelation in Christ, implying a hierarchical relationship to other types of revelation. He unequivocally exalts the revelation of God in Christ as not only the climax of previous revelations, but as the supreme revelation, unexcelled by others before or since. He affirms: “Certainly both the evangelists and apostles distinguish Jesus of Nazareth as the supreme and final revelation of God.”²

This raises the issue of whether Henry is depreciating the value of a written revelation by exalting the superior value of a living revelation in bodily form. He quickly

¹*GRA*, 3:9.

²Carl F. H. Henry, “Revelation and the Bible, Part I,” *Christianity Today*, 9 June 1958, 7. For biblical support of this position he cites Matt 16:16; John 1:18 RSV; and 1 Cor 15:1-4.

answers this possible objection: “But the New Testament writers never make this staggering fact of God’s personal revelation [*sic*] in the flesh by Jesus Christ the occasion for depriving the inspired utterances of the sacred writers of a direct identity with divine revelation.”¹ Both the apostles and their Lord Jesus Christ exalted the words of Scripture as the very words of God. One evidence of this is that “he [Christ] specifically identifies his own words and commands with the Father’s word,” as in John 14 and 15.² Jesus’ high view of the divine authority of OT Scripture demonstrates the fact that there is no disjunction between the living Word and the written Word, as contemporary theologians have sometimes proposed.³ So we dare not set forth “a contrast between the authority of Christ and of Scripture” on the basis of Jesus’ own claims of being the Savior, the divine Son of God.⁴ When Christ says, “But I say unto you,” (as in Matt 5:21, 27, 33, 38, 43), he is not exalting his authority above the OT’s authority, nor is he setting aside the OT law, but he “is criticizing misconstructions and misunderstandings of what the Mosaic Law requires.”⁵

For Henry, the doctrine of the Trinity brings together the unity of Scripture, and the unity between the living Word and the written Word. The trinitarian outlook on Scripture is in evidence in these words: “God is the source of Holy Scripture; Christ Jesus is the

¹Ibid.

²Ibid.

³For evidence of a lack of disjunction, see “Jesus’ View of Scripture,” *GRA*, 3:28-47, and “Jesus and the Word,” *GRA*, 3:75-98.

⁴*GRA*, 3:33.

⁵*GRA*, 3:39.

central message; and the Holy Spirit, who inspired it and illumines its message to the reader, bears witness by this inscripturated Word to the Word enfleshed, crucified, risen, and returning.”¹ To bring about this close union between the living Word and written Word, Henry does not resort to the analogy of the divine-human nature of Christ as a direct correlation with the divine-human nature of Scripture. For him that is an imperfect analogy, for it does an injustice to the humanity of Scripture. If Christ in both his divinity and his humanity was perfect, then such would imply that Scripture in its divine aspects as well as its human aspects must be perfect in all respects! Such a concept Henry rejects on the basis that it would lead to a theory of inspiration based upon “divine dictation.”²

The Logos and Christology

Henry’s approach to Christology is intensely practical and is not preoccupied with the speculative questions of the relationship of the two natures, the divine and the human, in Christ, nor the relationship of Christ to the other two members of the Trinity. He devotes one chapter only to these questions in *God, Revelation and Authority*.³ He is more interested in defining Christ as the Logos, which he introduces with the topic of Jesus in his relationship to the written/spoken Word of God.⁴ He does emphasize the importance of

¹Carl F. H. Henry, “The Authority and Inspiration of the Bible,” *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, edited by Frank E. Gaebelin (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1979), 1:25.

²*Ibid.*, 27. Henry’s conclusion that the divine/human aspects of Christ’s nature are not analogous to divine/human aspects of Scripture has relevance to Henry’s understanding of Gen 1. As shown below, Henry does not use the “humanity” of the creation accounts in order to harmonize them with a modern understanding of science.

³“Jesus Christ—God-Man or Man-God?” *GRA*, 3:99-117.

⁴“Jesus and the Word,” *GRA*, 3:75-98.

allowing Scripture to define the “person and work of Christ,” in contrast to modern approaches that resort to philosophical systems for a definition of Christ and his Word and that make a distinction between “the Jesus of history” and “the Christ of faith.”¹

As noted previously, the doctrine of the Logos is the foundation for Henry’s proposal that all revelation is propositional and is also intelligible. He defines Logos in the following manner:

The Logos is the creative Word whereby God fashioned and preserves the universe. He is the light of the understanding, the Reason that enables intelligible creatures to comprehend the truth. The Logos is, moreover, incarnate in Jesus Christ, whose words (*logoi*) are spirit and life because they are the veritable truth of God. Reality has a unified goal because the Logos is its intelligible creative agent, and on this basis man is called to the reasonable or logical worship and service of God.²

The Logos doctrine ties together both creation and revelation, bridges the gap between general and special revelation. It is centered in Christ, who is the center of the biblical message, both in its prophetic and its fulfillment aspects. It leads in a practical way to Christian service by the believer on the basis of Rom 12:1 (emphasis added): “Present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your *reasonable* service.” The Logos theme actually spans the entire period of salvation history from creation to eschatology because “Rev 19:13 explicitly identifies the exalted Christ as the Word [*Logos*] of God in his future judgment of the race: ‘And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in

¹Carl F. H. Henry, “Dare We Renew the Controversy? Part III,” *Christianity Today*, 8 July 1958, 15-18. Because of neo-orthodoxy’s selectivity of the Scriptural testimony about Christ, it offers only a partial opposition to liberalism. “A crucial illustration of this,” writes Henry, “is the hesitancy of dialectical theologians to maintain the full identity of Jesus of Nazareth with the Christ; the historical Jesus is for them a witness to the Christ. Here the detachment of the Christological from the scriptural principle actually threatens the central faith of the New Testament, namely, that Jesus of Nazareth is the zenith of divine revelation.” *Ibid.*, 17.

²*GRA*, 3:212.

blood: and his name is called The Word of God' (KJV)."¹

Creation is integral to the doctrine of the Logos, since the Word is the divine agent of creation (John 1:1). The Word must then be preexistent to the incarnation with the result that the Old Testament message is Christ's message: "In view of the identity of the preexistent Christ with the Logos, all revelation in the broad sense is therefore christological."² Man being created in God's image implies a close connection between the mind of God and the mind of man, according to Henry: "Since the eternal Logos himself structures the created universe and the conditions of communication, logical connections are eternally grounded in God's mind and will, and are binding for man in view of the *imago Dei*."³ Human language and communication would not be feasible without organized structures of thought and a common logic, which is a product of divine creation, not naturalistic evolution. Logic prevails for religious as well as non-religious language; therefore, according to Henry, "the logical laws of correct thinking are principles to which all one's thinking must conform if truth is an object."⁴ However important logic is within

¹*GRA*, 3:203. Henry is aware that the Logos in two of John's books, the Gospel and the Revelation, have a different emphasis and function, but nonetheless these are references to one person, Jesus Christ, according to *GRA*, 3:203-204.

²*GRA*, 3:205.

³*GRA*, 3:214. Elsewhere Henry notices "how significant is the Christian assertion that the laws of logic and morality belong to the *imago Dei* in mankind." "Revelation, Special," 1023. This same thought is expressed in *GRA*, 3:229.

⁴*GRA*, 3:235. Further on Henry states: "Language is a necessary tool of communication, but it cannot effectively serve this purpose unless it defers to the laws of logic." Ibid. One of the important laws of logic is the "law of non-contradiction," which Henry directs against T. F. Torrance (and obliquely against Barth as well), who states that God's logic is different from man's. See *GRA*, 3:229. Elsewhere Henry is even stronger in his critique of Barth: "The person who renounces the importance of noncontradiction and logical consistency sponsors not only the suicide of theology, but also the demotion of intellectual discrimination." *GRA*, 1:233. The "law of noncontradiction" means that a statement cannot be true and false at the same time. In this last reference Henry is critiquing Barth for arguing that the truth of theology is based upon "a logically irreconcilable 'yes' and 'no.'"

the arena of religious communication, God cannot be reduced to a mere statement of logic. “The Logos is the Reason, Logic or Wisdom of God and not a mere element in language analysis. While words depend on speech, Logos does not,” writes Henry.¹ God is not a proposition, although his revelation is propositional and intelligible.

A correct understanding of Christ as the supreme revelation of God and as an entirely intelligible revelation in the form of the Logos paves the way for examining the means of revelation.

4) The Means or Method of Revelation

The next step in Henry’s thinking is to progress from the linking of man’s rationality to the divine Logos on to considering the rationality of revelation itself. And again, he is indebted to Gordon H. Clark. We have previously observed that both Henry and Clark emphasize the rationality of general revelation and its connection with the rationality preserved in the image of God. One would expect they would both emphasize the rationality of special revelation, and they do. Clark’s explication of this is found in his 1958 article, “Special Divine Revelation as Rational.”² They both move from the rationality of revelation to its propositional nature and finally to its purity. This describes an entire process, which I have designated the “how” of revelation. Its three phases are (1) establishing the propositional nature of revelation, (2) establishing the inscripturated nature of revelation, and (3) establishing the inspired nature of revelation.

¹*GRA*, 3:238.

²Gordon H. Clark, “Special Divine Revelation as Rational,” in *Revelation and the Bible: Contemporary Evangelical Thought*, ed. Carl F. H. Henry (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1958), 25-41.

The Propositional Nature of Revelation

Thesis 10 summarizes Henry's view on revelation: "God's revelation is rational communication conveyed in intelligible ideas and meaningful words, that is, in conceptual-verbal form."¹ This is the "theoretical how" of revelation, and when we later examine the Bible under the topic of the "inscripturated nature of revelation," we will be dealing with the "practical how" of revelation. Henry's view of propositional revelation is not simply that revelation must be written in logical sentence format: "We mean by propositional revelation that God supernaturally communicates his revelation to chosen spokesmen in the express form of cognitive truths, and that the inspired prophetic-apostolic proclamation reliably articulates these truths in sentences that are not internally contradictory."² This definition stands in opposition to neo-orthodoxy that makes allowance for theological truths being expressed in contradictory ways. Henry capitalizes on this fact when he offers the following definition of a proposition: "As generally understood, a proposition is a verbal statement that is either true or false; it is a rational declaration capable of being either believed, doubted or denied."³

These definitions of a proposition and propositional revelation raise the question of

¹*GRA*, 3:248.

²*GRA*, 3:457. This definition of revelation is designed to counteract the Barthian view of revelation. For a fuller discussion of this, see Klaas Runia, *Karl Barth's Doctrine of Holy Scripture* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1962). Interestingly, Henry in *GRA* does not cite Runia's work.

³*GRA*, 3:456. Two years after *GRA* vol. 3 was published, Henry published this definition of a proposition: "A proposition is simply an intelligible, logically formed statement, a declarative sentence that is either true or false." Carl F. H. Henry, *Conversations with Carl F. H. Henry: Christianity for Today* (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 1986), 84. This interview was first published in *Christianity Today*, 13 March 1981, 18-23.

whether divine revelation at its inception prior to its being recorded in Scripture was in propositional form. Related to this question is another, Must all revelation be considered propositional in character? We must explain figures of speech and similes on the basis of propositional revelation, as well as pictorial forms of revelation, such as dreams and visions. He answers this latter question by reiterating a position taken previously:

“Revelation in the Bible is essentially a mental conception: God’s disclosure is rational and intelligible communication.”¹ The word “essentially” is a critical word here because it focuses upon the essence or nature of revelation.² Henry is eager to point out that “Bultmann insisted that revelation occurs only through the spoken or written word of the kerygma. . . . Fuchs also describes language as the locus of revelation.”³

To his fellow evangelicals who argue that not all revelation is propositional, Henry takes this two-pronged approach:

1. He states that revelation *is essentially* propositional, and “it should be indicated, the extraverbal and extrarational belong only to the rim of revelation; revelation in its *essential* definition centers in the communication of God’s Word.”⁴

2. He notes that revelation must be capable of being expressed in propositions: “The content of God’s progressive revelation is propositionally given or expressible.”⁵ Thus

¹GRA, 3:248.

²The word “essentially” may have been taken from Clark Pinnock, whom he quotes elsewhere: “Revelation is enshrined in written records and is essentially propositional in nature.” GRA, 3:457.

³GRA, 3:250.

⁴GRA, 3:457, emphasis added.

⁵GRA, 3:459.

dreams, visions, symbols, and figures of speech can be translated into propositions.¹ No one has provided an example of a type of revelation that is not expressible as propositions. He even goes a step further by assigning propositional revelation to general revelation, for God “speaks” through nature, and nature is intelligible.² Thus propositional revelation is prior to the writing or recording of that revelation, the revelation in nature being as yet unrecorded.

Henry is concerned about the impact of the position, seen in neo-orthodoxy and in most modern theologies, that myth is an appropriate vehicle for communicating divine truths.³ The prime example of myth is often said to be Gen 1-11, especially the account(s) of creation in Gen 1-2. In the case of Gen 1-11 the motif of myth is often employed as a device to harmonize Scripture with the contemporary scientific world view, as argued by H. M. Kuitert, who sees nonliteral truths in the early chapters of the Bible.⁴ Henry is quick to point out that this reliance upon myth as a harmonizing device not only undermines the historical nature of Scripture, but also does “little to commend Christianity to the contemporary mind as specially revealed religion.”⁵ Henry rejects James Barr’s proposal that “historical revelation” be divided into three categories: (1) God’s activities in the ordinary course of nature; (2) divine supernatural interventions, such as the virgin birth;

¹Henry’s main critique of Avery Dulles is that he sees symbolism as non-propositional. Carl F. H. Henry, “The Priority of Divine Revelation: A Review Article,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 27 (1984): 77-92. Here he reviews Avery Dulles’s *Models of Revelation* (1983).

²*GRA*, 3:405. Henry describes “God’s extended and ongoing speech in general or universal revelation.” *Ibid.*

³Henry notes that religious myth is not to be equated with fairy tales. *GRA*, 3:254.

⁴*GRA*, 3:254-255.

⁵*GRA*, 3:255.

and (3) legends such as Noah's ark and Jonah's whale.¹ Barr's sharp critique of a fundamentalist approach to Gen 1, which relies upon both literalness and symbolism, indicates that he has no objections to interpreting it as legend or myth.² Thus for Barr myth and history when applied to the Old Testament are compatible; for Henry they are incompatible.

At stake in the discussion of propositional revelation is the issue of truthfulness. If God's Word is truthful, then it can be trusted. Henry expends a great deal of effort refuting the major objections to propositional revelation: (1) That religious language lies outside the conventions of normal human discourse;³ (2) that the close correlations between the book of Proverbs and Egyptian Wisdom literature rules out divine disclosure for Proverbs;⁴ (3) that language itself is not a God-given gift, but a product of human evolution and creativity;⁵ (4) that all theological statements are tautologies and thus not empirically verifiable, according to the strictures of logical positivism;⁶ (5) that theologians are in disagreement in their descriptions of religious language and its meaning;⁷ (6) that God's

¹*GRA*, 3:264-265.

²James Barr, *Fundamentalism* (London: SCM Press, 1981), 40-50, noting especially his observation: "For fundamentalists it is usually wrong to interpret a biblical passage as if it were a myth or legend" (50), indicating that he does not object to viewing Gen 1 as myth or legend.

³"Cognitive Aspects of Divine Disclosure," *GRA*, 3:272-303.

⁴"Wisdom as a Carrier of Revelation," *GRA*, 3:304-324.

⁵"The Origin of Language," *GRA*, 3:325-346.

⁶"Is Religious Language Meaningful?" *GRA*, 3:347-361; also "Linguistic Analysis and Propositional Truth," *GRA*, 3:439-454.

⁷"The Meaning of Religious Language," *GRA*, 3:362-379; and "Religious Language and Other Language," *GRA*, 3:380-385, where Henry asserts that there is no specialized religious language.

“speech” or “speaking” is simply an anthropomorphism with no reality.¹

Many of the above objections are answered by Henry with a recourse to the doctrine of creation, which holds that all aspects of humankind, including his gift of speech and communication, are products of God’s handiwork. He relies upon the studies of Arthur C. Custance, who shows “that the Genesis creation account offers an explanation of the circumstances, content, and consequences of the beginning of human speech.”² Adam is given the privilege of naming the animals and birds immediately after his own creation, indicating that the gift of speech was already divinely granted to him. God himself employed language and exercised the art of naming as part of his act of creation.³ In his calling of prophets and communicating with them, God undoubtedly employed language, according to the biblical record.⁴

Henry does not dare attempt to isolate the language of revelation from the divine speaking, otherwise we are left with a Scripture that is time-bound and culturally conditioned. “If language is detached from divine revelation, it is abandoned simply to cultural-historical relativism and confined in its relevance merely to time-bound concerns. The relation of language to logic and reality is decisive for propositional revelation.”⁵ It is also decisive for the truthfulness and trustworthiness of Scripture. Henry takes decided

¹See Henry, “The Living God Who Speaks,” *GRA*, 3:403-428.

²*GRA*, 3:387. Henry cites Custance, “Who Taught Adam to Speak?” (Brockville, Ontario, Canada: n.p., n.d.).

³*GRA*, 3:390-391. Moreover, God addressed man in the garden both before and after the Fall. *GRA*, 3:391-392.

⁴*GRA*, 3:392-392. Henry is careful to avoid, however, the idea of “divine dictation.” *GRA*, 3:411.

⁵*GRA*, 3:417.

exception to Jack Rogers's reliance upon the "theory of accommodation" that was taught by Origen, Chrysostom, Augustine, and Calvin, as a means of explaining what we do not understand.¹ For Henry the languages of Scripture—Hebrew for the OT and Greek for the NT for the most part—are indeed colored by the local setting and culture, but nevertheless revelation does come in the form of language, and language is intelligible!² Avery Dulles recognizes Carl Henry as one of the major proponents of propositional revelation,³ based upon his incessant defense of propositional revelation. When connected with intelligibility through the divine Logos, propositional revelation can be considered a major cornerstone of Henry's doctrine of revelation.

The Inscripturated or Normative Nature of Revelation

Without a deposit of revelation, the divine truths given to humankind would be subject to the ebb and flow of human opinions and theories. The Bible provides a firm basis for God's message to have a permanent impact on human thinking and lives, as Henry iterates in thesis 11: "The Bible is the reservoir and conduit of divine truth, the authoritative written record and exposition of God's nature and will."⁴ The issues of truth and authority are inseparably tied together, and "the problem of authority is one of the most deeply

¹*GRA*, 3:419.

²*Ibid.* Here Henry finds support in Ramm, *CVSS*, 71. Henry continues by noting Peter's words at Pentecost, "Let me tell you plainly . . ." (Acts 2:29, NEB). Further on, he critiques the mystical approach to Scripture's language by citing again the words of Ramm: "A wordless revelation is mysticism." Ramm, *Special Revelation and the Word of God*, 159, quoted in *GRA*, 3:422.

³Dulles, 39-40. This is under the rubric of his first model, "Revelation as Doctrine." For Henry's critique of Dulles' book, see above.

⁴*GRA*, 4:7.

distressing concerns of contemporary civilization.”¹ Besides this, according to Henry, “nothing is more foundationally important for the world and for the church in the twentieth century than a recovery of truth.”² One can acknowledge the historical nature of the biblical record, but that record must be both truthful and inspired in order for it to have permanent authority. The intertwining topics of authority and truth become the central focus of the next aspect of Henry’s doctrine of revelation, the function and purpose of Scripture as inscripturated revelation.

The entire basis for Scripture’s authority is that it is a revelation given by God; the authority of the Bible is the authority of God. In his most elaborate discussion of biblical authority outside of *God, Revelation and Authority*, Henry begins with these words: “The first fact to be affirmed about the Bible is its divine authority. To be sure, other considerations, such as its inspiration and infallibility, are in important respects interwoven with this. But the Bible presents itself, first and foremost, as the Word of the Lord.”³ The Bible is not authoritative because it is inspired or infallible, according to Henry, but on the contrary its inspiration and infallibility are a byproduct of its divine authority. Thus in his words, “the Bible is authoritative because it is divinely authorized; in its own terms, ‘All

¹Ibid. Elsewhere Henry warns that “Western civilization is in a severe ‘authority crisis,’ not confined to the realm of religious faith,” but evidenced in the questioning of all types of authority—parental, marital, political, academic, and ecclesiastical. Carl F. H. Henry, “The Authority of the Bible,” in *The Origin of the Bible*, ed. Philip Wesley Comfort (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House, 1992), 13. For further discussion of the crisis in the Western world resulting from a loss of truth and consequently of authority, see “The Crisis of Truth and Word,” *GRA*, 1:17-30, and “The Modern Revolt Against Authority,” *GRA*, 4:7-23.

²Carl F. H. Henry, *A Plea for Evangelical Demonstration* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1971), 75.

³“The Authority and Inspiration of the Bible,” 5. This is corroborated by *GRA*, 4:27: “The first claim to be made for Scripture is not its inerrancy nor even its inspiration, but its authority.”

Scripture is God-breathed' (2 Tim. 3:16)."¹

Henry does not define authority when he begins his discussion of authority in *God, Revelation and Authority*, but he commences his discussion with an exploration of the meaning of the NT word for authority, *exousia* (Gr.), which is translated by the English words "authority" and "power." His starting point for biblical authority is Christological. He observes: "In the New Testament we face the fact that God's *exousia* is the power and authority given to Jesus Christ and under him, to his disciples."² It also designates Christ as the sovereign authority over his church, which enables its members to prepare for the coming kingdom. Thus it serves as an ecclesiastical function, according to the New Testament, and gives the impetus for the Christian mission and message. But the concept of God's authority over his people is not new with the New Testament. Henry sees a continuity between OT and NT authority: "The authority of the Old Testament prophets as divinely appointed spokesmen anticipates the authority also of the apostles."³ The authority of Christ himself, the supreme revelation of God, is redirected to the authority of the OT Scriptures: "The indissoluble connection between Christ and Scripture is evident in other ways as well [other than in promise and fulfillment]. Jesus himself expressly declared that he came not to destroy the law and the prophets but to fulfill them (Matt 5:17), and he dogmatically endorses the Old Testament Scriptures as the authoritative word of God" (as, for example, in Matt 9:13; 12:3; John 5:46-47; 10:35).⁴

¹"The Authority of the Bible," 19.

²*GRA*, 4:26.

³*GRA*, 4:33.

⁴*GRA*, 4:35.

Closely allied to the question of authority is the question of truthfulness. Henry devotes a whole chapter to the discussion of truthfulness by asking the question in the chapter's heading, "Is the Bible Literally True?"¹ In it he answers the major objections to the absolute truthfulness of Scripture, that he has already discussed in connection with the propositional nature of revelation: (1) That human language is anthropomorphic; (2) that all language and knowledge is culturally conditioned; (3) that finite language cannot be used to describe the Infinite; (4) that religious knowledge is analogical, according to Thomas Aquinas' theory of analogical knowledge; (5) that religious knowledge is by its very nature metaphorical and is accessed by figures of speech.² Ultimately Henry connects truthfulness with propositional revelation: "Since God is the source and ground of all truth, all truth is in some sense dependent upon divine disclosure and therefore 'revelational'. Truth consists of cognitively meaningful propositions; the totality of these propositions constitutes the mind of God."³ It is the process of inspiration that preserves Scripture's truthfulness, and now we turn to the question of inspiration.

The Inspired Nature of Revelation

Not only is Carl Henry interested in demonstrating that "all Scripture" is inspired, but all Scripture is inerrant through the powerful working of the Holy Spirit. He introduces this topic with thesis 12: "The Holy Spirit superintends the communication of divine

¹*GRA*, 4:103-128.

²*GRA*, 4:110-120.

³*GRA*, 5:336. For another analysis of Carl Henry's view of truth and truthfulness of Scripture see White, "The Concept of Truth in Contemporary American Evangelical Theology." For a critique of certain contemporary views of truth, see Carl F. H. Henry, "Basic Issues in Modern Theology: Revelation as Truth," *Christianity Today*, January 1, 1965, 14-17.

revelation, first as the inspirer and then as the illuminator and interpreter of the scripturally given Word of God.”¹ First of all, Henry offers this definition of “inspiration”: “Inspiration is a supernatural influence of the Holy Spirit upon divinely chosen agents in consequence of which their writings become trustworthy and authoritative.”² As we have already observed, Henry states that the Bible is authoritative because the authority of God himself is behind it, and inspiration is the byproduct of that authority. But we must be cognizant of the fact that he makes a clear-cut distinction between inspiration and inerrancy. Consistently in his thought inerrancy is not explicitly taught in Scripture, but inspiration is, and this is why he refuses to make inerrancy a “badge of loyalty” in the Neo-evangelical movement.

The step-by-step development of Henry’s doctrine of revelation is biblical, traditional, and evangelical in approach, so that we need not repeat all the steps in his thinking. But we should note how evangelical his view of inspiration is, in that he adapts the “Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy,” developed by the International Council on Biblical Inerrancy in October of 1978, with the result that there are just two denials and a total of eight affirmations.³ The original 1978 document had a total of nineteen affirmations and denials set forth as pairs that were introduced by a preamble and followed

¹*GRA*, 4:129.

²Carl F. H. Henry, “Bible, Inspiration of,” *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, 2nd ed., 160. Henry notes the biblical origin of the term in 2 Tim 3:16, where Scripture is said to be “God-breathed”: “The emphasis falls on divine initiative and impartation rather than on human creativity; Scripture owes its origin and nature to what God breathed out. In short, the Bible’s life-breath as a literary deposit is divine.” “The Authority and Inspiration of the Bible,” 13. Henry connects this “God-breathing” with the act of creation, which is a process of God’s speaking.

³The two affirmations are discussed in *GRA*, 4:137-144, and the eight denials in *GRA*, 4:144-161.

by an exposition.¹

Henry's goal was to hammer out a position on biblical inerrancy that would eventually become the centrist position for evangelicals, avoiding some of the potential pitfalls in the Chicago Statement.² Throughout his long writing career he was alarmed at the potentially divisiveness that the issue of inerrancy was generating among evangelicals. He hoped to bring the two sides, the inerrantists and the errantists, into a close association and perhaps to a common meeting ground. Those pulling in opposite directions were frequently and critically scrutinized, Harold Lindsell and James Barr being often the two who were singled out for criticism.³ Harold Lindsell, an editor of *Christianity Today* in 1976 when he published his evangelical bombshell, *Battle for the Bible*, came under Henry's criticism for making a doctrine of strict inerrancy the "litmus test" for who the true evangelicals are.⁴ In addition Lindsell is criticized for his total rejection of the use of the historical-critical methods among evangelicals, suggesting that these methods undermine a

¹For the Chicago Statement in its entirety, see "The Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 21 (1978): 289-296. For Henry's critique and evaluation of the statement, aside from *GRA*, 4:141ff., see Carl F. H. Henry, "The Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy': Theologian Carl F. H. Henry's Analysis," *Eternity*, February 1979, 44-46.

²He critiques the Chicago Statement for asserting that divine superintendence was involved even in the choice of words used in Scripture by the biblical writer, which he feels moves in the direction of verbal inspiration. *GRA*, 4:141.

³See the index of *GRA*, 4:644, for the nearly twenty references to Lindsell in that volume. In that same volume (vol. 4) we find that James Barr is mentioned nearly fifty times, most often in a critical light, according to the index entries in *GRA*, 4:641.

⁴Henry charges Lindsell with making inerrancy "the badge of evangelical authenticity." For a candid discussion of Henry's views on Lindsell expressed in an interview by three editors of evangelical papers, see "The Battle for the Bible," in *Conversations with Carl Henry*, 23-28, published originally in *The Trinity Scribe*, 1 June 1976. In another context Henry objects to Francis Schaeffer making inerrancy "the watershed of evangelical fidelity." Carl F. H. Henry, *Evangelicals in Search of Identity* (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1976), 53.

belief in inerrancy.¹ James Barr, a Reformed scholar and expert on Old Testament criticism, is strongly criticized by Henry for his total rejection of a doctrine of inerrancy and a seemingly unqualified acceptance of the use of the various critical methods.²

According to the parameters set forth at the beginning of this study, the question of inerrancy is outside the scope of this research, but it has been important to note the divisive nature of the debate on inerrancy with evangelicalism that continues to this day, noting especially the widening differences between Carl Henry and Bernard Ramm on this issue. It is also important to note that the question of inerrancy does have a direct relationship as to whether the early chapters of the Bible are to be interpreted historically, and how the days of creation are to be viewed if the entire Bible is considered inerrant.

Once Henry has established the propositional, inscripturated, and inspired nature of revelation, he is ready to examine the effects or results, both present and future, for the process of revelation.

5) The Results of Revelation

The present results of revelation are presently manifest in a twofold way, according to Carl Henry's outline of topics: first, in the life of the individual, and second in the life of

¹In Henry's words, "Dr. Lindsell regards the historical-critical method as in itself an enemy of orthodox Christian faith. He seems totally unaware that even evangelical seminaries of which he approves are committed to historical criticism, while repudiating the arbitrary, destructive presuppositions upon which the liberal use of the method is based." *Conversations with Carl Henry*, 26-27.

²James Barr in his *Beyond Fundamentalism* critiques evangelicals for holding to inerrancy and thus clinging to their fundamentalist roots. The title of his book may have piggy-backed on the title of Bernard Ramm's *After Fundamentalism*, published the previous year. The same criticisms that Henry had for Ramm were likewise reserved for Barr, and vice versa. Evidence of this is found in Carl Henry's review of Bernard Ramm's *After Fundamentalism*, in "Barth as Post-Enlightenment Guide: Three Responses to Ramm," *TSF Bulletin*, May-June 1983, 16.

the church. These are present-day effects that can be observed immediately. The future effects or results are yet to be manifest in the coming kingdom of God to be established in the last days. In theological terms I will briefly summarize Henry's views on ecclesiology and eschatology. Since these views, however, do not have a direct impact upon either his understanding of revelation or his understanding of creation, his view will be summarized in no more than a cursory fashion.¹

Revelation and the Individual

For Henry the test of the efficacy and power of God's revelation is manifest in the changed life of the individual who appropriates the truth of the Word, according to thesis 13: "Bestower of spiritual life, the Holy Spirit enables individuals to appropriate God's truth savingly, and attests its power in their personal experience."² The power to change a human life is the power evidenced in the creation of the world. Henry remarks: "So stupendous is the reborn sinner's spiritual and moral transformation that, in language recalling the creation account (Gen. 1:3), Paul depicts conversion itself as a supernatural act akin to divine creation [quoting 2 Cor 4:6]."³ Henry's concern is that evangelicals can be so wrapped up in the importance of the new-birth experience that they "minimize the importance of propounding the inerrancy, inspiration or authority of the Bible."⁴

A central motif, according to the New Testament, in the new-birth experience is

¹Henry's discussion of these topics, which I have subsumed under section 5, "The Results of Revelation," occupies only about a hundred pages in *God, Revelation and Authority*. See *GRA*, 4:494-614.

²*GRA*, 4:494.

³*Ibid.*

⁴*GRA*, 4:495.

that of the image of God, which again links creation with conversion. Henry finds that the image of God “stands in the forefront of Old and New Testaments, being used in Genesis of God’s creation of humankind in his likeness, in Colossians of the Holy Spirit’s moral renewal of penitent sinners, and in John of complete restoration to Christ’s image when the risen Lord returns.”¹ For him the concept of God’s image also enhances the dignity of women, who are equally part of God’s image: “Foundational to the New Testament emphasis on the dignity of women is its Old Testament background. In the Genesis creation account, male and female alike bear the image of God (Gen. 1:27).”² His view of creation that is reflected in the new-birth, or new-creation, experience of the individual and that is applied to the enhancement of the role of women in the church and society is biblically based and stands opposed to any humanistic attempts to transform society through philosophy or political agendas.³

Revelation and the Church

According to Henry’s thesis 14, “The church approximates God’s kingdom in miniature, mirroring to each generation the power and joy of the appropriated realities of divine revelation.”⁴ The theme linking this thesis with the previous one is that of “power”–

¹*GRA*, 4:497.

²*GRA*, 4:515.

³Henry critiques Norman Vincent Peale’s “power of positive thinking” philosophy as well as Robert H. Schuller’s similar philosophy of “possibility thinking” that permeates his television program, “The Hour of Power” and his ministry to his 8,000-member church, “The Crystal Cathedral.” *GRA*, 4:518. He is also critical of the Marxist ideology that forms the basis of “Liberation Theology” in Latin America. *GRA*, 4:522-541.

⁴*GRA*, 4:542.

the power of the Holy Spirit to transform first the life of the individual, then the community of the church, and finally society itself through the influence of the church. This is the same power exerted by Christ, the Creator-God, at the work of creation in the beginning of time.

Henry's ecclesiology is very much oriented toward its social mission, a theme which he adopted early on in his writing career when he wrote perhaps his most influential book, outside of *God, Revelation and Authority*, within evangelical circles—*The Uneasy Conscience of Modern Fundamentalism*.¹ This book catapulted Henry into the evangelical limelight, and he was soon designated the new leader of evangelicalism.² The societal responsibility of the church is very much in evidence in Henry's opening discussion of the church and its mission:

The gospel resounds with good news for the needy and oppressed. It conveys assurance that injustice, repression, exploitation, discrimination and poverty are dated and doomed, that no one is forced to accept the crush of evil powers as finally determinative for his or her existence. Into the morass of sinful human history and experience the gospel heralds a new order of life shaped by God's redemptive intervention.³

The authority of the gospel and its power to change lives and societies is founded upon the authority of Scripture—the power of the Word that likewise brought the world into

¹In it he rebukes fundamentalism for its social isolationism and for the failure of its churches to take on a larger responsibility to society.

²John D. Woodbridge attributes the “emergence” of Henry as “a spokesperson for the ‘new evangelical’ movement” to the publication of this book. See his article, “Carl F. H. Henry: Spokesperson for American Evangelicalism,” in *God and Culture: Essays in Honor of Carl F. H. Henry* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 384. David Weeks similarly writes: “This book is often referred to as the manifesto of the evangelical movement,” citing Donald Bloesch and Robert K. Johnston in support of this contention. David L. Weeks, “The Political Thought of Carl F. H. Henry” (Ph.D. dissertation, Loyola University of Chicago, 1991), 12, n. 38.

³*GRA*, 4:542.

existence. The incarnation makes possible the restoration of God's original plan for humankind: "God's incarnation in Jesus Christ has in view the restoration of his fallen creation to its originally intended purpose."¹ The Sabbath is that which ties together creation, the incarnation, and the new creation: "The prospect of God's sabbath, the good news of healing from man's moral and social ills, envisions a new heavens and earth, a new age, a new creation."²

Most of Henry's discussion of the church deals with its relationship to society, the realm of social ethics. This topic has been adequately dealt with in other doctoral studies,³ so I will not repeat what has already been stated. What one does find in a survey of Henry's discussion of the church and social action is that he is concerned that the church not adopt a philosophy or ideology, such as Marxism, that is foreign to Scripture.⁴

Revelation and the Coming Kingdom

Carl Henry's final thesis, number 15, as one would expect deals with eschatology: "God will unveil his glory in a crowning revelation of power and judgment, vindicating

¹*GRA*, 4:553.

²*Ibid.*

³For an analysis of Carl Henry's personal and social ethics in relationship to his views on revelation, see Miroslav M. Kiš, "Revelation and Ethics: Dependence, Interdependence, Independence? A Comparative Study of Reinhold Niebuhr and Carl F. H. Henry" (Ph.D. dissertation, McGill University, 1983), noting especially pp. 388-407. For an analysis of Henry's views of the church's social responsibilities in the arena of politics, see David L. Weeks, "The Political Thought of Carl F. H. Henry."

⁴See Henry's chapters, "Marxist Exegesis of the Bible" and "The Marxist Reconstruction of Man," in *GRA*, 4:555-577 and 578-592 respectively. See also frequent references to Marxism scattered throughout Henry's book, *The Christian Mindset in a Secular Society: Promoting Evangelical Renewal and National Righteousness* (Portland, OR: Multnomah, 1984).

righteousness and justice and subduing and subordinating evil.”¹

In this section Henry goes to great lengths to establish the God of the Bible as the one true God, in opposition to all false gods, which are creations of humankind. The ultimate proof that he is the true God is that he will reveal himself in person at the time of the setting up of his kingdom. In setting forth this thesis Henry is more concerned about the nature of God than he is about the nature of God’s kingdom. Is it a kingdom on earth? in heaven? What is the relationship of the second advent of Christ to the kingdom of glory? Does the second advent happen prior to the establishment of the kingdom (premillennialism), or does it follow the setting up of the kingdom (postmillennialism)? Related to the question of the kingdom is the question of the eternal destiny of unrepentant humankind: Are the unrepentant wicked annihilated at the time the kingdom is fully established (annihilationism), or are the rebellious wicked kept alive eternally (doctrine of eternal hell)? These specific questions about the kingdom are only touched upon very lightly in Henry’s voluminous writings.²

Henry’s view of the end-times falls more in line with “realized eschatology” than with dispensationalism, which he rejects. For him the kingdom of God is already here, although it retains both aspects of the “already here” and the “not yet.” He writes: “The great redemptive event for the eschatological end time no longer belongs to an indefinite

¹*GRA*, 4:593.

²Henry has only one statement on annihilationism in *God, Revelation and Authority*, and this he rejects on the basis of certain biblical passages (Mark 12:40; Luke 12:47ff.). See *GRA*, 6:510. Elsewhere he rejects annihilationism in the same breath that he rejects universalism: “Biblical theology thus gives no comfort to the notion that the unredeemed will be annihilated, nor to the teaching of the final salvability of all men.” Carl F. H. Henry, “The Final Triumph,” in *Foundations of the Faith*, ed. David J. Fant (Westwood, NJ: Fleming H. Revell, 1951), 176. It would be interesting to observe how Henry connects his view on annihilationism to the doctrine of creation, but we have no inkling how he would do such.

future; it has already occurred in the historical past, in the resurrection of the crucified Jesus from the grave.”¹ Thus his rejection of Fundamentalism in the 1940s involved a rejection of the extremes of Fundamentalism’s eschatology, although later in his career he still retained Fundamentalism’s belief in the conversion of a remnant of Jews according to a literal interpretation of the Apocalypse.²

This last section on the topic of revelation has dealt with the questions, What for? or, For what purpose? This analysis of Henry’s doctrine of revelation started with the question, Why? Why is there a need for divine revelation? Then this study examined the various types of revelation, especially looking at the difference between general and special revelation. This was followed by a focus upon the central personage of revelation, Jesus Christ, the divine Logos, as I attempted to answer the question, Who is the center of revelation? In the fourth section I surveyed Henry’s views on the process and means of revelation, answering the question of How? All of these questions then round out the discussion of Henry’s views on revelation. His views can be subsumed under the topic of “propositional revelation,” which is both intelligible and divinely given and thus is authoritative for Christians in all aspects of their lives today and unveils the future so that

¹*GRA*, 3:22. He goes on to state: “God’s kingdom has thus actually already broken into the human predicament [according to Luke 11:20].” *GRA*, 3:23. He notes that the Gospel accounts and the Book of Acts view the present age as the turning point in history, so much so that the “not yet” is crowded out by the “already.” *GRA*, 3:22. With Henry’s emphasis on “realized eschatology” he makes a break with his fundamentalist roots. Early on in his career in his epoch-making book, *The Uneasy Conscience of Modern Fundamentalism*, he rejected Fundamentalism because of its preoccupation with a future eschatology to the point it neglected present-day concerns with respect to its obligations to society. His message in that work is that the “kingdom is already here!”—a form of “realized eschatology.” See his chapter in *The Uneasy Conscience of Modern Fundamentalism*, “The Apprehension over Kingdom Preaching,” 48-57.

²*Conversations with Carl Henry*, 117, where he states in an interview: “The Bible speaks of a recovery of faith by a remnant of Jewry, perhaps by a considerable remnant, and of Messiah’s return in such a time” (117). This interview was first published in *Religious Broadcasting*, December 1982.

they know what is their concrete hope for all of eternity. Having covered the major aspects of Henry's doctrine of revelation, I now turn to his doctrine of creation, noting especially the interconnection between the two doctrines.

Henry's Doctrine of Creation

The doctrine of creation according to Carl Henry's *God, Revelation and Authority* is a sub-topic under the doctrine of God, as it is in all classical evangelical systematic theologies. The discussion of creation occupies all of volume 6 of his six-volume series, whereas the doctrine of God is occupied by volume 5. Actually, all the essential points of his doctrine of creation were hammered out prior to the publication of his magnum opus, starting fifteen years earlier in his contribution to *Contemporary Evangelical Thought* (1957), a volume which he edited.¹ In that 1957 volume he summarized in the form of a thesis his view of the evangelical understanding of the doctrine of creation:

That a sovereign, personal, ethical God is the voluntary creator of the space-time universe; that God created *ex nihilo* by divine fiat; that the stages of creation reflect an orderly rational sequence; that there are divinely graded levels of life; that man is distinguished from the animals by a superior origin and dignity; that the human race is a unity in Adam; that man was divinely assigned the vocation of conforming the created world to the service of the will of God; that the whole creation is a providential and teleological order; that the whole front of evangelical theology finds these irreducible truths of revelation in the Genesis creation account. That the word of creation is no mere instrumental word, but rather a personal Word, the Logos, who is the divine agent in creation; that this Logos permanently assumed human nature in Jesus Christ; that the God of creation and of revelation and of redemption and of sanctification and of judgment is one and the same God: these staggering truths evangelical theology

¹"Science and Religion," 245-287.

unanimously supports on the basis of the larger New Testament disclosure.¹

The foundation for his doctrine of creation, however, is laid first with his doctrine of revelation and of Scripture, just as in a pragmatic sense his doctrine of God is based upon his doctrine of revelation.

The 1957 statement on creation was largely shaped in the crucible of contemporary evangelical conflicts over creation as it related to modern science and the use of the scientific method as a result of the Enlightenment. It was preceded by Bernard Ramm's 1954 work, *The Christian View of Science and Scripture*, which is viewed as an attack on fundamentalist approaches to science and their treatment of Scripture as a textbook of science useful for resolving scientific controversies. The influence of Ramm in shaping the agenda for the discussion of science and religion issues is apparent throughout Carl Henry's 1957 chapter, "Science and Religion."²

After writing "Science and the Bible" in 1957, Carl Henry developed his view on

¹Ibid., 258-259. Henry quotes this statement in an article written the following year: Carl F. H. Henry, "Science and the Bible," *Christianity Today*, 1 September 1958, 22. This statement in its entirety is again quoted two years after originally published, and this time in a new context, the conflict with evolution: Carl F. H. Henry, "Theology and Evolution," in *Evolution and Christian Thought Today*, ed. Russell L. Mixer (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1959), 220. This same statement appears in yet another context as part of Henry's article in the back of the Holman Study Bible: "The Bible and Modern Science," 1188. It is prefaced there with a brief summary of the statement: "The biblical view of creation presupposes several things: (1) a sovereign mind and will; (2) origination by fiat command; (3) graded ordered of being and life. In other words, the Bible teaches that the universe owes its existence and continuation to the Will and Word of a transcendent God; that this unique divine activity of creation (Gn 1.1; 2.4; cf. He 11.3) established fixed grades of being and life (cf. 'after his kind,' Gn 1.11,13,21,24,25 and 6:20)." The repeated use of the original 1957 statement in a variety of differing contexts shows the esteem Carl Henry had for this summary of his (and evangelicals') thoughts on creation. It can be considered an "evangelical creation credo," broken down into eleven theses, just as Henry's doctrine of revelation is subsumed under fifteen theses.

²Henry's comments on Ramm are scattered throughout the chapter "Science and Religion" (e.g., 248, 250, 252, 267, 272, 276) and are largely negative, starting with his criticism of the title of Ramm's book, which presumably gives greater emphasis to science than to Scripture by putting science before Scripture, as in *The Christian View of Science and Scripture*. On the basis of this logic, one could fault Henry for elevating science above faith, as in Carl F. H. Henry, "Science and Faith," *Faith and Thought* 104 (Summer 1977): 53-56.

creation further in a section he wrote in 1962 for the *Holman Study Bible*.¹ However, Henry's mature view on creation is best exhibited in *God, Revelation and Authority*, volume 6, dated to 1983, and it is this statement of his thinking that will be the focus of our attention, for it reflects his deepest thinking on the subject, as well as upon the doctrines of God and revelation.² Other than these three major statements on creation, he has only an occasional article on the topic, mainly as a critique of modern science.³

Important Facets of Henry's Doctrine of Creation

The Biblical Basis for Creation

In contrast to some evangelicals, Carl Henry largely excludes general revelation from his doctrine of creation, perhaps out of fear that if so used general revelation could revert to a natural theology in terms of the way it has been developed over the centuries by

¹"The Bible and Modern Science," 1184-1194.

²Indeed the title of his magnum opus could very well have been *God, Revelation and Creation*, because it is upon the doctrine of creation that Henry finds perhaps the greatest erosion of the Bible's authority in modern times.

³One of Henry's earliest critiques of modern science is "The God of the Bible Versus Naturalism," in *Christianity and World Revolution*, ed. Edwin H. Rian (New York: Harper & Row, 1963), 225-237. Some of the themes in this early study appear throughout his monograph, *Gods of This Age or God of the Ages?*, a compilation of both lectures and published articles by Carl Henry. The opening chapter, "Christianity and Resurgent Paganism," an address first delivered in Romania, 13 September 1990, has this significant comment on naturalism: "In the western world naturalism has become biblical theism's major competing conceptuality. The supernatural thought structure is shunned as alien to the academic arena." *Ibid.*, 2. For Henry's critique of the modern world view, which is largely shaped by scientific thought, see "The Christian Worldview Imperative," *Faculty Dialogue* 11 (1989): 23-32; and "Fortunes of the Christian World View," *Trinity Journal* 29 (1998): 163-176. The relationship between humankind and the natural world in the context of the ecology movement is discussed in an article, "Stewardship of the Environment," in *Applying the Scriptures*, ed. Kenneth S. Kantzer (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1987), 473-488. While all of these topics do relate to Henry's doctrine of creation, they are only tangential to this present study.

Roman Catholicism, leading to the acceptance of Thomism.¹ This he rejects, one reason being that natural theology sets up a system of revelation based upon propositions that are totally independent of Scripture. But his starting point in the development of his doctrine of creation in *God, Revelation and Authority* is Gen 1 and the great passages of both the Old and New Testaments on creation.²

For Henry the doctrine of creation is the cornerstone for all of history and the foundation for all of theology. The biblical world view has two foci, creation and eschatology, upon which all of sacred and secular history is founded and understood. In the words of Henry: “The Bible sets miraculous redemptive history and the secular world history in which it occurs in the context of two governing facts, namely, God’s creation of the world and his final consummation and judgment of human affairs.”³ The great events of the Old Testament, such as the exodus from Egypt and the entry into the promised land, have themes that are derived from creation, and the Sabbath commandment suggests “the unity between creation and covenant.”⁴ Henry’s propositional view of revelation takes

¹For the detailed argumentation of why Henry rejects natural theology, see his chapter, “The Rejection of Natural Theology,” in *GRA*, 2:104-123. He ends the chapter with his own three reasons for its rejection: “We reject natural theology because of the express nature of supernatural revelation, because of man’s epistemic nature and because of the invalidity of empirically based arguments for theism.” *GRA*, 2:123.

²*GRA*, 6:108ff., 120ff. In his earlier creation statements he takes a similar position: “Only monotheistic religion, however, teaches the fashioning of the universe out of nothing by the creative power of God. The only source of this doctrine is the Bible (Gen 1.1-2.25, Jn 1.3, Cl 1.16-17, He 11.3).” “The Bible and Modern Science,” 1187. This teaching of *creatio ex nihilo* cannot be supported either by natural theology or general revelation, but Henry finds it explicitly taught in Scripture, as will be discussed in greater detail below.

³*GRA*, 2:331. Protology and eschatology are the two anchor points for all of history. Henry considers then the story of Jesus’ life and death on earth as “the midpoint of history.” *GRA*, 2:289.

⁴*GRA*, 2:332. He also sees the Sabbath as having an eschatological aspect.

these events, starting with creation, as being historical events. In addition to being foundational for understanding history, he views the doctrine of creation as foundational for theology: “The doctrine of creation is the bedrock foundation of every major doctrine of the church. On this doctrine, for example, rest the biblical Sabbath (Heb. 4:3f.), monogamous marriage (Matt. 19:4 ff.), and the universal brotherhood of man (Acts 17:26).”¹ At the same time he recognizes the legitimacy of scientific evidence in developing a Christian world view.²

It is Henry’s doctrine of man and especially his emphasis upon the rationality of humankind that gives an indelible stamp to all of Henry’s doctrine of creation. This he summarizes by saying:

Evangelical thinkers ground in the doctrine of creation the fact that man’s linguistic and cognitive capacity are unique and apparently transferred via the genetic mechanism from one generation to another. The image of God in man facilitates his cognitive transcendence of nature and the linguisticization of cognitive capacity.³

As noted previously, Henry connects the Logos (intelligence) principle with the image of God by correlating John 1 with Gen 1-2. The image of God then is not only the end-product of a doctrine of creation, but also the avenue for leading to a belief in creation, or a

¹*GRA*, 6:119.

²Henry defends scientific pursuit in these words: “The Christian challenge to current evolutionary theory therefore need not imply a repudiation of empirical science per se.” *GRA*, 6:117. Elsewhere he details the relationship of science to the development of one’s theology in *GRA*, “Theology and Science,” 1:165-175. In this section he argues that a Christian world view can incorporate elements of philosophical and scientific discovery: “Almost a century ago James Orr emphasized in *The Christian View of God and the World* (Kerr Lectures) that truth is universal, and that the revelationally based Christian world view therefore will not and does not conflict with anything that philosophy or science can establish with certitude.” *GRA*, 1:166.

³*GRA*, 3:346. The term “linguisticization” has been coined by Henry and does not appear in *Webster’s Third New International Dictionary*.

testimony to God's creative power. As Henry acknowledges, "The revelation of the transcendent Logos sustains his [man's] quest for meaning and worth, and spotlights the truth of man's divine creation and eschatological destiny."¹ Henry's view of the image of God allows the conscience and spiritual consciousness to not only be a part of God's image, but also to be integral to the teaching of general revelation.² Moreover, by uniting together general revelation and the image of God upon the common ground of the human conscience, Henry projects the important role that these topics play in the realm of personal and social ethics. Thus the doctrine of creation, in Henry's thought, is also foundational to a proper understanding of ethics.³

In a sense, the image of God provides the physical/psychological mechanisms whereby divine revelation is possible, so that God can communicate with humankind. "Since the eternal Logos himself structures the created universe and the conditions of communication," posits Henry, "logical connections are eternally grounded in God's mind and will, and are binding for man in view of the *imago Dei*."⁴ The image of God in humankind is much more than mental or physical, but includes the categories of "moral and

¹*GRA*, 3:172.

²In "Revelation, Special" (2001), 1021, Henry defines general revelation as "revelation in nature, history, reason, and conscience." In *GRA*, 2:87, he ties this general revelation very closely with the image of God: "Because God willed to make himself known thus, he provided a universal revelation in the cosmos and in history, a general anthropological revelation in the mind and conscience of man, and . . . a particular salvific revelation consummated in Jesus Christ. . . . God is universally self-disclosed, therefore, in the created world; in man who bears the remnants of the divine image; . . . and in the whole sweep of history that repeatedly falls under God's moral judgment."

³For the important role that Henry's understanding of the *imago Dei* plays in the development of philosophical and practical ethics, see Kis, 308-323. For the relation of natural law and human rights see *Twilight of a Great Civilization*, 156-160.

⁴*GRA*, 3:214.

spiritual” as well, thus suggesting that man is not patterned after ape-like ancestors.¹ Henry reasons: “Whereas evolutionary study of man is preoccupied with man’s likeness to the lower animals, the Genesis account speaks not at all about man’s similarity to the other creatures; it delineates rather man’s specially fashioned likeness to God (Gen. 1:27).”² Thus the Scriptural teaching of man’s being in God’s image lays the foundation for the doctrine of creation by emphasizing the rationality of God as seen in all creation and in the mind of man, by testifying to the validity of general revelation, and by distinguishing man clearly from the animal world, and in so doing negating an evolutionary origin for humankind. Thus the doctrine of the *imago Dei* lays the foundation for a doctrine of creation that excludes all of life being a product of chance processes.

The Bible and Evolution

In the thinking of Carl Henry the Darwinian theory of organic evolution poses a greater threat to the biblical teaching upon creation than any other philosophy or teaching in modern times. He finds that evolutionary thought has been elevated into a world view that permeates all facets of society—education, government, morality, and religion.³ For him there can be no compromise between evangelical theology and evolutionary theory in that any compromise would be considered capitulation. His unwavering antagonism towards a molecules-to-man evolutionary approach thus indicates the common ground evangelicalism

¹*GRA*, 6:201. Evolution strips humankind of the “uniqueness of rational, moral and spiritual categories.” Elsewhere he states that the *imago Dei* means that man “from the beginning [was] intended for fellowship with God, for rational-moral-spiritual discrimination, for social responsibility, for dominion over the earth and the animals.” “Science and Religion,” 282.

²*GRA*, 6:203.

³For evolution’s impact upon morality, culture, and history, see “Theology and Evolution,” 218.

holds with Fundamentalism in its strong opposition to evolution during the first half of the nineteenth century. Space will allow us to explore only a few of the aspects of Henry's thinking on this critical issue.

Definition of evolution

Carl Henry begins one of his first discussions of evolution with this very brief definition of both theology and evolution: "Theology is the science of God; evolution, the doctrine of change."¹ He states that evolution or Darwinism is more than simply a change of organisms with time through a process of natural selection, inherited characteristics, and mutations; otherwise evangelical Christians could accept evolution.² But "the history of philosophy defines evolution as an immanent process whereby the whole universe of being and life has evolved through the self-differentiation of lower into higher forms."³ He identifies the key components of evolution, what he considers its "warp and woof": "(1) an endowed or unactualized primitive entity, (2) temporal development, (3) progressive acquisition of new capacities."⁴ In its pre-Darwinian form, "the history of philosophy defines evolution as an immanent process whereby the whole universe of being and life has evolved through the self-differentiation of lower into higher forms."⁵ The Darwinian form of evolution adds the mechanisms of how all of life could be derived from a single living

¹Ibid., 190.

²Ibid., 197.

³Ibid.

⁴Henry, "Science and Religion," 251-252. He recognizes there are many other components of evolutionary theory, but these are the basic ones.

⁵"Theology and Evolution," 197.

source: descent with modification, gradual variations over very long periods of time, a struggle for existence based upon overproduction, and the survival of the fittest.

Darwinian evolution can be further subdivided into two views, macro-evolution and micro-evolution—one of which Henry accepts and the other he rejects. Macro-evolution is the concept that all of present-day life is a product of slow changes by natural processes from preceding forms of life, which can ultimately be traced back to one single-celled organism that is the ancestor of all plant and animal life on this planet. This view of evolution Henry rejects on the basis that Scripture mandates the special creation of fixed orders or grades of organisms.¹ On the other hand, micro-evolution theorizes that small changes can form new species, genera, or orders through natural processes of adaptation and genetic change. This latter type of evolution Henry does not reject.²

Reasons for rejecting evolution

Why is Carl Henry so adamant in his rejection of the one form of evolution, that is, macro-evolution? His total rejection of macro-evolution is due to his reticence about endorsing “progressive creation,” which Bernard Ramm and other evangelicals proposed for positing the abrupt introduction of new “kinds” into geological history, followed by the

¹Henry speaks of the idea of “fixed grades of being and life” being one of three elements “essential to the biblical idea of creation.” “Science and Religion,” 251. He acknowledges that evangelical theology allows “room for a staggering aggregate of intermediary species and varieties between the specially created ‘kinds’ of life,” (ibid., 258) while at the same time he believes that “the Bible itself . . . speaks only of the fixity of *kinds*, rather than of species, of life.” “The Bible and Modern Science,” 1191, emphasis original.

²In “Theology and Evolution,” 204-211, Henry chides fundamentalists for holding to “fixity of species,” which he believes is not taught in Genesis and which is not endorsed by most evangelicals. He clearly rejects “macro-evolution” on p. 209 of this discussion.

evolution of those “kinds” into many “sub-kinds.”¹ He finds very little difference between progressive creation and theistic evolution.

Among the many reasons for Henry’s rejection of macro-evolution, or even progressive creation, four reasons stand out. First, Scripture gives no hint whatsoever that all living things are derived from a common living ancestor. In fact, plain biblical statements differentiate the origin of living things into various groupings, called “kinds” (Gen 1:21, 24-25). Henry comments upon these “divinely graded *kinds* of being” described in Gen 1:

If evolutionists had derived all life forms from supernaturally fixed classes, orders and families consistently with the biblical emphasis that ‘there is one flesh of men, and another flesh of beasts and another flesh of birds, and another of fishes’ (I Cor. 15:40 [*sic*]), each reproducing ‘after its kind’ (Gen. 1:21, 24ff., etc.), Christianity could have found an immediate basis for friendly discussion with evolutionary science.²

For Henry, Gen 1 in conjunction with 1 Cor 15:39-40 is normative for determining the nature of the original categories of created animals, thus ruling out any acceptance of macro-evolution. On the other hand, he does not argue in favor of “fixity of species,” and

¹One reason that Henry proposes for rejecting progressive creationism is its acknowledgment that the order in Gen 1 and the order in the geological record is at variance; hence the sequence in Genesis is symbolic, not literal. Note his reference to Ramm: “Progressive creationism, as Bernard Ramm expounds it in *The Christian View of Science and Scripture*, insists that the order within the fossil record is not one of chance but of divine design, even though its sequence cannot be equated with the chronology of Genesis; the Genesis sequence . . . is considered visionary and not historical.” *GRA*, 6:146. So Henry views progressive creationism as a “smokescreen” for macro-evolution: “Progressive creationism, a view popular among many evangelical scientists, can therefore also be considered a variety of theistic evolution, yet one which holds that major steps in developmental advance have resulted from fiat creation that sporadically penetrated long ages of comparatively gradual change.” *GRA*, 6:142. He perceives “progressive creationism” as attempting to attract evolutionists to theism “under false pretenses,” which will eventually embarrass evangelicalism. “Science and Religion,” 250.

²“Theology and Evolution,” 197. I Cor 15:39 incorrectly cited as 15:40.

thus recommends that evangelicals accept micro-evolution.¹

Second, his theology of creation has as a major component the doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo*, defined simply as creation apart from any antecedent causation.² He is certain that science will never uncover an explanation of how life can originate through natural processes from non-life,³ nor will it ever explain how matter could come from non-matter. This is based on his belief that “God created *ex nihilo* by divine fiat.”⁴ This is Henry’s starting point for his doctrine of creation:

If the Christian doctrine of creation contains one central emphasis *how* God created, it is that God created by the instrumentality of his Word and, moreover, that he created *ex nihilo*. Scripture does not align God side by side with preexistent matter or with eternal chaos; rather it presents the Word or Wisdom side by side or face to face with the Father.⁵

Henry finds the biblical support for this teaching not only in Gen 1 (“And God said, Let there be . . .”), but also in Ps 33:6-9 and Heb 11:3.⁶ The doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo* is elevated to great importance because of Henry’s view that Scripture records the words of

¹Henry assures us: “There is no need to deny progression in some species or retrogression in others, or in view of this to deny the emergence of new ‘species’ scientifically so-called.” *GRA*, 6:175. As noted previously, he engages in a detailed critique of the outdated theory of “fixity of species” in his “Theology and Evolution,” 204-211. Elsewhere he admits, “Evangelical expositors erred when they unhesitatingly equated the graded *kinds* of life affirmed in Genesis with the biological species schematized by contemporary science.” “Science and the Bible,” 20.

²While literally *creatio ex nihilo* means “creation out of nothing,” this should not be inferred as meaning that “nothingness” was the “substance” out of which the world was made. It simply means the world was made starting “from nothing,” or with “nothingness” as the starting point.

³See Henry’s discussion of this under the heading of “Life and Inanimate Matter” in “Theology and Evolution,” 211-215.

⁴*Ibid.*, 220. This statement originally appeared in “Science and Religion,” 258.

⁵These are the opening words of a chapter in *GRA*, 6:120ff., entitled “Creation *Ex Nihilo*,” emphasis original.

⁶*GRA*, 6:123.

God. A supernatural creation by the spoken words of God is closely allied with a supernatural book containing the written words of God.¹ Evolutionary theory by contrast does not allow for this type of supernatural intervention into nature by an intelligent Designer.

Third, Henry rejects evolution because he believes that Scripture tells us much more than the fact of creation, but it also illuminates the process of creation. He strongly disagrees with fellow evangelicals who were arguing that the Bible gives only the *who* and the *why* of creation, not the *what* and the *how*. He must have read Bernard Ramm's comments on this: "The Bible tells us emphatically *that* God created, but is silent as to *how* God created."² For he critiques that position: "The notion that the creation account tells us the *who* and *why* of creation but not *how* God created needs careful examination. God's method is surely that of divine fiat. . . . The *how* of God's creation is his authoritative word or command. God creates, nonetheless, in an orderly time-sequence"—a time sequence which Ramm's progressive creationism takes exception to.³ Certainly Henry's firm belief in the propositional nature of revelation and in the inerrant nature of Scripture in theology, science, and history has led him to the conclusion that any form of theistic evolution or progressive creation is incompatible with a biblical doctrine of creation.

¹One of three presuppositions of creation is "origination by fiat command." "The Bible and Modern Science," 1188. This is further elaborated: It means "that God created *ex nihilo* by divine fiat." As has been previously noticed, Bernard Ramm views the geological record as composed of many acts of creation by fiat sprinkled through long ages. This is progressive creationism.

²Bernard Ramm, *CVSS*, 70, emphasis original. Elsewhere Ramm continues on this theme: "The theologian knows that God is Creator, but that fact does not tell him the *how* and *when*. The geologist knows the *how* and *when*, but the *Who* is a mystery to him." *CVSS*, 154, emphasis original.

³*GRA*, 6:114, emphasis original. On the next page (115) Henry quotes Ramm's argument that the Bible only gives the *who* and the *why* of creation, as well as rejecting his "moderate concordism" that finds only approximate chronological harmony between the sequences in Gen 1 and in geology.

Fourth, Henry rejects macro-evolution because it completely undermines the biblical concept of man being created in God's image (Gen 1:26-27) as well as the historicity of Adam's fall. While he does not hold to "fixity of species," as we have just observed, he does apply the idea of "constancy of species" to the origin of man: "In at least one respect the Bible insists on the constancy of species, and that notably in respect to man as a special creation."¹ After noting that theistic evolutionists are willing to accept the idea that man originated from a pre-human form—that is, *Homo sapiens* has had a pre-history—he sets forth his own position (and that of evangelicals): "Over and against these theories the traditional creationist view teaches man was both anatomically and spiritually a new divine creation."² Henry states in no uncertain terms: "In any event, no biblical basis exists for regarding any animal species as the progenitor of man."³ The creation of Adam from the dust of the ground (Gen 2:7) rules out any living progenitor for the human race, although it cannot rule out physiological and chemical similarity between humankind and the other creatures said to be most closely related to humankind. "Scripture declares man as bearer of the divine likeness to be a distinct 'kind' of being. The 'dust' into which Yahweh breathes 'the breath of lives' (Gen. 2:7) was clearly not a living animal."⁴ The Bible offers not a sliver of evidence that man has been evolved, even in his physical aspects, from

¹Henry, "The Bible and Modern Science," 1192.

²Ibid.

³*GRA*, 6:222.

⁴*GRA*, 6:222. Man can still bear similarities to other creatures: "While the Bible affirms man's creation by a unique divine act, it does not exclude anatomical similarities between human and non-human forms." "The Bible and Modern Science," 1193. According to Henry, man's having been created from dust means that not all creation is *ex nihilo* and does not rule out the possibility that the dust may have been animated. *GRA*, 6:223, cf. "Science and Religion," 282.

anthropoid apes or hominids, nor does the Scriptural teaching of the fall of humanity with its dire consequences upon the entire human race connote any kind of human progress in the Darwinian sense.¹

If the theory of macro-evolution has been paraded by modern man as the key to understanding all of human culture, history, religion, and biology, for Carl Henry the concept of the Logos as related to the image of God within humankind is “the key to creation, revelation, redemption, sanctification, and judgment—in other words, as the center of reference for science, philosophy, religion, ethics, and history.”² This fourth reason, the creation of God’s image within humankind, then is the most compelling reason in Henry’s thought for the evangelical to reject macro-evolution.³

The Uniformity of Nature and Miracles

Evolution is based upon the concept of a closed sequence of cause and effect in order to account for the descent of all living things on earth from one common ancestor.

Changes between parent and offspring generations are said to be either very minor or non-

¹The doctrine of man’s being created in God’s image has a darker side to it; the partial erasure of that image as a result of his fall in Eden. This teaching Henry finds totally incompatible with any theory of evolution: “This [Darwinian] evolutionary speculation challenged not only the dignity of man on the basis of creation; it challenged also the fact of his fall and sinfulness. For both these conceptions, evolutionary philosophy substituted the dogma of human progress and perfectibility. Hence it eliminated the doctrine of man’s need for supernatural redemption. The intellectual movement of the past century portrays a loss of faith in the Apostles’ Creed simultaneous with a rise of faith in the evolutionary creed.” “Theology and Evolution,” 217-218.

²Ibid.,” 221.

³Henry discusses additional reasons for rejecting evolution, many of which are as much philosophical or scientific, as they are theological. One should consult chapter 8 of Henry’s *GRA*, 6:156-196, for his climactic discussion of such, but one should note that this discussion, in contrast to others on the subject, does not have any references to Scriptural texts. The discussion there is meant to be more philosophical and scientific, rather than biblical and exegetical in nature. This study concentrates upon his biblical and theological reasons for rejecting macro-evolution.

existing. Major changes in organisms between two generations would not be allowable in the evolutionary paradigm and would be rejected on the basis that such suggests creation, which is declared to be a violation of natural law. The challenge for Henry and for evangelicals is to harmonize a belief in the uniformity (or regularity) of nature and its processes with a belief in supernatural intervention, that is, in miracles.¹

The principle of uniformity of nature and of natural law is considered by Henry to be an enemy of Christianity, because over the centuries skeptics have used uniformity to deny the major teachings of Christianity such as creation, the virgin birth, and the resurrection. In 1957 he observed: “The contemporary philosophy of science retains its basic hostility to transcendent divine activity” because of its “dogma of uniformity.”² This is one of the principal reasons for the conflict between science and Christianity. In fact, the modern scientist turns toward this principle for his “faith”—his “faith in uniformity as an idolatrous principle to which the scientist pays his vows.”³ Henry went so far as to state: “No dogma more completely undermined the relevance of the Hebrew-Christian tradition for the modern mind than that of the absolute uniformity of nature,” which “precipitated the modern attack on miracle.”⁴ Uniformitarianism, the idea that all natural processes today

¹For Henry’s views on the uniformity of nature, see *Remaking the Modern Mind*, chaps. 4 and 5.

²“Science and Religion,” 264.

³Ibid. The uniformitarian view of nature is said to be advocated by the “scoffers” of 2 Pet 3:6, who declared that “all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation.” Ibid., 264-265. This linking of 2 Pet 3 and uniformitarianism was fairly common among fundamentalists, including George McCready Price, who wished to counteract the influence of geological theory in the early twentieth century.

⁴*Remaking the Modern Mind*, 79. This is the opening statement in his extensive discussion of uniformity in two chapters of *Remaking the Modern Mind*, 77-98, 99-116. Elsewhere he finds it to be the major conflict between Christianity and science: “This faith in uniformity promotes the main plateaus of conflict between science and Christianity.” “Science and Religion,” 264.

proceed at the same rate and intensity as the processes of the past, has become the foundation of modern geology. Henry criticizes Davis Young's modification of uniformitarianism as applied to geology, not because it results in an ancient earth millions of years old, but because of its allowance of occasional breaks in uniformity, making possible miraculous interventions. Henry feels this compromise may lead to a "God of the gaps" theology.¹ He notes that geology currently is marked by the rise of a belief in catastrophism, which leads to a partial or total rejection of uniformitarianism.²

Probably the main reason Henry critiques scientific uniformitarianism is that it advocates a closed system in the natural world whereby miracles and any supernatural interventions are not allowed. He warns against the acceptance of any scientific principle that excludes God's ability to create and thus would exclude the resurrection and God's ability to re-create in the end of time.³ This principle then not only would ultimately negate the God of creation but also the God of redemption, because the incarnation is God intervening in history in a supernatural way.⁴ Not only does Henry warn of uniformitarianism in scientific research, but also in historical research, resulting in what is called "historical positivism."⁵ Lastly, he warns of uniformitarianism's application to biblical studies whereby on the basis of evolutionary premises divine intervention in the

¹*GRA*, 6:215-216. Henry questions whether natural laws "are invariant" as suggested by Young.

²*GRA*, 6:216. He cites the article of geologist Edgar B. Heylman, who states that uniformitarianism as a doctrine cannot be proven.

³"The resurrection of Christ stands firm against all objections rooted in the so-called uniformity of nature or the analogies of history." *GRA*, 3:162.

⁴Summarized from "Science and Religion," 265.

⁵*GRA*, 2:324-325. Troeltsch's principle of analogy, for example, rules out miracles.

process of revelation is disallowed, so that special revelation becomes relegated to general revelation. The result is that “divine uniformitarianism allows no special events, no special revelation, no special writings.”¹ Here we find another instance where Henry’s doctrines of creation and revelation intersect, in that he rejects the principle of uniformity when applied to either nature or Scripture.

The Bible and the Age of the Earth

The principle of uniformitarianism as originally developed by James Hutton in 1785 and as applied to the geological strata by Charles Lyell in 1830-1833 paved the way for the acceptance of the long ages of geological history and the eventual acceptance of Darwinism as a mechanism for biological change.² In the twentieth century when uniformitarianism was applied to the rates of atomic decay in radioactive elements it resulted in assigning of ages to the geological strata starting with an age of more than 500 million years for the beginning of the Phanerozoic, or fossil-bearing, era. This raises the question, Can one reject this principle when applied to other areas of science, but accept it when applied to radiometric dating? or vice versa, Can one reject its application to radiometric dating, while accepting its reliability in other aspects of science, such as the biological sciences?

Interestingly Carl Henry apparently accepts radiometric dating when applied to the rocks and to the fossils in those rocks, resulting in a multi-million-year age for the fossil record and a multi-billion-year age for the minerals of the earth. Henry finds a great

¹“Divine Revelation and the Bible,” 260.

²For Hutton see R. Hooykaas, *The Principle of Uniformity in Geology, Biology and Theology* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1963), 17ff., and for Lyell’s role in disseminating uniformitarianism, refer to Charles C. Gillispie, “The Uniformity of Nature,” in *Genesis and Geology* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1951), 121-148.

amount of agreement between evolutionary theory and evangelical theology on the question of the *when* of creation:

If by evolutionary fact is meant that the universe is billions of years old, and that millions of years were required for the development of all the various species of plant and animal life, and that the antiquity of the human race is somewhat greater than the brief span of six thousand years assigned by scientists and theologians alike a few centuries ago, then warfare between science and Christianity is at an end.¹

In other words, these are all matters that evangelicals can accept without reservation.²

Henry in numerous instances makes clear his view that a multi-billion-year-old universe and earth are compatible with the biblical record.³ On the other hand he takes the position that the record of *Homo sapiens* on earth can be limited to the last 10,000 years, a position that is compatible with most “scientific creationists.”⁴

The possible reasons why Henry is willing to accept an old age for the earth and life can be summarized as follows: (1) Inerrancy does not demand a belief in either a young

¹“Theology and Evolution,” 219.

²Earlier in this essay Henry speaks highly of the evangelical view of an old earth: “Virile centers of evangelical theology find in the creation account abundant room for the antiquity of the earth.” *Ibid.*, 258.

³For Henry’s belief that the universe is “between 6 and 10 billion years old” see “The Bible and Modern Science,” 1190; and *GRA*, 6:141. His acceptance of a 550-million-year age for the fossil record is alluded to in his essay, “Theology and Evolution,” 208-209.

⁴Sir Arthur Keith is quoted favorably in support of a date of “only about 9,000, or perhaps 10,000 years” for human history, according to Henry, “Science and Religion,” 280. Five years after this was published, he wrote: “Whether civilization dates back more than six to eight thousand years is no longer a matter of debate.” “The Bible and Modern Science,” 1193. Here he argues that biblical chronology dates the human race at “no more recently than 6,000 and no more remotely than 10,000 years ago.” In 1983 he had a lengthy discussion on both sides of the issue as to whether the record for modern man could go back 75,000 years, but eventually concluded this: “To be sure, while it seems highly unlikely on the surface of things that the Genesis account of human beginnings can be stretched back to a date much more than 10,000 years ago, yet the insistence on geological uniformity could be remarkably modified by further evidence concerning a world flood.” *GRA*, 6:225. His view then is that man is a recent creation upon an old earth with previously existing life.

earth or an old earth, neither does a strict reading of the Fourth Commandment (Exod 20:8-11) demand a young earth;¹ (2) the doctrine of God is not affected by a very old earth and universe, neither is God's eternity undermined by such;² (3) the work of early chronologists, such as Archbishop Ussher, is no longer considered authoritative in light of archeological finds going back earlier than 6,000 years;³ and (4) the theory of Flood geology, as the only possible means of reducing earth history to fit biblical chronology, has thus far failed its mission.⁴ While Henry could be charged with inconsistency for his strident critique of uniformitarianism, labeling it "an idolatrous principle," and yet adopting

¹Henry warns evangelicals against elevating the issue on the earth's age to "credal status," and goes on to state: "Faith in an inerrant Bible does not rest on a commitment to the recency or antiquity of the earth or even to only a 6000-year antiquity for man; the Genesis account does not fix the precise antiquity of either the earth or of man. Exodus 20:11, to which scientific creationists appeal when insisting that biblical inerrancy requires recent creation, is not decisive." *GRA*, 6:225-226. This is probably the prime reason Henry does not take a stand in favor of a 6,000-10,000-year-old earth. Inerrancy is not affected.

²He asserts: "But the age and size of the universe has no bearing on the question of divine infinity." *GRA*, 5:224. On the other hand, he cautions that one cannot argue that "the eternity of God" implies "the eternity of the world." *GRA*, 5:263.

³The work of Archbishop Ussher comes under attack in Henry's first statements on creation: "Arbitrary identification of the chronology of creation with the date 4004 B.C. . . . has reduced respect for Christianity as an authoritarian religion, and has multiplied doubts over its unique knowledge of origins." "Science and Religion," 258. His latest statement on the subject is this: "The Bible . . . does not demand a date of 5000 B.C. or thereabouts for the origin of man on the basis of Genesis 5 and 11." *GRA*, 6:226. He finds good evidence for gaps in biblical genealogies. See *GRA*, 4:201 and *GRA*, 6:225.

⁴Henry is just as critical of the work of modern Flood geologists as he is of the work of Archbishop Ussher. His observation is valid: "Unless one dismisses scientific datings as wrong and opts instead for the divinely given 'appearance of age' in a 6000-year-old earth, it becomes necessary to invoke catastrophe to compress the geological record." *GRA*, 6:144. After stating that biblical genealogies do not demand a date of 5000 B.C. for the beginning of human history, he continues: "Nor does the doctrine of a universal flood demand flood geology." *GRA*, 6:226. His criticism of Flood geology undoubtedly was heavily influenced by the writings of Bernard Ramm. See *GRA*, 6:144. Bernard Ramm, on the other hand, was very critical of George McCready Price, who can be considered "the father of the modern Flood theory of geology." In a footnote, Ramm reminisces on a discussion of evangelical geologists, who were asked why they had not refuted Price: "One geologist said in substance that no reputable geologist feels it worth his time to refute something so preposterously false. Another remarked that his geology professor would not let anybody pass sophomore geology till he had refuted Price." Ramm, *CVSS*, 170, n. 12. Flood geologists, on the other hand, are convinced that the best scientific argument against Darwinian evolution is a universal flood that formed the earth's major strata in one year's time. See, for example, Whitcomb and Morris, 451.

uniformitarian methodologies, namely radiometric dating methods, for assigning an ancient age to the earth and its fossils, one must keep in mind that he allows science to speak where Scripture is silent. One example is the area of biblical genealogies, which he feels are not chronologies and thus cannot be used to date the origin of the human race. This leads us to the question of whether Scripture can speak authoritatively at all in scientific areas. I will examine how Henry addresses that question further on, but first I must address the question of death in the fossil record, which arises once Henry has made allowance for a fossil record with complex forms of life existing for perhaps 600 million years prior to Adam and Eve's creation. Traditionally, Christians have ascribed the presence of death, suffering, and catastrophe in the natural world to the sin of the first couple, Adam and Eve. How does Henry reconcile this long tradition with his view on the fossil record?

The Goodness of Creation and the Origin of Evil

In his *God, Revelation and Authority*, volume 6, Carl Henry dwells extensively upon the doctrine of God as creator, the biblical and scientific arguments in favor of creation and opposed to evolution, the chronological aspects of creation, and the origin and nature of humankind before he then addresses the issue of how one can harmonize the goodness of God as creator with the presence of evil in the world.¹ This latter issue becomes a pressing issue once the author has concluded that the earth and life therein are both extremely old, as old as the geologists suggest, and once he concomitantly concludes

¹Henry devotes first a chapter to the topic, "The Goodness of God," *GRA*, 6:251-268, followed by a chapter entitled, "God and the Problem of Evil," *GRA*, 6:269-282. His solution to the harmonization of the "goodness of God" with the "problem of evil" is not fully resolved until he presents immediately following these topics the chapter, "Evil as a Religious Dilemma," *GRA*, 6:283-304. His approach is systematic and follows a logical progression here.

that the human race has had a young time span on this planet, perhaps only 10,000 years. He must then answer the question of how evil entered the world—as part of an original creation, or as a result of the fall of Adam and Eve? In other words, is natural evil prelapsarian or postlapsarian?¹

The starting point in Henry's understanding of the origin of evil is his view of the fall of Adam and Eve into sin. Just as Henry rejects a mythological interpretation for the creation account in Gen 1-2, so he also rejects such for the account of the Fall in Gen 3. For example, he strongly critiques the proposal that the biblical account "be considered a serpent-myth since the Serpent's role, even if important, is but incidental."² The serpent is considered to be another creature in the garden, albeit the most crafty one in the garden (Gen 3:1). In Henry's thinking the narrative of the Fall is a real story that took place in a literal garden and involved a literal couple, designated with the names Adam and Eve.³

The consequences of the Fall are reflected in the sinful nature of humankind and the physical disruptions displayed throughout the cosmos. Henry lists precisely the Fall's consequences: "deprivation of the tree of life, death both spiritual and physical, expulsion

¹These terms are related to the terms, infralapsarian and superlapsarian, which in Calvinistic teaching describe the relationship of the election decrees of God to the fall of Adam and Eve. See John A. Knight, "Infralapsarianism," *Beacon Dictionary of Theology*, ed. Richard S. Taylor (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press, 1983), 283. The term originates from the Latin *lapsus*: "fall, lapse; specifically, the fall of Adam and Eve from original righteousness," according to Richard A. Muller, *Dictionary of Latin and Greek Theological Terms* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1985), 172. Thus, "prelapsarian" can be defined as natural evil originating in the world prior to the fall of humankind, and "postlapsarian" as evil originating in a perfect world directly as a result of humankind's sin.

²*GRA*, 6:245.

³When discussing the literalness of the garden of Eden, Henry suggests that when the narrative has Adam hearing the "voice" of God, that does not imply that God has a larynx such as we do. His point is that while "the account is to be understood factually, not mythically or symbolically," it can have some figurative elements as well. *GRA*, 6:116.

from paradise where God dwells, shame (Gen 3:7), fear (3:10), feminine travail in childbirth, work as hardship.”¹ The effects of the Fall extend well beyond the immediate confines of the first family; it has transferred a perverted human nature to every member of the human family.² In fact, the natural world and the entire cosmos are affected. Henry writes: “The biblical revelation includes nature itself, and not only man, in the consequences of the fall,” for the simple reason that “a unique solidarity exists between mankind and the outer world in respect to both sin and redemption.”³ Not only does it include nature, but all of nature: “Man’s rebellion has consequences for the entire cosmos; it implicates all creation.”⁴

Because Henry takes the fall of Adam and Eve literally, he views the consequences of their wrongdoing in a literal sense, including consequences upon the natural world. Does this mean that Henry views the origin of evil in this world and in the entire universe as postlapsarian? The problem is how to explain the obvious presence of death, suffering,

¹*GRA*, 6:248. One will quickly notice from this list that no mention is made of the curse in Eden affecting the animal kingdom, perhaps introducing death and carnivory among animals. Elsewhere Henry states: “Following man’s fall God’s curse is pronounced on the Serpent for beguiling the woman (Gen. 3:14); on the ground because of Adam’s disobedience (3:17); on Cain for fratricide (4:11); on Noah’s youngest son Canaan (9:25) and on all that curse the seed of Jacob (27:29),” *GRA*, 6:327. He adds to this the emotional effects of the curse: “The concept of grief and sorrow as a divine punishment also shadows the account of the fall.” *GRA*, 6:328. Again, we find no mention of specific effects on the animal world.

²Henry iterates: “Because of the fall man harbors a calamitous congenital propensity for evil and judgment. Ever since that fall sin has pervaded human nature as an unmistakable inner conflict from which we cannot fully escape.” *GRA*, 6:296.

³*GRA*, 4:609. He continues by stating that the Bible “declares not only the existence of an intimate connection between moral infractions and natural evils, but also the fact that God frequently punishes the former by the latter.” *Ibid.*

⁴*GRA*, 6:248. In discussing Patterson Brown’s view of evil, Henry agrees with him “that Christianity considers the dogma that evil pervades the universe to be a central premise.” *GRA*, 6:292. An evidence that evil has impacted the whole universe is the fact that redemption in its eschatological aspects is to be universal, based upon Rom 8:19. See *GRA*, 6:303.

dying, catastrophes, storms, and extinctions found in the fossil record without recourse to humankind's fall. First and foremost, he rejects an evolutionary explanation for the origin of evil, which is connected to a process that allows for the occurrence of mistakes and errors in order to develop new forms of life.¹ He notes that "in evolutionary speculation evil is simply a retardation or hindrance that can in principle be transformed into good," but he dismisses this concept because all attempts at eradicating evil through socialization or education have failed.² Next, he rejects the Platonic concept that matter is intrinsically evil, which results in dualism, and he critiques process theology's suggestion that evil is part of an evolutionary system by which good is brought out in the end. The problem with this latter view, in Henry's thinking, is that it "merges the creation and the fall."³ He faults process theologians for rejecting the doctrine of creation *ex nihilo*. However, the acceptance of such suggests the possibility that God is the author of both good and evil, since he is the creator of everything that is in the world.⁴

Carl Henry's solution to the dilemma of how the existence of evil in the world can

¹Henry differs with process theologian, Norman Pittenger, who views evil as a natural part of the evolutionary process—a process that in itself is evil, but produces good out of the process. *GRA*, 6:288. John Hick is another process theologian whom he critiques because of Hick's speculation that *Homo sapiens* is the product of a long evolutionary process during which time the image of God is gradually developed. *GRA*, 2:277. Hick's views on the origin of evil stem originally from Irenaeus, a second-century Christian apologist, who linked evil's origin with the creation of man in the image of God; thus man started in a state of humble innocence wherein he needed continual growth and maturation to develop character, according to John Musson, *Evil, Is It Real? A Theological Analysis* (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 1991), 39-48.

²*GRA*, 6:259.

³*GRA*, 6:287.

⁴*GRA*, 6:286. Henry objects to the reasoning of process theologian, David R. Griffin: "When traditional theists insist that God controls all events, says Griffin, they make him 'equally responsible for all murders, rapes and earthquakes.'" *GRA*, 6:287, quoting David R. Griffin, *God, Power, and Evil: A Process Theodicy* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1976), 237.

be harmonized with the existence of a good God is to be found in the omnipotence of God. In his own words, the issue is raised: “But how then can sin and apparently meaningless evil be reconciled with the biblical view of the sovereign, all-knowing, good God who is providentially at work in the space-time creation?”¹ The answer is thoroughly biblical. He describes Isa 45:6-7 as “an important passage concerning the origin of evil: ‘. . . I am the Lord, and there is none else. I form the light, and create darkness; I make peace, and create evil.’”² Henry finds in this pivotal passage no distinction between moral and natural evil, a distinction that many interpreters wish to point out as an apologetic device to relieve God of the responsibility of “causing” moral evil.³ He adds to Isa 45:6-7 a passage in Jeremiah supportive of the idea that God brings evil, even upon his people: “Jeremiah 18:11 somewhat similarly conveys the idea that Yahweh prepares evil to punish the impenitent (‘Behold, I frame evil against you. . . , KJV; ‘Behold, I am shaping evil against you . . . ,’

¹GRA, 6:291.

²GRA, 6:292.

³Henry is critical of exegetes who “translate the Isaian passage in a way that relates God’s creative work not to moral evil but only to physical or natural evil.” Ibid. He finds Isa 45:6-7 to be all inclusive of natural and moral evils. In a much earlier work Henry also refuses to dichotomize natural and moral evil as a means of explaining the existence of evil in God’s created world: “The problem of evil has two facets—natural and moral. . . . The Hebrew-Christian view refuses to mitigate this problem by saying that natural evil is due to the essential constitution of the universe.” *Notes on the Doctrine of God*, 34-35. There he includes hurricanes, earthquakes, and floods that cause suffering and death to thousands as part of natural evil, while he connects moral evil to willful revolt against God and the immorality of man. For an expanded discussion of the relation of natural and moral evil from an evangelical viewpoint at the turn of the century (nineteenth to twentieth), see James Orr, *The Christian View of God and the World* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1897), 186-199. Orr does seem to distinguish the two, the first being part of creation and the second being a result of the Fall, unlike Henry, when he states: “That the animal should die is natural.” Ibid., 198. More recently, one philosopher who finds a distinction between natural and moral evil, writing from a conservative Calvinist viewpoint, is Theodore Plantinga, *Learning to Live with Evil* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982). Plantinga adds a third category, that of “demonic evil,” associated with Satan.

RSV).”¹ The thought of Plato, who was a contemporary of the very last of the OT writers, is brought into the discussion:

Plato, by contrast, rules out God as the author of evil and does so on the ground that God is answerable to the good as an independent criterion. ‘God, if he be good,’ says Plato, ‘is not the author of all things, as the many assert, but he is the cause of a few things only. . . . For few are the goods of human life, and many are the evils, and the good is to be attributed to God alone; of the evils the causes have to be sought elsewhere, and not in him.’²

Henry’s response to Plato is that “Isaiah, to the contrary, speaks of Yahweh as creator of both good and evil, and in this sense, therefore, as their cause,”³ but he is not the author of evil, which would imply that he himself is evil.⁴ God is also the cause of “pain and suffering” in that he has made it a reality in the natural world; but at the same time, according to Henry, God suffers when his created beings suffer.⁵ Only a creator God who has created all things, both the good and the evil, can be also a redeemer God and the ultimate Creator of the “new heavens and new earth.” In Henry’s words: “Through the almost incredible suffering of the divine deliverer the Bible speaks of final dénouement and

¹GRA, 6:293. He adds to Jer 18:11 two other OT passages supportive of the idea that God is the agent for bringing evil: “‘It is I who have created the destroyer to work havoc,’ (Isa. 54:16, NIV). ‘Is there misfortune in the city without God being the author (*asah*)?’ (Amos 3:6).” Ibid. In that same context he also admits that “the idea that God creates evil is abhorrent to many people.” Ibid.

²GRA, 6:293, quoting Plato, *The Republic*, Book 2.379, in B. Jowett, *The Works of Plato* (New York: Tudor, n.d.).

³GRA, 6:293.

⁴Henry counters James Arminius on this point by suggesting that there is an important distinction between being the “author of evil” and being the “cause of evil.” For example, whatever God creates need not be a reflection of God or a part of God, just as God’s creating giraffes does not imply that giraffes “are aspects of God.” GRA, 6:294.

⁵One aspect of a suffering God is that God suffered when his own Son suffered on the cross, a concept known as *patripassionism*, which Henry accepts. GRA, 6:290. Christ’s “substitutionary” work on humankind’s behalf is also evidence of God’s suffering. GRA, 6:299. The experience of Job is a type for understanding the Suffering Servant of Isa 53, fulfilled in Christ’s death on the cross. GRA, 6:298.

deliverance, of reconciliation and peace.”¹

Henry’s solution to the problem of pain, suffering, and death in the animal world for the millions of years of earth history prior to the creation of Adam and Eve is the theology expressed in Isa 45:6-7 (and in other OT passages) that God as the originator of all things has created both “the good and the evil.”² Here we discover the decided influence of Calvinism, whereby the doctrine of God’s omnipotence views him as controlling every aspect of human life as well as everything that exists in the universe with the surprising result that God is considered the “cause” of evil, although not being blamed as the source of all evil.³ While God is viewed in this manner as the cause of “evil,” Henry never ascribes “sin” to divine causation.⁴

By making a clear-cut distinction between “sin” and “evil,” Henry is able to deftly argue for a prelapsarian origin of evil, the following being one of his clearest statements on

¹GRA, 6:297.

²Henry is cognizant of the fact that the KJV of this passage reads: “I make peace, and create evil” (Isa 45:7), but he also notes that “interestingly enough, the Dead Sea Scroll version of Isaiah 45:7 reads not ‘peace (*shalom*) and evil’ but rather ‘good (*tobe*) and evil.” GRA, 6:292. In this sense he views God as the cause of both moral and natural evil.

³In Calvin’s *Institutes*, Book One, entitled “The Knowledge of God the Creator,” John Calvin comments on this pivotal text, Isa 45:7, in the following manner: “It is for this same reason that Jeremiah and Amos bitterly expostulated with the Jews, for they thought both good and evil happened without God’s command [Lam 3:38; Amos 3:6]. In the same vein is Isaiah’s declaration: ‘I, God, creating light and forming darkness, making peace and creating evil: I, God do all these things’ [Isa. 45:7, cf. Vg.]” John Calvin, *Calvin: Institutes of the Christian Religion* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1960), 221. In a later section Calvin gives illustrations of how God’s command actually brings about “evil”: the affliction of Job (Job 1:6, 21; 2:1), persecution of the early church (Acts 4:28, cf. Vulg.), the Assyrian attacks (Isa 10:5), the curses of Shimei upon David (2 Sam 16:10), and even the death of Eli’s sons (1 Sam 2:34). Ibid., 229-231.

⁴Henry’s thought is: “The Bible states that sin entered the universe through Satan, a fallen spirit, and that he along with deceived and fallen mankind is culpably exposed to the wrath of the one living and holy God who cannot countenance sin. . . . Throughout the Bible sin is the antithesis of the divine and of the truly godly; it is everywhere a hostile act or state whose end is death or separation from God.” GRA, 6:294. Henry views Satan in a literal sense, according to chapter 10, “Angels, Satan and the Demons, and the Fall.” GRA, 6:229-250.

the subject: “That the human heart is the seat of sin need not mean, however, that man is the author of evil, for the original source of *ponēros* [Gr., that which is ‘bad’] predates man.”¹ While Calvin does not address the question of whether natural evil could be prelapsarian because of Calvin’s differing sixteenth-century world view, he does offer a view of divine providence that allows for God being responsible for natural evil, apparently apart from the fall of Adam.² Thus Henry’s Calvinism provides him a theological world view that permits a long history of evil and calamity on this earth, long before the creation of man, over a period of perhaps millions of years of life. This stands in contrast with other scholarly studies that view the presence of evil, calamity, and destruction in the fossil record as being a prime reason why life could not have existed on planet Earth prior to the seven days of creation or prior to the creation of humankind.³

The Bible and Science

Before we can explore the various ways evangelicals have harmonized the Bible and science and the reasons why Carl Henry does not adopt any of these methods, I must

¹*GRA*, 6:296.

²See Calvin’s discussion of natural evil in relation to providence in his *Institutes*, 203-204, where he reasons that lack of rain (famine) as well as a superabundance of rain (flooding) both are under God’s control because “not one drop of rain falls without God’s sure command.” *Ibid.*, 204.

³For the most complete discussion of those studies advocating no death in the animal world prior to Adam’s fall one is directed to Marco T. Terreros, “Death before the Sin of Adam: A Fundamental Concept in Theistic Evolution and Its Implications for Evangelical Theology” (Ph.D. dissertation, Andrews University, 1994). One must note that Carl Henry is very much opposed to theistic evolution, yet he would fall under Terreros’s critique. A nineteenth-century theological discussion of the question of death before sin is found in “Excursus VI—Death before the Fall,” in Donald MacDonald, *The Biblical Doctrine of Creation and the Fall* (Minneapolis: Klock & Klock, 1984), 386-393 (reprinted from the original 1856 ed.). For recent evangelical discussions of the question of death before Adam’s sin, see John C. Munday, “Creature Mortality: From Creation or the Fall?” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 35 (1992): 51-68; and Michael A. Corey, *Evolution and the Problem of Natural Evil* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2000).

first address this question: Is the Bible a textbook of natural science? And if it is not, the follow-up question is: How can the Bible be used to settle scientific controversies if it is not a science textbook? Henry's answer to the first question is in the negative: "The Bible nowhere claims to be a sourcebook for astronomy, geology, physics, anthropology, or psychology."¹ And his answer to the second question above quickly follows: "Absence of scientific vocabulary does not make the book unscientific, however."² In *God, Revelation and Authority*, Henry corroborates these views by stating that the Bible does not give "hidden information about geological ages,"³ nor does it presume "to offer scientific teaching on the basis of empirically validated hypotheses,"⁴ yet although it "is not intended to be a textbook on scientific and historical matters, it nonetheless gives scientifically and historically relevant information."⁵ Whenever the Bible touches upon the world of science, it is inerrant in its statements just as much as in the area of theology.

Is the first chapter of the Bible, Gen 1, then primarily a theological document, or can it be a scientifically useful document as well as a theological document? Henry's

¹Henry, "The Bible and Modern Science," 1191.

²Ibid.

³Henry suggests: "If we turn to Genesis mainly for hidden information about geological ages we shall miss out on the main drama of the ages." *GRA*, 6:111. Cf. a similar statement: "Yet it is surely not the purpose of the author [of Genesis] to supply us with a geological time-table." "Science and Religion," 278.

⁴*GRA*, 6:153.

⁵*GRA*, 4:205. Cf. where Henry definitely says that the Bible is *not* "a textbook on the planets, or a complete guide to the flora and fauna of the Holy Land" (*GRA*, 4:42), with where he observes, "Augustine says that the Spirit of God did not intend to teach astronomy through the biblical writers" (*GRA*, 4:376) and with where he states that Bible writers are said *not* to teach cosmology (*GRA*, 5:206). Yet he finds much in Scripture that is of scientific value for non-theological disciplines in developing a world view. For example, if the facts pertaining to geology or botany in Scripture are erroneous, this raises the question in Henry's thinking, "Can one trust the doctrine if the facts are unreliable?" *GRA*, 4:251. For Henry, the Bible is equally inerrant in geology as in theology.

answer to this question is consistent with his answer to the two previous questions regarding the Bible and science in general: “If we turn to Genesis 1 for information first and foremost about the cosmos and man we miss the center of its focus. The subject of Genesis is not quarks or quasars, but God.”¹ In the first creation account (Gen 1:1-2:3) Henry notes that God is the subject of the action more than forty times. Certainly Gen 1 is primarily theological in nature. Nevertheless, Henry’s view of the cognitive and informational nature of revelation not only allows for scientific information to be conveyed in Genesis, but mandates such: “But if God can convey authoritative cognitive information about himself and his relations to man, it is unclear why he cannot also convey—as the creation account on the surface implies—reliable knowledge, however limited, about man and nature and their interrelationships.”² While the Bible is not a textbook as such in any of the fields of science, it does provide useful information to the Christian in developing a world view in which science is not excluded.³ Thus Henry’s view of propositional revelation does allow the Bible to have the final say in controversies involving science and Scripture, or Genesis and geology.

Methods for Harmonizing Theology and Science

Early in this study I have described a variety of methods that evangelicals have employed to harmonize the record of Genesis with the findings of geology—the revelatory-

¹*GRA*, 6:110.

²*GRA*, 6:113. And the information God thus conveys is inerrant. *Ibid.*, cf. *GRA*, 4:205.

³Henry summarizes the role he feels that the Bible plays in developing a world view in the following way: “The Bible constitutes a propositionally consistent revelation whose principles and logical implications supply a divinely based view of God and the universe.” *GRA*, 4:251.

days view, the gap theory, the day-age view, the local creation hypothesis, the Noachian Flood theory, etc.¹ Carl Henry analyzes and rejects all of these views, including “progressive creation,” which came into vogue among evangelicals in the last half of the twentieth century. I will now discuss Henry’s reasons for rejecting all of these views to determine why he takes the position he does upon the days of creation, paying special attention to possible inconsistencies in his arguments. This examination covers four of the five major views developed in the nineteenth century, the one omitted being the “local creation hypothesis,” which has rarely been advocated among evangelicals.²

Henry on the Revelatory-Days View

The first harmonist scheme that Henry critiques in his earliest extensive essay on creation, “Science and Religion” (1957), is the revelatory-days view, which suggests that the days of creation are not days of creation per se, but days of revelation happening over a span of six literal days. This has sometimes been called “the Mosaic vision theory” because “the details of the creation presented to us by Moses were brought to his

¹The five different approaches to harmonization listed here all came into prominence within the first half of the nineteenth century, but the two most prominent ones throughout that century and into the first half of the twentieth century were the day-age view and the gap theory. “Two major schemes of harmonization were developed and refined during the nineteenth century: these were the gap and day-age interpretation of Genesis 1.” Davis A. Young, “Scripture in the Hands of Geologists, Part 2,” *Westminster Theological Journal* 49 (1987): 262.

²The local creation hypothesis is the concept that because of the inseparable relationship between Gen 1 and 2, the two accounts together are describing essentially the creation of the fauna and flora of the garden of Eden, climaxed by the creation of Adam and Eve, not the creation of the whole cosmos. The local creation concept is often allied with the idea of a local flood. The first major exponent of this theory, involving both local creation and a local flood, was John Pye Smith, who wrote *The Relation between the Holy Scriptures and Some Parts of Geological Science* (1850). For a recent evangelical exposition of the local creation theory, see John H. Sailhamer, *Genesis Unbound: A Provocative New Look at the Creation Account* (Sisters, OR: Multnomah Books, 1996). For him, Gen 1-2 describe the creation of the “promised land.” Henry nowhere discusses the local creation hypothesis.

knowledge by means of a series of visions, in like manner as the events of futurity were disclosed to the mind of the prophets of old.”¹ Henry has two major objections to this view, which he describes as “a transition theory” that “has been defended recently [1954] by Ramm.” “One weakness of the theory is that exegesis will not sustain the substitution of the notion that ‘God showed’ (or revealed) for the reading ‘God made.’” Second, “this view seems to make vulnerable concessions to the objectionable spiritual-truth theory, and to deprive the biblical revelation needlessly of statements of scientific relevance.”² Henry adds one more critique to Ramm’s revelatory-days view, which holds that the sequence in Gen 1 is artificial, and thus is considered “visionary and not historical.” He quotes William F. Albright to the effect that the sequence in Gen 1 cannot be improved upon by science.³

Henry on the Gap Theory

The gap theorists postulate a major gap or break in the biblical narrative between Gen 1:1 and 1:3, whereby the earth underwent millions of years of geological and biological changes between an original creation in 1:1 and a subsequent re-creation in 1:3. As Henry rightly notes, the gap theorists argue strongly for a literal six-day creation, but

¹Dominic McCausland, “Creation,” in *A Cyclopaedia of Biblical Literature*, ed. John Kitto (Edinburgh: Adam and Charles Black, 1869), 1:577. There McCausland credits Hugh Miller with being an earlier exponent of this theory. The evangelical scholar, Merrill F. Unger, credits both Bernard Ramm and Peter J. Wiseman for influencing him towards the adoption of this view. “Creation,” *Unger’s Bible Dictionary*, ed. Merrill F. Unger (Chicago: Moody Press, 1960), 226.

²“Science and Religion,” 276-277. Henry points to precisely the problem why the revelatory-days view had so little acceptance in the twentieth century among evangelicals, even though promoted by a few prominent evangelicals in the nineteenth century, and that is the apparent lack of *any* visionary language in Gen 1 and 2. One must link Exod 24:15-18 with Gen 1 and 2 to support this theory, but Num 12:6-7 seems to speak against the idea that Moses had visions on top of Mt. Sinai.

³*GRA*, 6:146. Other than three or four sentences devoted to discussing Ramm’s revelatory-days view, Henry has nothing else to say in this volume, indicating that this view had definitely lost ground among evangelicals in the twenty years since Ramm had first introduced it to neo-evangelicals.

superimposed upon a very ancient earth with an extensive fossil record: “Some creationists who insist on origin of the universe in six successive twenty-four-hour days make a major concession to the scientific demand for the earth’s antiquity by inserting geological history between the opening verses of Genesis, that is, between Genesis 1:1 and Genesis 1:3.”¹

“But if this interpretation is correct,” interjects Henry, “then Genesis records two beginnings but no significant account of [the original] creation.”² Two additional reasons to be wary of this theory is that other than being popularized by the *Scofield Reference Bible* and by the prolific writings of Harry Rimmer, it has had little support “except in a few Bible schools and churches,” and second “it rests upon contrived Bible exegesis and interpretation.”³ In his earlier publication “Science and Religion,” Henry outlined four reasons why the gap theory should be rejected in addition to the three reasons given above:

Its difficulties are multiple: the theory deprives Hebrew-Christian religion (except for the bare opening words of Genesis) of a revealed account of the original creation; it artificially wrenches the continuity of the creation account; it finds no explicit confirmation elsewhere in Scripture; it offers no theistic standpoint for interpreting the actual geological data.⁴

¹*GRA*, 6:144. The primal creation was destroyed completely and a new creation in six days was initiated perhaps in the last 6,000-10,000 years. Thus gap theorists hold to “biblical chronology” with respect to both the six literal days and to the time value of the genealogies of Gen 5 and 11.

²*GRA*, 6:144.

³*GRA*, 6:144. The main proponent of this theory in the late nineteenth century was G. H. Pember.

⁴“Science and Religion,” 277. The gap theorists would counter one of his four points by arguing that Jer 4 offers an eschatological picture similar to the ruination described in Gen 1:2, even to using the same wording “without form and void” (*tohu vabohu*) found in Gen 1:2. For a discussion of this and other exegetical issues and a scholarly critique of the gap theory, see Weston W. Fields, *Unformed and Unfilled* (Nutley, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1976). The thrust of Field’s critique is directed against Arthur C. Custance, *Without Form and Void: A Study of the Meaning of Genesis 1:2* (Brookville, Ontario: The Author, 1970). McIver says this of Custance’s study: “This book is acknowledged as the most authoritative defense of Gap Theory creationism.” Tom McIver, *Anti-Evolution: An Annotated Bibliography* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 1988), 53.

Henry's firm belief in propositional revelation does not allow him to insert extra-biblical meaning into any biblical passage, such as Gen 1:2.

A more popular view than the gap theory among evangelicals in more recent times is a related one called the "multiple-gap theory." It theorizes that between each of the creation days interpreted as being literal twenty-four-hour days, one can insert millions of years of geological activity. The actual six creation days are considered to be days of miracle or days of divine fiat, followed perhaps by some evolutionary development. Henry finds two major difficulties with this view: the first is "that Genesis does not distinguish the antiquity of the world from the creation days nor does it locate geological periods between the days," and the second one is that it has problems with its chronological sequence; for example, it "requires the simultaneous fashioning of man and all animal forms" on the literal sixth day.¹ Henry spurns both the gap theory and the multiple-gap theory on the basis that foreign material is inserted into the biblical text and that Scripture itself offers no hint whatever that the insertion of such is even possible.

Henry on Day-Age Creationism

The day-age theory of creation has probably been the most popular means used by evangelicals and conservative Christians in the last two hundred years for reconciling Gen 1 with the geological record. It suggests that the days are not literal consecutive twenty-four-hour days, but they are symbolic of biblically defined geological periods that are either

¹*GRA*, 6:145. This same critique is leveled at the multiple-gap theory in Henry, "Science and Religion," 277-278, where it gives it the label of the "transcendent-activity view." The outstanding expounder of this view is Peter Stoner in his *Science Speaks: An Evaluation of Certain Christian Evidences* (Wheaton, IL: Van Kampen, 1953). A more recent book that has advocated this view but has had limited influence in evangelical circles is Robert C. Newman and Herman J. Eckelmann, *Genesis One and the Origin of the Earth* (Downers Grover, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1977).

consecutive or overlapping. After observing that “most of the evangelical scientists in the American Scientific Affiliation today [1957] favor this view,” Henry offers three critiques:

Its difficulties are that, even when regarded as epochs, the Genesis days do not harmonize fully with the chronology proposed by modern science; that its enumeration of the forms of life is incomplete alongside contemporary schemes of classification; and that the literal sense of *yom* seems exegetically more natural (although cf. Psalm 90:4. . .).¹

Henry’s later 1983 critique of the day-age view dwells only upon the first of the three difficulties stated above, and this critique is more scientific in nature than theological. For example, he raises the question as to how plants could survive for millions of years if the third day/age preceded the fourth day/age when the sun was created. And he queries how these same plants could survive and reproduce for millions of years if there were no birds or insects available for pollination—the birds being created on the fifth day/age and the insects on the sixth day/age!² In conjunction with his critique of the day-age view, his main quarrel is with “progressive creation,” which had become the leading evangelical view in 1983 for harmonizing Genesis and geology, and specifically with Bernard Ramm’s version of it.³

¹“Science and Religion,” 277. In a statement sixteen years later he seems to defend those who hold to the day-age view: “Most of the 1200 members of the evangelically oriented American Scientific Affiliation affirm a theistic evolutionary harmonization of the days of Genesis with evolutionary ages; they nonetheless place the sovereign Creator-God at the beginning of the process.” *GRA*, 6:140.

²This line of argumentation is summarized from *GRA*, 6:145. Some scholars would place the origin of the insects, which were winged creatures, on the fifth day, rather than sixth, but that does not alter Henry’s point concerning the difficulties with pollination.

³“Progressive creationism, as Bernard Ramm expounds it in *The Christian View of Science and Scripture*, insists that the order within the fossil record is not one of chance but of divine design, even though its sequence cannot be equated with the chronology of Genesis.” *GRA*, 6:146. Davis Young, an evangelical geologist and son of Old Testament scholar, Edward J. Young, realized that the popular day-age view did not harmonize correctly the sequences in Genesis and in geology, so he once proposed overlapping day/ages. Davis A. Young, *Creation and the Flood: An Alternative to Flood Geology and Theistic Evolution* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1977). Since then he has rescinded this view.

Henry on the Flood Theory and Literal Days

Carl Henry's response to the Flood-geology theory of earth history and its corollary, the literal days of creation viewpoint, is illuminating for this study, for it reveals some possible reasons why he develops his own view for harmonizing the geological and scriptural records. In his way of thinking, the two views—Flood geology and a literal six-day creation—are inseparable, and one presupposes the other. If indeed the earth is 6,000-10,000 years old and if indeed all things were created (or perhaps all living things on earth) within six literal twenty-four-hour days, then the Flood theory of geology is the only mechanism available for accounting for the fossil record in a short chronology.¹ Early on, Henry addresses the connection: "It [the six literal days viewpoint] is widely correlated with argument for a world-wide Noahic flood, especially under the influence George McCready Price."² Flood geology is rejected by Henry early on for two reasons: (1) its

¹Numerous advocates of the Flood theory of geology directly link beliefs in the six literal days and a young earth with Flood geology, the following being one recent example: "Few appreciate the importance of the flood to the creation account. Unless most of the fossil record formed during the flood, an all-inclusive, six-day creation seems out of the question." Ariel A. Roth, *Origins: Linking Science and Scripture* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1998), 204. Henry also connects six-day creationism with "world-flood theory" in *GRA*, 6:219, and in *GRA*, 6:218 makes reference to Whitcomb and Morris's *Genesis Flood* that attributes all the geological formations to the work of the biblical Flood. He was familiar then with their views, of which the following excerpt is typical: "The decision then must be faced: either the biblical record of the Flood is false and must be rejected or else the system of historical geology which has seemed to discredit it is wrong and must be changed." Whitcomb and Morris, 118. This follows their observation that "modern geology has all but universally repudiated the book of Genesis." *Ibid.*, 116. This includes a rejection of the days of creation being literal, historical days.

²"Science and Religion," 277. Here he notes Price's impact upon Byron C. Nelson and Alfred M. Rehwinkel, both of whom adopted Flood geology. What is not noted here is a later development whereby all three individuals—Price, Nelson, and Rehwinkel—influenced a hydrologist engineer, Henry M. Morris, who in conjunction with theologian John C. Whitcomb published *The Genesis Flood* (1961). This has been republished in numerous printings by the tens of thousands, influencing the four main groups of creationists today—conservative Baptists, Presbyterians, Lutherans, and Seventh-day Adventists. The originator of the modern theory of Flood geology, George McCready Price, taught in Seventh-day Adventist schools his entire career. For a history of modern creationism and the relationships between Price, Nelson, Rehwinkel, and Morris, see Ronald L. Numbers, *The Creationists* (New York: A. A. Knopf, 1992).

“lack of persuasive archaeological evidence for a global flood” and (2) “the insistence of scientists that the geological and paleontological data resulted not from a single catastrophe but from a plurality of temporarily distributed forces.”¹ It should be noted that he does not state that radiometric dating is the tool that destroys or undermines Flood geology because he makes allowance for the possibility that such scientific dating methods may be wrong.

The later writings of Henry on creation are not any more favorable toward Flood geology than his earliest. While he strongly supports the historicity of the biblical Flood,² he is not certain that the Bible supports a universal flood: “It may be debatable whether the Genesis account does or does not require that floodwaters covered the whole earth, but it does clearly state that the Noahic flood was sufficiently extensive to destroy all human and animal life.”³ Henry makes a definite distinction between believing in a universal Flood and believing in Flood geology. After positing that the Bible does not demand a date of 5000 B.C. for the origin of the human race, he goes on to state: “Nor does the doctrine of a universal flood demand flood geology.”⁴

We thus uncover a three-step process in Henry’s progression of thought away from a strict 6,000 years and a literal six days of creation in developing his world view. First, he clearly distinguishes the idea of a universal flood from Flood geology; second, he rejects a

¹“Science and Religion,” 277.

²Henry states that “viewing the flood narrative as myth or legend” is “an approach that would embrace a world view alien to the Bible.” *GRA*, 4:124. He also defends the historicity of the Flood unambiguously in *GRA*, 2:263-264.

³*GRA*, 6:217. He continues by proposing that universal Flood legends may shed light on the universality of the Flood. *GRA*, 6:218.

⁴*GRA*, 6:226.

young earth and short chronology for earth history because of its close alliance with Flood geology—a position which he finds unsupported either in Scripture or by geological science; and third, he rejects the six days of creation as being literal because of their alliance both with a short chronology and with Flood geology. We have yet to explore in much greater detail the reasons why he moves away from accepting the days of Creation as being literal.¹

Henry's Proposal for Harmonizing Theology and Science

We have made the somewhat surprising discovery that Carl Henry has clearly rejected *all* the major theories/views for reconciling the Bible and science held by evangelicals in the nineteenth century and by fundamentalists during the first half of the twentieth century. But these were not the only options being seriously discussed in the evangelical world when Henry was doing his most extensive writing on the subject (1957-1983); for two additional views had risen to prominence—the framework hypothesis, and the mythological approach to Gen 1. The framework hypothesis is a literary approach to Gen 1 that says that the structure of that chapter takes precedence over the chronology or literalness of the events, and that its main purpose is to teach theology, not geology or a scientific theory of origins. It removes any chronological considerations from Gen 1, thus “it is considered compatible with views either of the earth’s antiquity or of its recency.”²

¹For the further discussion of the reasons why Henry rejects the literal days, see the section below, “Henry’s Views on the Days of Creation,” as well as the discussion in chapter 5 of this study.

²*GRA*, 6:134. Henry notes that its major proponents (at that time) were A. Noordtzij, Nicholas Ridderbos, and Meredith G. Kline. Since then a major evangelical champion of the view has been Henri Blocher, *In the Beginning* (Leicester, England: Inter-Varsity, 1984). Erickson agrees with Henry that the literary view has little emphasis on chronology: “There may be some chronological dimension to the

Henry criticizes the framework view on the basis that Gen 1 has “an unmistakable creation-sequence countdown: ‘first day . . . second day . . . third day [etc.]’.”¹

The saga or mythological approach to Genesis comes under the critical scrutiny of Henry as well. It often comes packaged as the concept of proto-history for Gen 1-11 that sets them apart from a historically verifiable type of historical accounting starting perhaps as early as the patriarchal period. These chapters in Genesis are often correlated with the creation/catastrophe/renewed creation motif of ancient Mesopotamian myths, such as Atrahasis. Henry cites Karl Barth as an outstanding representative of those holding to the view of Genesis as saga. “For Barth the creation story is saga—something of the nature of history that cannot be recorded in historical form because no human observers and participants were present; this saga, says Barth, has significance in the dimension of inner response but no bearing whatever on scientific method and conclusions.”² Henry’s rejoinder to Barth (and to evangelicals such as Bernard Ramm in later years) is this: “But the creation story is prior also in a logical way, one that in some respects clearly claims to be no less factual (Gen 2:4) than the chapters that follow it.”³ He goes on to point out that many great events and teachings of Scripture, such as Sinai and the Sabbath, presuppose the validity of the creation account: “The remainder of the Bible, moreover, presupposes

ordering, but it is to be thought of as primarily logical. The account [Gen 1] is arranged in two groups of three—days one through three and days four through six. Parallels can be seen between the first and fourth, the second and fifth, and the third and sixth days of creation.” Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1983), 1:381.

¹*GRA*, 6:134.

²*GRA*, 6:137.

³*Ibid.* See Ramm, *After Fundamentalism*, 84-87, 102, where he clearly sides with Barth’s understanding of Genesis as saga.

that the account of man's creation and subsequent fall is historical and therefore factual.

The Sabbath-command of the Decalogue, furthermore, points back to God's resting on the seventh day."¹ For Henry the entire historicity of the Bible is called into question if evangelicals reject the historicity of the early chapters of Genesis, which is a conclusion entirely in harmony with his view on the propositional nature of revelation.

Thus far we have found that Henry rejects the following approaches for the harmonization of Genesis with modern science (all of which have been held by evangelicals at some time): the revelatory-days view (Bernard Ramm's early view), the day-age view, the gap and multiple-gap theories, the Flood geology and literal creation days view, the framework hypothesis, and the mythological approach to Gen 1 (Bernard Ramm's later view). What then is Carl Henry's position for the harmonization of Genesis and the geological record? On the basis of the current study I am proposing that his is an "idealistic harmonization view," or "indeterminate model." In this view he finds that the Bible is totally silent with regards to many of the great issues raised by evangelicals in their discussion of Gen 1-11. He notes the abbreviated nature of the biblical record:

The competition between these several views and yet the further fact that several seem to have a certain merit, provokes an observation about the nature of the biblical revelation. The biblical history is selective. Its data are organized especially with a view to the divine interest in and redemption of man. Even this redemptive history is excerptive.²

In Henry's indeterminate model the Bible has little to say about earth history other than the fact that God created all things, that he made graded orders of being that have reproduced

¹*GRA*, 6:137-138.

²"Science and Religion," 278.

according to their kinds, and that the chronological sequence in Gen 1 is authentic. Science also has its problems because it is always changing. Therefore, in his thought, concordism is not a viable option for evangelicals because of the inherent danger that when one weds a theological world view to a contemporary scientific model, one's scheme of harmonization will soon become outdated because of the changing nature of science and possibly because of new insights gained from exegetical studies.

Henry takes the position of indeterminacy because of his understanding of science, which he inherited from his mentor, Gordon Clark. His view is that science is forever changing and never has arrived at the truth in any of its fields; all theories for him are tentative. After quoting Clark to the effect that scientific laws are only useful, but never can be true, Henry states: "All scientific verdicts, tomorrow's as well as yesterday's, are inherently tentative."¹ This does not mean that the harmonization of the Bible and science are forever beyond the reach of humankind because he firmly believes that the truths of science and the truths of Scripture are from a single divine Source, that of the Creator.² General and special revelation are two separate but complementary sources of truth.³

Henry iterates why he cannot settle upon any scheme or model for reconciling

¹Ibid. For a more complete discussion of Gordon H. Clark's views on science, see H. Harold Hartzler, "Gordon Clark's Philosophy of Science," in *The Philosophy of Gordon H. Clark: A Festschrift*, ed. Ronald H. Nash (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1968), 332-341.

²For Henry, God is not God unless he is the source of all truth: "The God of the Bible is the Sovereign Creator and the God of truth. . . . All truth is therefore God's truth. Truth is what God thinks; in this sense, all truth is revelatory truth." *Gods of This Age or God of the Ages?*, 205-206.

³Speaking of evangelicalism Henry states: "Its hope of harmony between science and religion is tied to this emphasis on this twofold revelation of the Creator." "Science and Religion," 272. But the hope of harmonization is yet future, and not a present reality: "Between scientific truth and Christianity as revealed religion there is not, nor can there be, any final conflict." "The Bible and Modern Science," 1187. The key word here is "final."

science and religion: “The danger of all attempts to reconcile Genesis and science, from the standpoint of revealed theology, is the troublesome assumption that prevailing scientific theory has achieved finality.”¹ This reflects back to what he previously had stated, showing the great influence Gordon Clark had upon his thinking: “Clark’s conclusion is that science is ‘incapable of arriving at any truth whatever’ [*A Christian View of Men and Things*, 227], but supplies only highly respected opinion constantly subject to revision.”² This theme of the uncertainties of science is carried all the way through his *God, Revelation and Authority* and into a few of his other writings.³ The tentativeness for reconciling science and religion is not only directed toward science in its forever-changing aspects, but is directed toward theology as well.⁴ Henry balances the picture by stating: “The limitations of revelational method need attention no less than do the limitations of scientific method.”⁵

¹“Science and Religion,” 275.

²*Ibid.*, 270. We should modify this slightly to say that science is “incapable of arriving at any *final* truth whatever.”

³Henry speaks of “repeated revisions of scientific formulas” (*GRA*, 2:283); describes the scientific method as “always incomplete” in terms of its observations (*GRA*, 4:270); suggests that no reigning scientific view has “a guarantee of permanence” (*GRA*, 4:344); notes in the areas of cosmology “major scientific theories can and do change” (*GRA*, 6:135). After stating that “past claims to scientific finality frequently have had to be revised,” Henry sets forth the theory of evolution as a prime example of the lack of scientific finality, because it is not a provable theory, nor is it a repeatable process. *GRA*, 6:116-117. For his further emphasis on science’s tentativeness, see *GRA*, 6:141, 154, 187-191, 194-195, 219, 225.

⁴Henry writes: “The question of concord arises therefore at levels of secondary concern to the biblical record. The problems are not simple, and about some of them we may be confident that neither theology nor science has yet come up with the last word.” “Science and Religion,” 279. Elsewhere he acknowledges: “Man is to walk humbly amid God’s creation, recognizing that he can speak with finality only where God has spoken in His word. Even man’s inferences from Scripture are not beyond the possibility of error.” Carl F. H. Henry, “The Ambiguities of Scientific Breakthrough,” in *Horizons of Science*, ed. Carl F. H. Henry (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1978), 102.

⁵*GRA*, 6:193.

Henry's Views on the Days of Creation

Henry's tentativeness when it comes to the evangelical understanding of the relationship between science and theology is also reflected in the manner in which he approaches the days of creation.¹ He finds from his examination of the biblical text that the meaning of the term "day" (Heb. *yom*) is indeterminate:

The term day in Genesis has no consistent chronological value. The sun is not created until the fourth day (1:14 ff.). In one passage (1:5) day is used both of the light day apart from darkness, and also for a dayspan that includes the cycle of both light and darkness. In another (2:4b) it is used comprehensively of the entire creation: 'in the day that the Lord God made the earth and the heavens.'"²

Here Henry is applying the test of logical consistency to Scripture, and he fails to find a consistent application for a single given option for interpreting *yom*, either "twenty-four-hour day" or "indefinite period of time." Instead of choosing one meaning and applying that meaning to each of the six days, especially in light of the use of *yom* in the fourth commandment (Exod 20:11), he leaves ambiguous the question as to the nature of the creation "days" in Gen 1. This explains in part why he is not able to champion any one particular model for harmonizing Genesis and geology, because even Scripture itself has a certain tentativeness as well as science. Only in a very broad sense is he a harmonist.

But once the door has been opened exegetically for a variety of interpretations of Gen 1, then Henry moves in the direction of non-literal creation days, or perhaps metaphorical days—he does not specify their nature exactly. He asserts: "Genesis hardly

¹The most complete discussion of the days of creation is found in the chapter, "The Six Days of Creation," *GRA*, 6:133-155. Note especially pp. 133-134, 138, 141, 145-148, and 154.

²*GRA*, 6:133. In setting forth this interpretation of *yom*, Henry has the support of the large majority of evangelical scholars of the twentieth century.

limits God's rest to a 24-hour period. The Bible does not require belief in six literal 24-hour creation days on the basis of Genesis 1-2, nor does it require belief in successive ages corresponding to modern geological periods."¹ Yet in his thinking the days in Gen 1 can be considered literal if they were non-twenty-four-hour days: "One should bear in mind that the sense is just as literal if the author literally intends either twenty-four-hour days or longer epochs."² He is more interested in preserving the chronological sequence of Gen 1 than protecting the chronological value of each day by keeping the seven days of creation within one weekly cycle. He comments: "Whatever duration the term day may signify, the days of Genesis are time periods identifiable sequentially as first, second, third, and so on."³ This immediately raises the question as to whether Henry is under the influence of the reigning geological paradigm that has totally ruled out a young age for life upon this planet.

The answer to this question perhaps may be found in Henry's willingness to admit that Scripture has a large number of finalities based upon its divinely inspired propositional statements and that science as well has finalities, not connected however with man's interpretations of science. The finalities of science are based on the fact that God is the author of the truths of science. Henry's original 1957 essay on creation wrestles with the

¹*GRA*, 6:226. He immediately goes on to state: "Nor does the doctrine of a universal flood demand flood geology." In the absence of Flood geology Henry has no mechanism of limiting the earth's age to a few thousand years or limiting creation to six twenty-four-hour days. He views the issues of the 6,000 years and the length of the creation days as being related: "Genesis 1, after all, says nothing about four thousand years or about twenty-four-hour days," in responding to Langdon Gilkey's criticism of creationism. *GRA*, 4:357

²*GRA*, 4:126. One should be cognizant of the fact that "authorial intent" is best determined from the context of the word in question, using the agreed-upon rules of exegesis.

³*GRA*, 6:114.

question of the “cleavage” or “cleft” between Scripture and science and how it can be resolved. His final thought in that essay informs us why Henry is willing to allow for an ancient earth and ancient life upon earth and not willing to adopt a creation with twenty-four-hour days: “If the cleft between Christianity and science is to be repaired, the theology of revelation will not ascribe to nature and nature’s God any course disputed by the *assured results of science*, nor will science find man’s dignity, and its own renown also, in anything inferior to thinking the Creator’s thoughts after Him.”¹ Here Henry speaks of “the assured results of science,” which is another way of saying “the finalities of science.” If there are scientific conclusions that will never again have to be revised, such as the fact that the earth rotates around the sun and not vice versa, then Henry compares such with Scripture and postulates that in no case will those “facts” be out of harmony with Scripture.

Likewise, for Henry the ancient nature of the earth and the dating of fossil remains to millions of years can also be considered “facts” of scientific research with “assured results,” much in the same way as the heliocentric nature of our solar system. Thus in his system when such is compared with Scripture it cannot possibly be at variance with any part of Scripture, especially Gen 1. Neither “Flood geology” nor “creation science” have yet produced for him any convincing *scientific* evidences for a young earth and young life therein.² It would be catastrophic to his view of propositional revelation if the earth’s

¹“Science and Religion,” 282, emphasis added.

²Flood geology and creation science are viewed as intertwined with the negative methods used by fundamentalists, which Henry and the founders of the Neo-evangelical movement have staunchly rejected. In discussing the question of evolution, Henry notes that the term “fundamentalist” is often applied as a pejorative label to those who attack evolution, but for this “fundamentalism is alone to blame.” Why? “Its apologetics has met the ‘problem of science,’ unfortunately, with a coupling of invective, or of ridicule, and a ‘stop-gap’ exegesis.” “Theology and Evolution,” 217. In a 1983 interview Henry praised certain fundamentalist leaders, such as Jerry Falwell of the Moral Majority and Henry Morris of the Creation

antiquity and the record of creation were at variance with the chronological constraints of Genesis. This also is based in part upon his theory of the nature of truth—there can be no logical contradictions. He flatly asserts: “Whatever is logically contradictory and incapable of reconciliation simply cannot be accepted as truth.” And then he immediately continues: “Should the representations of Genesis conflict with scientific finalities, if there be such, then the creation narrative could not be regarded as teaching the truth of God.”¹ It is on this basis, I suggest, that he finds no chronological value in the creation days of Genesis.

Henry then concludes that God’s creative activity of the universe, this planet, life on this planet, or the human race need not be limited to a period of six twenty-four-hour days. A number of influences may have converged to propel him towards this conclusion. We can list several possibilities: One is that both Psa 90:4 and 2 Peter 3:8 tend to support a figurative interpretation of the word “day,” at least as far as eschatology is concerned.²

Another influence, perhaps more pressing or serious, is the belief that Christianity would

Research Society [*sic*, Institute for Creation Research] for their willingness to speak out publicly on important issues. But then he criticized their holding “somewhat extreme or unguarded positions,” such as , the linking of “creation with recency of the earth and flood geology.” *Conversations with Carl Henry*, 119 (interview published in *Religious Broadcasting*, 1983). In that same year (1983), Henry observes that those who insist on a global flood are “just as embarrassed by a lack of supportive empirical evidence in the geological record as is the appeal to fossil data in the paleontological record.” *GRA*, 6:218. There he continues by taking the opposite side of “Morris and Whitcomb in *The Genesis Flood*,” who “still insist that the flood explains all geologic formations.” His response: “But, say many scholars, conclusive evidence is lacking that a great flood ever stretched across the Fertile Crescent from Egypt to Ur and into the Indus Valley.” *Ibid.* The problem for recent creationists, according to Henry, is that a date of 2400 B.C. (or even 4000 B.C.) for the Flood does not harmonize with the history of great civilizations in the Middle East that antedate the Flood date by many millennia. *Ibid.*, 218-222. Thus Henry concludes the discussion: “Faith in an inerrant Bible . . . does not demand a date of 5000 B.C. or thereabouts for the origin of man on the basis of Genesis 5 and 11. Nor does the doctrine of universal flood demand flood geology.” *Ibid.*, 226. Here he totally severs Flood geology and biblical chronology (6-7,000-year-old earth) from a doctrine of creation and a belief in the full inspiration of Scripture.

¹*GRA*, 4:174. Henry speaks here of the existence of “scientific finalities” being tentative, but he is more willing to speak of the “assured results of science.” See “Science and Religion,” 282.

²On Ps 90:4, “Science and Religion,” 277, and on 2 Pet 3:8 see *GRA*, 3:180.

lose its apologetic thrust to a secular world if it held to twenty-four-hour days.¹ A third possible influence is Henry's view of time versus eternity and his conviction that God is timeless in keeping with classical Christianity, thus removing the necessity that creation be accomplished within a time frame understandable to humans.² Certainly Henry believes that God's power and authority are not lessened to any degree if he created life during long geological ages rather than in six twenty-four-hour days.³ A fourth influence is that which Henry inherited from the Reformation, and that is the conviction that God's first book, the Bible, and his second book, nature, cannot ever be at variance—the unity of special and general revelation without postulating natural theology.⁴ Closely related to this, a fifth influence is, as previously noted, his emphasis on the rational nature of the human mind as part of the image of God as well as a part of general revelation. A sixth influence is the

¹The concern for Christianity's intellectual impact is paramount, as revealed in this quotation: "Arbitrary identification of the chronology of creation with the date of 4004 B.C., of the specially created 'kinds' with the 'species' of modern science, of the creation-days with six successive twenty-four-hour periods, has reduced respect for Christianity as an authoritarian religion, and has multiplied doubt over its unique knowledge of origins." "Science and Religion," 258. In *GRA*, 6:109 he speaks of the scorn heaped upon the idea of "divine creation" because of its identification with Ussher's 4004 B.C. and with a "young earth" created in "six literal twenty-four-hour days." This concern about creationism's image resonates with leading evangelical harmonists of science and religion who view a young age of the earth and Flood geology as undermining a valid witness of the Christian faith to a secular world. This is the theme in Davis A. Young, *Christianity and the Age of the Earth* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1982).

²For a discussion of creation and evolution with respect to time, see *Notes on the Doctrine of God*, 125. He observes that the Hebrew-Christian view of creation elevates the importance of time, "without making time the ultimate explanation or ground of the universe, and without placing God in time." One reason he rejects theistic evolution may be that it places God as a creator within time.

³In support of this thesis Henry quotes approvingly William Jennings Bryan's testimony at the Scopes trial in 1925: "It would be just as easy for the kind of God we believe in to make the earth in six days or in 6 million years or in 600 million years." *GRA*, 6:146. On the other hand, Henry does not conclude that Gen 1 has geological eras in mind: "Yet nothing in the account suggests that the writer has expressly in view the extensive geological timespans that modern science identifies as evolutionary aeons." *GRA*, 6:134. This would be advocating a concordist view, which Henry has rejected.

⁴For the unity of the two revelations see "Science and Religion," 267. He speaks against evangelicals who separate these two revelations into two "levels of explanation." *GRA*, 6:137.

strong conviction in the propositional nature of Scripture and its inerrancy, not only in areas of theology but in areas of history and science. While he is reticent to argue that the Bible is a textbook of science, he finds it a totally inspired and thus trustworthy account of the world's origin; and thus biblical science must be consonant with geological science.

Henry's view of biblical time comes into play here as well, especially time as it relates to the Sabbath and to eschatology. If the days of creation are ambiguously stated, then Henry certainly finds that the length of the creation Sabbath is ambiguous as well. He suggests: "While God's seventh-day rest sanctions the sabbath day, Genesis hardly limits God's rest to a 24-hour period."¹ He takes the position that the "rest" spoken of in Heb 4 is the creation rest that becomes the eschatological rest: "The divine rest prefigures a yet future sabbath-rest to which Christ will escort the redeemed people of God (Heb. 4:3, 9 f.)."² If the rest (or, sabbath) of Heb 4 in defining the earth's eschatological rest is not confined to twenty-four hours, then in Henry's way of thinking the rest of the seventh day in Gen 2 cannot be limited to twenty-four hours.³ This undoubtedly becomes another (or a seventh) factor why he has restrained himself from advocating the literal nature of twenty-four-hour days, although early on he acknowledged that "the literal sense of *yom* seems exegetically more natural" than any metaphorical or extended meaning.⁴

¹Ibid.

²*GRA*, 6:457.

³The most common evangelical argument on the "endless" nature of God's resting on the seventh day is that this particular day in the creation account does not have the expression, "and the evening and the morning, were the seventh day," as we find delineating the other six days. Henry, however, does not use this argument because he does not limit "evening and morning" in Gen 1 to twenty-four hours.

⁴"Science and Religion," 277. He goes on to cite Ps 90:4 as support for a metaphorical view of the days of creation. In all this discussion he clearly rejects the day-age view of the creation days.

Summary

Henry's view on creation is consistent with his view on revelation. A rationalist approach to revelation,¹ stating that it comes in the form of intelligible propositions, also finds resonance in a rationalist approach to creation whereby all of nature is stamped indelibly with the intelligibility of its creator. Science, which is the study of God's work of creation, ought then to harmonize totally with God's written word. Information given in the Bible is superior to any human attempts, however, in harmonizing theology with science and Genesis with geology, due to the ever-changing nature of scientific progress, whereas Scripture itself, stamped with the thought of God and of his character, is never changing.²

When Henry is challenged with explaining the exact nature of the days of creation in Gen 1, he has much more difficulty applying his rationalist approach than he does when

¹For Henry "rationalism" does not indicate that the human mind is the supreme arbiter of truth, as commonly understood by this term, but it simply connotes the fact that God's revelation by nature must be rational in that it is granted within concepts that can be grasped by the human mind. The term "presuppositional rationalism" is applied to Henry's methodology, and even Henry himself defends the use of the term "rationalism," in that he finds some good elements contained therein. He writes: "To be sure, evangelicals need not tremble and take to the hills whenever others charge us with rationalism, since not every meaning of that term is objectionable; those who glory in the irrational, superrational or subrational ought to be challenged head-on." *GRA*, 3:480.

²Heb 13:8, "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, today, and forever," is one of Henry's favorite biblical texts on the nature of Christ as it relates to the nature of God and to the permanence of God's Word. The unchanging nature of Christ is based on the unchanging nature of God, the Father, and this view gives insight as to why Henry supports the "classical" view of God as being "timeless," that is, outside of time. Henry avers: "The God of Christian orthodoxy is timelessly eternal as mainstream theologians like Augustine, Anselm, Aquinas, the Protestant Reformers, and in fact, most Christian theologians affirm." *GRA*, 239. Time symbolizes constant change, and is unstable; God is an absolute, according to Henry, and thus he must exist outside of time. For a philosophical and exegetical critique of the classical view of God's timelessness, see Fernando Luis Canale, "Toward a Criticism of Theological Reason: Time and Timelessness as Primordial Presuppositions" (Ph.D. dissertation, Andrews University, 1983), who bases his position, the concept of Being rooted in time, upon the "I AM" passage (Exod 3:14-15). For a contemporary, evangelical debate on the issues related to God's timelessness, see Gregory E. Ganssle, ed., *Four Views: God and Time* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001).

dealing with other Scriptural passages. He acknowledges that the natural interpretation of those days is that of twenty-four-hour periods,¹ but he also is fully aware of the fact that earth science depicts a long history for life on this earth in terms of millions of years. Thus adopting the contemporary scientific interpretation over the biblical world view he appears to be allowing science to interpret Scripture, setting up an independent standard for the judging of what is truth. I must query whether he has fallen into the very trap that he has warned his fellow evangelicals against falling into—the trap of accommodation.²

I must also raise the question whether Gen 1 becomes for Henry one exception to his literal approach to the rest of Genesis in which there is a literal Adam and Eve, a literal fall into sin, a literal flood, and a literal history of the patriarchs when apparently he favors a non-literal approach to the days. Even the sequence of the seven days he views as literal, but apparently he does not view the time period for each of the creation days as being literal, or necessarily twenty-four hours, on the basis of the ambiguity of the meaning of the word “day” (*yom*). Of course Henry would object to the charge of inconsistency here on the basis that a literal interpretation of the creation days can include these as extended geological time periods, or perhaps literal “eons.” Granted, the term “literal” can and does have various levels of meaning. One can interpret a given word on the basis of its root meaning, holding strictly to its original connotation. Or one can interpret the same word in

¹*GRA*, 6:205, and “Science and Religion,” 277.

²Henry observes: “Nothing in the Bible presumes to offer scientific teaching on the basis of empirically validated hypothesis. The diversity of evangelical interpretation of the Genesis account stems largely from efforts to adjust the creation narrative to modern scientific theory. And because scientific explanation is tentative and revisable, such correlations of Scripture and science are likewise vulnerable to continuing change.” *GRA*, 6:153. The question is raised here whether Henry has adjusted the Creation narrative with its time-oriented statements, so that such are accommodated to a reigning scientific paradigm.

a metaphorical sense, pointing to a literal reality lying below or beyond the root meaning. For example, the Apocalypse is filled with metaphorical expressions, yet these can point to a literal conflict between good and evil, a literal Redeemer, and a literal heaven or earth made new. Cannot the author of Gen 1 be understood as pointing to a reality far above and beyond the normal root meaning of the word *yom*, and thus one can in a sense preserve the literal interpretation of the entire creation account?

These questions that I have raised concerning the application of Henry's methodology and resulting conclusions, however, must be saved for further analysis and critique in chapters 5 and 6.

CHAPTER 5

CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE VIEWS OF BERNARD L. RAMM AND CARL F. H. HENRY

Introduction

The views of two leading evangelical theologians of the twentieth century, Bernard L. Ramm and Carl F. H. Henry, have been examined with respect to their understanding of the doctrines of revelation and creation. Of special importance is the connection between their views on creation and their concept of revelation, the former being definitely rooted in the latter. In addition, their respective views on the days of creation have been analyzed in order to determine what impact their understanding of both creation and revelation has had upon their views of the days of creation, whether considered as symbolic or literal.

The purpose of this study is twofold: first, to ascertain the reasons why Bernard Ramm and Carl Henry differ upon many important issues, although they hold so much in common as neo-evangelical systematic theologians. In fact, their praise for the work of each other is sometimes unrestrained.¹ Most non-evangelicals in appraising the work of

¹At the end of his review of Henry's *God, Revelation and Authority* (first two volumes only), Ramm has these glowing words about Henry: "Henry, however, has written the broadest, the most learned, and the most incisive and comprehensive work on revelation in our current evangelical tradition. That one may have differences with him should not obscure the great effort expended, not the uniqueness of his synthesis nor the cutting edge of his criticism." Ramm, "Carl Henry's Magnum Opus," 63. In reviewing

leading evangelical scholars seem to identify both Ramm and Henry as belonging to the same “camp” or the same school of thought within evangelicalism. Second, the goal of this study is to uncover reasons why both Carl Henry and Bernard Ramm are agreed in rejecting the literal interpretation of the creation days in Gen 1. Granted, they have quite different schemes for reinterpreting the creation days in light of modern geological science, but they both advocate a figurative, non-literal interpretation of the creation days.

This chapter then consists of two major sections: the first part deals with a comparison between Ramm and Henry on the topics of revelation and creation, and the second part seeks to uncover the reasons why they reject the literal days of creation while at the same time they uphold the literal nature of the early chapters of Genesis. These two sections are integrally related. If Ramm and Henry are in disagreement on certain facets of their doctrine of creation, then it would be illogical to argue that such facets are responsible for their rejection of the literal days of creation. It is on certain points in their respective doctrines of creation that they are in essential agreement that one must search diligently for possible reasons for their rejection of the literal days of creation. This is based upon the premise that any major points of disagreement in their creation doctrines ought to produce opposite or at least differing conclusions with respect to the nature of the creation days. Thus it has been absolutely necessary to first lay the foundation for understanding the thinking of both Henry and Ramm on revelation and creation before delineating the reason or reasons why both men apparently reject a literal interpretation of

Ramm's *An Evangelical Christology*, Henry likewise speaks highly of Ramm: “This is one of Ramm’s best books, and must be ranked among his most helpful contributions to pastors and seminarians.” Carl F. H. Henry, “The Person of Christ,” *Eternity*, February 1986, 39.

the creation days. There are no short-cuts to obtaining this goal.

The evaluative tool for analyzing the conclusions of both Ramm and Henry in regard to their understanding of the length of the creation days will be that of logical consistency. Logical consistency has many facets that must be taken into consideration: internal, methodological, and historical. In examining internal consistency, this study analyzes whether their conclusions in regard to Genesis 1 are consonant with conclusions in regard to the later chapters of Genesis. Methodological consistency involves the question of whether one's methodology is consonant with one's theology, and historical consistency focuses upon the question of whether one's conclusions are an external outgrowth of one's historical context, rather than being an internal outgrowth of one's theological principles and methodology. The question must be addressed whether twentieth-century advances in science have played a major or even minor role in the interpretation of the early chapters of Genesis.

Similarities between Ramm and Henry

Non-Substantive Similarities

The non-substantive similarities have little to do with the core of their beliefs, but are based upon religio-sociological, rather than purely theological, factors. Both Ramm and Henry are Baptists.¹ They both have doctoral degrees in the area of philosophy, and both became systematic theologians. As noted previously, both are considered perhaps

¹For these general similarities between the two men see the essays first by R. Albert Mohler, "Carl F. H. Henry," in *Baptist Theologians*, ed. Timothy George and David S. Dockery (Nashville: Broadman Press), 518-538; and then by Day, "Bernard Ramm," in *ibid.*, 588-605.

the two most influential leaders of the neo-evangelical movement starting in 1942 for a period of about a half century. The non-substantive similarities are not predictors of whether these two men would have basic agreement on the doctrines of revelation and creation, or that they would agree on the question of the length of the creation days.

Substantive Similarities

The substantive similarities are theological in nature and reveal the fact that they hold in common a core belief system in regard to both revelation and creation.

Their Concepts of Revelation

Avery R. Dulles categorizes both Ramm and Henry in the camp of those adhering to a belief in propositional revelation, along with most evangelicals. This is true of Ramm, prior to his shift to a more nuanced, non-propositional view of revelation with the publication of *After Fundamentalism* (1983).¹ I have limited this portion of the discussion to the “earlier Ramm.” According to both Ramm and Henry, revelation in the Judeo-Christian context is always a historical process, so that the product of revelation is historical, as opposed to many major religions whose tenets have no divine revelation, or if there are claims of divine revelation, such are devoid of a historical context. The revelation is also propositional, in that it is given to the biblical writer with specific

¹Dulles, 39-40. Dulles lists five camps under the general “conservative evangelicalism” view of propositional revelation. The first is represented by Harold Lindsell, author of *The Battle for the Bible*, who advocated inerrancy on all matters; the second by Henry, who limits inerrancy to the autographs, not the received texts; the third by Clark Pinnock, who holds to inerrancy of the author’s intent, not to specific details; the fourth by Ramm, who holds to soteric inerrancy, not inerrancy for matters of history and science; and the fifth by Bloesch and Jewett who allow for some errancy in matters not essential to faith. Dulles published his work in 1983, the same year as Ramm’s *After Fundamentalism*, so that he would not have been aware of Ramm’s shift away from inerrancy.

informational content. Both Henry and the “earlier” Ramm rejected encounter theology, whereby revelation consists of a divine-human interaction in which no visionary pictures and no verbal or informational content are granted.

Their Concepts of Creation

The respective concepts of creation in the writings of Ramm and Henry have much more in common than there are differences between them. The following are the main points they agree upon:

1. Creation is by fiat, that is, by the powerful word of God, and is a miraculous act.¹
2. Macroevolution is not God’s mode of creation, nor is theistic evolution.²
3. The origin of the human race is by creation, bringing into it elements much in common with the animal world; this origin is much earlier than the biblical record has it;

¹Ramm’s description of creation, which is almost poetic, involves acts of fiat creationism scattered through the geological ages: “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 geological history the earth is prepared for man’s dwelling, or as it has been put by others, the cosmos was pregnant with man. The vast forests grew and decayed for his coal. . . . The millions of sea life were born and perished for his oil. . . . From time to time the great creative acts, *de novo*, took place. . . . This is not theistic evolution which calls for creation from within with no acts *de novo*. It is progressive creationism.” Ramm, *CVSS*, 155. Henry’s creation creed commences with these words: “That a sovereign, personal, ethical God is the voluntary creator of the space-time universe; that God created *ex nihilo* by divine fiat.” Henry, “Science and Religion,” 258.

²For an extended critique of evolution as a scientific system, see Ramm, *CVSS*, 183-197, and for its fusion with Christian thought see his critique of theistic evolution, see *ibid.*, 197-205, where he praises both Russell Mixter and E. J. Carnell for their rejection of macroevolution, see *ibid.*, 204. One of his critiques of evolution is that it fails to reckon with design in nature and flies in the face of the laws of thermodynamics manifested in the increase of entropy. *Ibid.*, 193. Henry also has an extended discussion critical of evolution in a chapter entitled, “The Crisis of Evolutionary Theory,” *GRA*, 6:156-196.

and humankind's creation is followed by a literal fall.¹

4. The age of the earth with life therein is very old, in terms of millions of years and not the thousands of years of Ussher's chronology.²

5. Evil has been part of the natural world long ages prior to the creation of humankind.³

¹Ramm teaches that man's origin is from God, and not a product of mixing of two lines, the human line with the anthropoid line; that man's origin may be up to 500,000 years ago (or whatever date assigned by science); that man has much in common with the animal world because of the same Creator; and that the Fall of man is literal and historical. Ramm, *CVSS*, 214-233. Henry argues for the unity of the human race (which is more important than the date for man's origin), allows for perhaps 50,000 years for the history of humankind on earth, and advocates a literal Fall that brought death into the human race. Henry, "Science and Scripture," 279-282; *GRA*, 6:197-228. In the evolutionary view "man is animalized, the brute humanized." Henry, *Remaking the Modern Mind*, 246. Henry warns against evangelicals compromising on the date of human origins, which may lead to a minimizing of the idea of a "historical Fall." Henry, *Frontiers in Modern Theology*, 137.

²Speaking on behalf of evangelicals, Ramm asserts: "We also have reliable knowledge of millions of years of geological history." Ramm, *CVSS*, 26. He proceeds to state that "the Ussher chronology should at this point be abandoned," and that the theologian who teaches that the earth was formed out of water in 4004 B.C. is misinterpreting Scripture. *Ibid.*, 38. Moreover he observes that "most evangelical Christians have long ago given up the date of original creation as 4000 B.C. or so." *Ibid.*, 121. He believes along with contemporary geologists that the earth began 4-5 billion years ago, that complex life appeared in the Cambrian 500 millions years ago, and that the Pleistocene epoch began about 5 million years ago. *Ibid.*, 119, 122. He acknowledges as valid "the radically longer history of man as presented by the science of anthropology." Ramm, *After Fundamentalism*, 156. He concedes to the geologist all the time that is needed by geological theory: "Therefore, the geologist is to be given his vast period of time, with the realization that the world made in two billion years is no less a miracle than a world made in twenty-four hours." Ramm, *CVSS*, 153. When it comes to the origin of man, he offers Karl Barth's synthesis as a solution in that it gives to the anthropologist all that is needed for his theories and grants to the Christian theologian all that he needs in upholding his belief in the image of God in man. Ramm, *After Fundamentalism*, 157. Henry seems to echo many of the above thoughts of Ramm, when he states: "Virile centers of evangelical theology today find in the creation account abundant room for the antiquity of the earth." Henry, "Science and Religion," 258. Also, he acknowledges that the age of the earth is probably 6-10 billion years old. Henry, "Bible and Modern Science," 1190. Likewise he categorically rejects Ussher's chronology: "Donald England summarizes the matter as follows: 'To get a value of 6,000 years for the age of the earth one would have to assume an error of 99.9998 percent for each of the major radioactive methods.'" *GRA*, 6:214, emphasis original. He goes on to elaborate: "Faith in an inerrant Bible does not rest on a commitment to the recency or antiquity of the earth or even to only a 6000-year antiquity for man. . . . It does not demand a date of 5000 B.C. or thereabouts for the origin of man on the basis of Genesis 5 and 11." *GRA*, 6:226.

³Ramm's discussions of the problem of evil in relationship to the Fall are found in *CVSS*, 231-233, and *Offense to Reason*, 56-57. He takes the position that the only death introduced into the world at the Fall of Adam is the death of humankind. Henry's discussion of the problem of evil is located in *GRA*, 6:269-

6. The days of creation are not literal twenty-four-hour days, but instead denote aspects of God's creation of the earth and its biota over a long period of geological time.¹

Disagreements between Ramm and Henry

Not a Struggle for Prominence

No evidence is found for a political-style rivalry between Carl Henry and Bernard Ramm for gaining the leadership position among neo-evangelicals. First of all, Neo-

304. While the two men reach essentially the same conclusion that evil existed in the natural world long before the Fall of man, they do so with quite different lines of reasoning. Ramm stresses the important role that death plays in a perfect world: "Carnivorous animals and fish keep the balance of Nature." *CVSS*, 233. Henry on the other hand views natural evil as part of God's omnipotence used as a tool for retribution and judgment, and thus God is considered the Creator of natural evil. *GRA*, 6:292-293. Henry does not equate evil with sin when he states that Satan is responsible for the introduction of sin into the universe. *GRA*, 6:294.

¹Ramm's rejection of the six literal days of creation is apparent when he states that "there is no time element in the record except the expression 'in the beginning'" (*CVSS*, 119-120); when he considers the position that the days are literal to be "the naive-literal view" (*ibid.*, 120-121); when he remarks that many geologists and theologians have adopted the non-literal view, which makes it likely that "the case for the literal day cannot be conclusive nor the objections to the metaphorical interpretation too serious" (*ibid.*, 145); when he lists five different usages of the word day in Gen 1:1 - 2:4 (*ibid.*); and when he sets forth his main reason for rejecting the literal view—"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." (*ibid.*, 150). His summation of argumentation is given as follows: "We believe, in agreement with the authorities which we have listed, that creation was *revealed* in six days, not *performed* in six days." *Ibid.*, 151, emphasis original.

Henry's advocacy of the non-literal approach to the creation days is perhaps best encapsulated in his opening (or earliest) formal statement on the subject: "Arbitrary identification of the chronology . . . of the creation-days with six successive twenty-four-hour periods, has reduced respect for Christianity as an authoritarian religion, and has multiplied doubt over its unique knowledge of origins." "Science and Religion," 258. Here the tone of thought is reminiscent of Ramm in that he finds ridicule heaped upon evangelical Christianity for holding to a view that cannot be supported scientifically. Cf. *GRA*, 6:109. For him the six-day creation view over-interprets Scripture: "To identify biblical creationism exclusively with a six-day week wherein all the known species of life were divinely created without any interdependence overstates the facts." "Theology and Evolution," 206. He immediately remarks that one cannot derive all living species today from the species of animals that supposedly were preserved in Noah's ark. *Ibid.* Following the footsteps of Ramm, Henry notes the multiple usage of the word "day" (Heb. *yom*) in Gen 1-2:4. *GRA*, 6:133, cf. *GRA*, 4:122-123. But he takes exception to Ramm when he states that the days of creation are sequential no matter what the duration of the days might be. *GRA*, 6:114. Perhaps his last statement on the nature of the days is this: "While God's seventh-day rest sanctions the sabbath day, Genesis hardly limits God's rest to a 24-hour period. The Bible does not require belief in six literal 24-hour creation days on the basis of Genesis 1-2, nor does it require belief in successive ages corresponding to modern geological periods." *GRA*, 6:226. In this last statement he rejects the "day-age view" of creation.

evangelicalism as already noted is a loosely knit confederation of organizations, churches, ministries, and publishing ventures that hold in common a core of beliefs. There is no single organization called “Neo-evangelicalism.” Second, Neo-evangelicalism does not have a leadership position or governing council for all its entities. Third, Carl Henry has been named “evangelicalism’s dean” by more or less common consent, rather than by an official decision. And finally, Bernard Ramm gives no evidence in his wide array of writings that he wanted to be recognized as the leading voice in evangelical theology. Hence, I find no evidence of a serious rivalry between the two men, nor any ongoing professional animosity between the two.

Both Carl Henry and Bernard Ramm were not shy about voicing their opinions about fellow evangelicals, and thus one finds a surprising number of comments that each has made about the other—in nearly all cases comments about a theological position taken by the other. This study is incomplete without a careful examination of their mutual comments in order to discern whether these statements will uncover the reasons why Henry and Ramm differ from one another on their approaches to the relationship between science and religion.

Henry’s Criticisms of Ramm

Earlier in his career Carl Henry was critical of Ramm mostly in the arena of the relationship between the Bible and modern science. The book that troubled Henry was Ramm’s *Christian View of Science and Scripture* (1954), where Ramm launched a modern form of progressive creationism, called “moderate concordism.” His criticisms

of Ramm are sprinkled throughout his article “Science and Religion,” and consist of the following points:

1. Ramm gives “a certain priority” to science above theology by entitling his book, *The Christian View of Science and . . .*¹

2. Ramm gives support to progressive creationism, a process which does nothing more than bring into existence the “master forms” of all created things as conceived in the mind of God prior to creation. Thus he is alleged to have imported “a chunk of naturalism into his system.”²

3. After complementing Ramm for describing the Bible’s statements as “phenomenal” rather than being “postulational”—describing appearances rather than the essence of reality—Henry then critiques him for assigning “to science a competence in defining objective reality which leading philosophers of science have more and more disowned.”³

4. The sharpest criticisms are reserved for Ramm in his attempts to find a solution to the dissonance between science and theology. Ramm is said to have failed to see that the cleft is due to the fact that the scientific viewpoint is constructed by “unregenerate scholars,” but instead he states that both scientists and theologians are not aware of the

¹Henry, “Science and Religion,” 248. This criticism is unmerited in light of the fact that the title of Henry’s article is “Science and Religion,” which can be used as an argument that Henry too is giving priority to science over religion!

²Ibid., 252. Edward J. Carnell is likewise criticized for doing so with his concept of “threshold evolution.”

³Ibid., 267-268. The philosophers cited as examples of those disowning science’s competence are John Dewey, E. Mach, and P. W. Bridgman. We would categorize John Dewey more as a “philosopher of education,” rather than a “philosopher of science.”

limitations of their respective methodologies. Ramm is then critiqued for organizing a “truce” between science and religion by robbing religion of its right to speak on scientific issues, except in the arena of the phenomenal (or appearances). Without the ability of the Bible to communicate scientific truths, there can be no “Christian philosophy of science,” according to Henry.¹ Science then has autonomy in its own sphere.

5. Finally, Henry faults Ramm’s view of pictorial revelation and moderate concordism on the basis that there is no inkling in Gen 1 that “God showed” his work of creation to Moses, rather than “God speaking” his works into existence, and that his model offers an unneeded concession to the “spiritual-truth theory” that attributes only theological truths to Gen 1.² In these five critiques Henry has very little to say about Ramm that is complementary. His overriding concern in all five points is that Ramm has become enamored with modern science, giving it much too great an authority in developing a Christian world view and granting Scripture too little authority for critiquing modern science.

In successive writings Henry referred to Ramm mostly in a positive sense. In 1966 he included Ramm among the many “conservative” evangelical scholars who were resisting the tide of neo-orthodoxy and were defending the conservative cause on the

¹Ibid., 272. Henry’s final concern is that science in Ramm’s viewpoint is invested with “an excessive and sacred authority.”

²Ibid., 276-277. Henry labels Ramm’s view a “transition theory,” probably implying that it is a transition towards a theistic evolutionary position. Elsewhere in this study it is noted that “theistic evolution” and “progressive creation” are synonymous in Henry’s thinking.

question of the “full authority” and inerrancy of Scripture.¹ In numerous references to Ramm in *God, Revelation and Authority*, Henry writes positively of Ramm’s contribution to evangelical thought, especially to its doctrines of revelation and inspiration.² The criticisms of Ramm in *God, Revelation and Authority* are few and far between, but are pointed. Interestingly, Henry takes up the theological cudgel against Ramm exactly where he had laid it down in his 1957 essay, “Science and Religion.” As noted immediately above, his concern was that Ramm had made unneeded concessions to the “spiritual-truth” view of Gen 1, thus removing its authority from the arena of science. His first criticism of Ramm in *God, Revelation and Authority* was in the same vein of thought, in that he sees Ramm first adopting a “pictorial representation” of Gen 1 in *The Christian View of Science and Scripture* and second advocating the possibility that the category of “myth” can be a vehicle for best understanding Genesis in his later work, *The Evangelical Heritage*.³ But then Henry launches a much more broad-based critique of Ramm as a summary point: “Ramm nonetheless considers propositional revelation too

¹Henry listed Ramm along with Paul K. Jewett, John F. Walvoord, Edward J. Young, J. I. Packer, Gordon H. Clark and others who were defending the conservative evangelical cause in the early 1960s. Henry, *Frontiers in Modern Theology*, 123, 140.

²For Henry’s laudatory or supportive comments on Ramm’s thought, see *GRA*, 2:42; 3:137, 156, 392, 397, 405, 419, 422, 464; 4:104, 124, 163, 205, 274-275, 278-279, 488-489; and 6:144, 200, 217-218.

³*GRA*, 1:67, where Henry observes: “When once a symbolic value is given to what has long been considered predominantly factual, as in the case of the creation of man, then the transition to myth is not difficult.” This is stated in respect to Ramm. Henry’s firm stance against mythology in Genesis is evident in a previous statement: “No conflict could exist between the Bible and science, of course, if one arbitrarily dismissed the scriptural account as simply sublime poetry or mythology, or reduced its truths to mere parabolic symbols.” “The Bible and Modern Science,” 1189. Henry is alarmed that Ramm was moving in that direction in his attempts to harmonize the Bible and science.

narrow a concept to be theologically normative for the Bible.”¹ For Henry, propositional revelation and the literary use of myth in Scripture are two mutually exclusive categories.

In Henry’s critique of Ramm, the central issue is not their differing views on inerrancy, although that is an item of concern. He takes exception to Ramm’s statement that to have a solid view of inerrancy it would require “a theology of glory which we do not yet have.”² Henry points out that if that type of certainty were required for inerrancy, it would also be required for a theology of the cross and all other theologies as well. But his real concern was that Ramm was inconsistent in stating that Scripture is “the supreme and final authority in matters of faith and conduct,” while at the same time he was supporting G. C. Berkouwer’s book, *Holy Scripture*, as being in the mainstream of historic Christianity.³

In his discussion of the doctrine of creation Henry critiques Ramm for not allowing the Bible to address the “how” of creation, although he does state that the Bible clarifies the “who” and the “why” of creation.⁴ But his main concern over Ramm’s position is not the sharp division between the “who/why” and the “how,” but the fact that he selectively finds objective scientific knowledge on the first few pages of the Bible:

By imposing the grid of empirical science on the Genesis account

¹*GRA*, 1:67.

²*GRA*, 4:190.

³*Ibid.* At this point Henry is being unduly hard on Ramm, in that he elsewhere defends Berkouwer, along with F. F. Bruce, as having served *Christianity Today* very well over the years, and the two should not be castigated as “false evangelicals.” Carl F. H. Henry, *Confessions of a Theologian: An Autobiography* (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1986), 365.

⁴*GRA*, 6:112-113. For Ramm modern science can give us the “how” of creation. See *CVSS*, 70, 150. Henry categorically rejects this approach of Ramm’s, according to *GRA*, 6:114-115.

Ramm abstracts certain elements from the narrative as a whole that unlike other elements are to be regarded as factually significant. But this method of interpretation necessarily suspends what is or is not to be considered factual upon the changing theories of science; it provides no firm basis, moreover, for excluding the factual significance of other elements.¹

Here is Henry's major concern, which is repeated throughout his writings on creation:

Modern science is unfairly superimposed upon the biblical account, thus redirecting the meaning of Scripture away from that which was originally intended by the authors. Thus Henry portrays Ramm's uniting of the pictorial view with "moderate concordism" and "progressive evolution" as a "wedding of convenience," rather than being driven by the actual statements of Scripture.²

After proposing that progressive creationism is merely another variety of theistic evolution, Henry summarizes Ramm's concept of progressive creationism: "In Bernard Ramm's view root-species were divinely created but change and development have occurred through evolution."³ Henry rightly notes that progressive creationism "holds that major steps in developmental advance have resulted from fiat creation that sporadically penetrated long ages of comparatively gradual change."⁴ A further discussion of Ramm's view leads Henry to this observation: "Once the further step is taken of scattering God's creative acts throughout geological ages, whether in the same or

¹*GRA*, 6:115. Henry also faults Ramm in this context for not offering a hermeneutical methodology for determining what elements in the Creation account are factual and what are not.

²*GRA*, 6:115. Henry questions whether the Gen 2 account of man's creation out of the dust of the ground is merely a pictorial representation, and suggests that it may indeed rule out the ancestry of the human race from animal precursors.

³*GRA*, 6:142.

⁴*Ibid.* Henry questions whether this differs "at all" from theistic evolution.

some other sequence as in the six creation days, we approximate theories of theistic evolution that insist upon miraculous divine intervention in an evolutionary process.”¹

One could argue that there is little difference between theistic evolution with its postulation of a one-time divine intervention at the beginning of the process and progressive creationism with its suggestion of multiple episodes of divine intervention throughout the geological ages. Both views have divine intervention, but progressive creationism with its continuing episodes of divine activity is much more favorable to the concept of genuine divine miracles occurring throughout human history, especially as recorded in sacred history. The miracles occur in the form of fiat declarations by which new forms of life are brought into existence suddenly, not through a long gradual process. Theistic evolution tends to disallow miraculous events whereby divine power can alter the course of natural history by changing natural laws or working outside of natural laws.²

Carl Henry has reviewed two books authored by Bernard Ramm, and both reviews have notes of deep concern about the direction that Ramm’s theology is taking him. In his review of *An Evangelical Christology*, Henry’s critique centers around Ramm’s view of inerrancy: “Ramm defends the Gospels against radical criticism but disavows the

¹*GRA*, 6:146.

²Theistic evolutionists for the most part still accept the fact of miraculous divine activity because the original creation was a miraculous event. They view creation as taking place via a process, rather than by fiat; hence, “miracles” are divine events that take place within natural law, rather than outside of natural law. For example, the British evangelical C. S. Lewis, who is a theistic evolutionist, explains miracles on the basis of God using “rules” that are not readily apparent to us. “In other words,” Lewis writes, “there are rules behind the rules, and a unity which is deeper than uniformity.” *Miracles: A Preliminary Study* (New York: Macmillan, 1947), 116. Bernard Ramm speaks approvingly of E. J. Carnell’s definition of miracles as a divine activity that is above and beyond that is natural, while not disrupting the uniformity of nature. *Types of Apologetic Systems*, 234-236.

evangelical orthodox emphasis on inerrancy.”¹ He ends by critiquing Ramm for siding with Barth in downplaying the importance of inerrancy: “Ramm agrees with Barth that the christological content of Scripture, and not any theory of inspiration, is evangelical Christianity’s first line of defense.”²

In his review of Ramm’s *After Fundamentalism*, Henry again faults Ramm for siding with Barth on the question of inerrancy: “Ramm apparently joins with Schleiermacher and Barth in affirming that an inerrant Scripture is indefensible: cultural-linguistic considerations influentially shape, determine, govern and limit all human thought.”³ Ramm’s view is that cultural conditioning of Scripture makes it impossible to hold a strict view of biblical inspiration, and even propositional revelation is not a viable position unless the Bible was given in the pure language of heaven. The main issue is one of authority, science versus Scripture. After noting the challenges of biblical criticism, geology, astronomy, and the theory of evolution, “Ramm seeks nonetheless to know how both the biblical and modern accounts can be true, and he categorizes as obscurantist castigation any suggestion that the scientists are wrong,” according to Henry.⁴ At this point it becomes manifest that one of the major differences between Ramm and Henry is whether science can be granted final authority in its various spheres

¹Henry, “The Person of Christ,” .39.

²Ibid., 39-40.

³George Hunsinger, John B. Cobb, and Carl F. H. Henry, “Barth as Post-Enlightenment Guide: Three Responses to Ramm,” *Theological Students Fellowship Bulletin*, 6, no. 5 (1983): 16. For a more recent evangelical assessment of Henry’s and Ramm’s views on Barth, refer to John D. Morrison, “Barth, Barthians, and Evangelicals: Reassessing the Question of the Relation of Holy Scripture and the Word of God,” *Trinity Journal* 25 (2004): 205-212.

⁴Ibid.

of study. Ramm says “Yes,” and Henry says “No.”

A survey of Henry’s critiques of Bernard Ramm’s thought accentuates the differences between the two men:

1. Ramm gives much more credence to scientific thought than does Henry, even in areas where science apparently contradicts Scripture.

2. Ramm limits the ability of Scripture to address scientific issues, and allows for the possibility of errancy or at least cultural-conditioning in its scientific statements.

3. Ramm allows for a good deal of evolutionary thought to enter into his model known as progressive creationism, much more than what Henry would allow.

4. Ramm throughout his long writing career gradually shifted away from propositional revelation and made allowance for myth and other types of symbolism to be present in the early chapters of Genesis in order to harmonize the biblical and scientific accounts.

Ramm’s Criticisms of Henry

Since Ramm’s first exhaustive writing on science and religion, *The Christian View of Science and Scripture* (1954), predated Henry’s writing on that topic, and since much of what Ramm has written predates Henry’s *God, Revelation and Authority* (1976-1983), we find references to Henry’s thought few and far between. One can find Ramm’s personal thoughts about Henry in two major places—first in his book, *After Fundamentalism*, and second in his review of Henry’s *God, Revelation and Authority*.

The first mention of Henry in *After Fundamentalism*, published in 1983, the same

year as the final volume of *God, Revelation and Authority*, cites him for giving “bad press” to Karl Barth.¹ This sets the stage for Ramm’s ardent defense of Barth as a model to evangelicals for doing responsible theology in response to the Enlightenment critique of historic Christianity. Ramm is deeply concerned that Henry and other evangelicals have not taken the critical methods of scholarship seriously, as evidenced in these comments:

Evangelicals cannot gloss the monumental amount of critical materials developed by modern biblical scholarship. In *God, Revelation and Authority*, Carl F. H. Henry sets out his views of revelation, inspiration, and authority against all other options, but his monumental effort [four volumes] stumbles because he glosses biblical criticism.²

Henry’s response to this cutting criticism was to ignore the question of biblical criticism entirely in his review of Ramm’s *After Fundamentalism*. Instead, he focused upon what he felt were central issues, one of which is the importance of adhering to propositional revelation and inerrancy.

Actually the sharpest critiques made of Henry by Ramm in the public arena are found in his review of volumes 1 and 2 of Henry’s *God, Revelation and Authority*— an article-length review published in *Eternity* (1977). After noting that the underlying thesis of these volumes is that an inerrant propositional revelation stands superior to any other theological or philosophical system and that all other non-evangelical theologies can be shown to be contradictory by means of the law of non-contradiction, Ramm lists five

¹Ramm, *After Fundamentalism*, 23.

²Ibid., 26-27. In one sentence Ramm undermines the effectiveness of Henry’s four volumes published at the time of his critique. Two volumes were later published as part of *GRA*.

major critiques of Henry:

1. With regard to Scripture, Henry is faulted for rejecting some contemporary approaches to understanding Scripture, such as Brevard Child's canonical criticism. Ramm gives this warning: "Unless Henry comes to some kind of synthesis of criticism and theology, the very theology of revelation he so vigorously advocates could falter."¹

2. With regard to the non-rational, Ramm points out that in both personal experience and in Scripture one can detect elements of the non-rational. If that be the case, Ramm argues, "Henry's use of reason to test a revelation cannot handle the non-rational in Scripture."²

3. With regard to propositional revelation, he first agrees with Henry in noting that there is much in Scripture that is propositional, but he candidly admits he parts company with Henry on the point Henry makes that "all the literary genre of Scripture (poetry, drama, parable, apocalyptic literature, fables, symbols) and all figures of speech (smile [*sic*, simile], metaphor, hyperbole, etc.) . . . must be reduced to propositions or they cannot be tested," since reason is said to be the universal test.³ But the problem Ramm finds is that these examples of literary genres cannot be redefined in stark propositions without significant loss of information.

4. With respect to inerrancy, Ramm asks the question confronting every theologian, "What is the first thing . . . he says about it [Scripture]?" His answer is

¹Ramm, "Carl Henry's Magnum Opus," 59.

²Ibid., 61. This criticism is probably based upon a distortion of Henry's thought. For Henry reason is not the test itself of truth, but it is the divinely created apparatus for recognizing truth.

³Ibid., 62.

directed to Carl Henry: “Henry says that it is inerrant.”¹ But Ramm focuses upon the content and message of Scripture as its greatest evidence of divine origin, rather than by using an artificial concept that is called inerrancy: “But in that Scripture is formally the Word of God by virtue of revelation and inspiration, it must also materially be the Word of God by its content and message. It may be true that Scripture is inerrant but that is not where its divinity, its believability rests.”²

5. With respect to Karl Barth, Ramm finds fault with Henry’s selecting bits and pieces here and there from Barth’s writings without examining the whole corpus of what Barth writes in *Church Dogmatics*, admittedly a Herculean task because of its thirteen volumes.³

To summarize Ramm’s critiques of Henry, one should note that Ramm is far more anxious than Henry to have a credible witness for evangelical theology, a witness that takes seriously the modern theological methods. Once these methods are accepted as having a degree of validity, then the question of the nature of propositional revelation is raised. Expressions in the Bible can be seen more from their human side, than from the standpoint of their possible divine utterance, by means of critical methods. Once an emphasis on the humanity of Scripture is taken, this raises the question of inerrancy,

¹Ibid. Ramm does agree that throughout the centuries Christianity has offered a variety of expressions describing the divine origin and content of Scripture, but divine origin is not the issue.

²Ibid., 62-63.

³Ibid., 63. In this fifth critique Ramm is the most congenial to Henry in that he acknowledges that it is a tremendous task for any theologian to have a grasp of Barth’s writings in their entirety, complicated by the fact that Barth somewhat frequently changes his mind on a topic and thus one needs to be aware of shifts in Barth’s thinking.

which then needs to be reinterpreted if the critical methods have any validity whatever. These methodological differences between Ramm and Henry ultimately have led to significant theological differences.

Differences between Ramm and Henry

Their Methodologies

Ramm's approach to Scripture is principally inductive, while Henry's approach is primarily deductive. For Ramm a discussion of inspiration and revelation must take fully into account the "phenomena" of Scripture, which are considered to be the data that are visible and accessible to the researcher.¹ By his own admission this approach is inductive, patterning the work of a theologian after that of a scientist.² His philosophical system is evidentialism that searches throughout the scriptural record for the evidences or "proofs" for the truth of Christianity—a long tradition that includes William Paley of the early nineteenth century.

By contrast Henry definitely follows the deductive method in developing his

¹Ramm, "Scripture as a Theological Concept," 150. He proposes that only a phenomenological approach to Scripture can provide the basis for accurately stating "the theological attributes of Scripture." Ibid.

²Early in his career Ramm made a close comparison between the work of a theologian and that of a scientist: "We concur with Hodge that this is to be an inductive procedure. The theologian to a degree imitates the scientist. The theologian is the scientist; the 'facts' to be examined are in Scripture; and the procedure is inductively directed. The theologian is to be a careful collector of facts. . . . Just as the scientist strives for a systematic formulation of his knowledge, so the theologian strives for *systematic* theology." Ramm, *Protestant Biblical Interpretation* (1970), 173, emphasis original. A similar statement first appeared in *Protestant Biblical Interpretation* (1956), 153-154. In a lengthy discourse on the relationship between the work of a theologian and that of a scientist Ramm states this: "We define theology as the task of setting forth the claims of our knowledge of God, the verification of these claims, and the systematic and organic connections of our theological knowledge. . . . It is the . . . task of the scientist to explore the works or creation of God, and that of the theologian the speech of God in the Bible, Nature, and history." *CVSS*, 35. Further on, Ramm speaks positively of the use of the "scientific method" in the pursuit of truth, but he does not attempt to introduce the use of that method into theology. Ibid., 39-40.

theology, first concentrating upon the broad theological statements in Scripture about God, creation, salvation, eschatology, and all other theological doctrines. The philosophical methodology followed by Henry is apriorism, which emphasizes the priority of divine revelation: “Its [Christianity’s] theological method, predicated on the priority of divine revelation, rises not from a culture-bound conceptuality that has no significance beyond a particular historical era or cultural period.”¹ Henry’s prime concern is that the theological starting point be kept above any cultural or time-bound limitations; hence, only a divine revelation preserved by the Holy Spirit’s influence can be preserved as supra-cultural. His starting point is not the doctrine of God or the resurrection of Christ, as in some presuppositional systems, but the fact of God’s self-revelation because “only a self-refuting concept of divine self-revelation could have its basis merely in philosophical presuppositionalism.”² More specifically, Henry’s approach is sometimes called “rational presuppositionalism,” in contrast with other types of presuppositionalism.³

While Ramm is noted for his emphasis on the inductive method and Henry on the deductive method, one should recognize that at times both men use of a combination of

¹*GRA*, 6:214-215.

²*GRA*, 6:219. Here Henry clearly defines his position as “philosophical presuppositionalism,” which also is known as “philosophical apriorism.”

³According to Albert Mohler, “Henry, while placing himself clearly within the presuppositionalist camp, nevertheless resisted any charge of fideism or irrationality.” R. Albert Mohler, “Carl F. H. Henry,” in *Theologians of the Baptist Tradition*, ed. Timothy George and David S. Dockery (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2001), 286. Mohler finds that Henry categorically rejects the fideism or anti-rationalism as first developed by Tertullian and as expanded upon by neo-orthodox theologians in the twentieth-century, and he spurns the rationalism of Thomas Aquinas that results in a full-fledged natural theology. His method most closely aligns itself with that of Augustine.

inductive and deductive approaches to arrive at truth in their interpretation of Scripture.

Their Concepts of Natural Revelation

Even though both men accept the concept of natural revelation and reject the idea that there is a natural theology that leads one to an admiration for, or acceptance of, a Creator God, Ramm assigns natural revelation an important role for discovering the truth about Creation, while Henry argues that Creation itself is best defined by Scripture irrespective of scientific thoughts on Creation.

Their Concepts of Special Revelation

Ramm emphasizes the great varieties of means by which revelation comes by pointing out that propositional revelation is just one of many types of revelation. In other words, revelation does not have to come in the form of propositions in order to be intelligible and meaningful. Henry, on the other hand, states that all revelation is propositional in that it can be stated in the form of propositions without the loss of any meaning or content therefrom.

Their Attitudes toward Science and Scientific Research

Ramm has a much more positive view of modern scientific thought than does Henry, while he is highly critical of twentieth-century Fundamentalism for its castigation of modern science and its failure to come to terms with the advances of the Enlightenment. Henry correctly notes that science is constantly changing through a process of self-correction as new discoveries come to light; hence, he warns

evangelicalism of the danger of wedding any world view with scientific thought. In the processing of constantly-changing advances in science, one's interpretations of Scripture must be constantly shifting as well in the areas where science and theology intersect.

Their Models for Reconciling Science and Theology

Throughout his career Ramm has been a strong advocate of the progressive creationism model that allows for distinct episodes of fiat creationism to be scattered throughout the long eras of geological history. These episodes have only a rough approximation to the creative acts of the six days of creation, leading to his advocacy of "moderate concordism." The specific manner in which Gen 1 is correlated with the geological record is through the "revelatory-days" concept of creation, which will be further evaluated below.

Carl Henry by contrast does not advocate a particular model for reconciling science with theology, and geology with Genesis, for the very reason stated above that science is a process that undergoes continual change. Any changes in science would mandate corresponding changes in theology. Henry's model has been labeled in this study as "the indeterminate days" model for understanding of the six days of Creation, in that one cannot prove from Scripture that the creation days are either twenty-four-hour periods of time or long geological eras. Henry rejects both the twenty-four-hour day view of Gen 1 as well as the day-age theory for the creative days. His view on concordism can

be designated as “theoretical or idealistic concordism,”¹ in that God is viewed as the author of all truth, whether the truth is found in science or in Scripture. Since God as the supreme source for truth is established as a unity, not a plurality, then any truth from either special revelation or natural revelation should display that unity.

Their Understanding of Science and Inerrancy

Ramm, according to his own admission and according to the penetrating critiques of Henry, restricts the areas in Scripture that hold scientific authority. Thus Ramm can speak of a perfect agreement between science and Scripture in that the Bible can display wrong or misleading scientific concepts because of its cultural conditioning and because it was not designed in those cases to deal with scientific matters. Only in a few broad matters is the Bible inerrant when it comes to scientific issues, such as the concept that God intervened into the natural world to “create.”

Henry’s concept of inerrancy is that the Bible is inerrant wherever it intersects with either the scientific and historical arenas, which is the mainstream position of neo-evangelicals. For him the Bible is inerrant even when it touches lightly upon a scientific area, or where there are seemingly minor allusions to natural phenomena. Thus Henry utilizes Scripture much more as a scientific text than Ramm would do, although he has disengaged himself from the concept that the Bible is indeed a textbook of science.²

¹For a more elaborate description of Henry’s view on concordism, as it relates to other views on concordism, see Appendix A.

²Henry agrees with the statement in my 1981 *Ministry* article to the effect that creationists do not consider the Bible to be a “textbook on science,” but they find that it offers a philosophy of science and its doctrines in some cases have definite implications for science and scientific models. Warren H. Johns, “Strategies of Origins,” *Ministry*, May 1981, 27, cited in *GRA*, 6:147.

Ramm, by contrast, also states that the Bible is not to be considered a scientific textbook, which for him means that none of the details of science or natural phenomena in Scripture are considered to be inerrant. Only the description of God's many interventions into the natural world are to be considered inerrant in areas where the Bible and science overlap.

Their Understanding of Creation and Evolution

While both men have stated that they fully believe that this world, all life therein, and the entire universe are the product of creation, not evolution, Ramm accepts more of the evolutionary process for differentiation of species than does Henry. While both men reject the idea that human beings are the product of evolution, Ramm in praising the work of James Orr upon the relation of evolution to mankind allows for the possibility of a closer relationship between man and animals than what evangelicals have been accustomed to seeing. He also allows for a long history for the human race in terms of tens of thousands of years, but sensing that more research is needed to determine the relationship between men and animals. Henry by contrast makes it very clear that there is no biological connection between men and animals. For example, he detects no genetic connection between the hominids and modern man because they had already gone extinct when the first *Homo sapiens* appeared in the geological record.¹ Like Ramm, Henry allows for the existence of man on earth in terms of tens of thousands of years possibly, but all dating methods are subject to revision, so that possibly a younger age, perhaps in

¹Henry quotes the prominent paleoanthropologist, David Pillbeam, who says, "There is no clearcut and inexorable pathway from ape to human being." *GRA*, 6:211.

the range of 10,000 years before present, will eventually be settled upon.¹

Their Views on the Days of Creation

Both Ramm and Henry reject the literal, twenty-four-hour concept for the days of creation in that they state that God's creative activity for producing life here on this earth took place over millions of years of time. Ramm's view is that the days of Gen 1 are not days of creation, but days of revelation. The revelation may have been made to Moses during a seven-day period when he was on top of Mt. Sinai in the presence of God. This pictorial view of creation transmitted to Moses then became codified in the Ten Commandments (Exod 20:11; 31:17).

For Henry the days of creation are not twenty-four-hour days in that the biblical word for day, *yom*, has a variety of meanings—at least three different meanings in the creation account itself: (1) the light part of the twenty-four-hour cycle, designated as “day” (Gen 1:5a); (2) the entire twenty-four hours (Gen 1:5b); and (3) the whole period of creation (Gen 2:4b). Elsewhere in the Old Testament *yom* takes on a variety of figurative meanings in addition to the literal meaning. While Henry rejects the “day-age view” for the creation days, he definitely supports the idea that the creation days are indeterminate in length.² There is no evidence in Scripture that the biblical writer had geological ages or eras in mind for each of the creation days.³ The only time element that is important

¹Henry's only hope that a younger age can be established is that Flood geology may someday figure out how to reduce the geological chronology, but he finds no evidence that it can. *GRA*, 6:225.

²*GRA*, 6:133.

³*GRA*, 6:134.

with respect to the seven days of creation is the sequence, which in an overall way is the same sequence that one finds for the appearance of life in the geological record.¹

Reasons for the Differences between Ramm and Henry

From the above analysis of Ramm and Henry this study finds a variety of distinct differences between the thought of the two men, even though they have a great deal in common as two of the major founders and leaders of the neo-evangelical movement. They have different approaches, inductive and deductive respectively, for developing their doctrine of revelation. Their defense of Christian theism is founded on two contrasting types of apologetics: evidentialism for Ramm, and presuppositionalism for Henry.² Their concept of general revelation in nature and history is slightly different in that Ramm emphasizes the validity of natural revelation for establishing truth independent of Scripture, while Henry finds the truths of general revelation being dependent upon those in special revelation. The truths of the latter help interpret the truths of the former, according to Henry. Their concepts of special revelation differ upon

¹*GRA*, 6:146.

²Stanley Grenz has expertly summarized the differences in their respective methodologies: "Early in his career, Ramm's interest in reconciling Christian faith with human knowledge, especially science, followed a typically neo-evangelical path, namely, the apologetical trail. Rather than affirming the presuppositionalism espoused by Van Til and Henry, however, Ramm pursued evidentialism, the other major approach that neo-evangelicals were exploring. This strategy looked for observable or verifiable data (Ramm called them 'facts') that offered evidences for the truth of the Christian faith." Grenz, *Renewing the Center*, 103. In commenting on Henry's approach, Grenz states: "For him, true theology could be based only on the self-disclosure of God found in the Bible, for here alone can true knowledge of God be found. In this way, he set himself apart not only from the Thomist tradition, but also from the evangelical 'evidentialists' who sought to ground Christian faith on arguments from reason and empirical evidence. Insofar as he based all theology on the presupposition of the truthfulness of the Bible, Henry followed a 'presuppositionalist' approach." *Ibid.*, 96.

one major point: for Henry all of revelation is propositional, and for Ramm there is such a great variety of revelatory means or “modalities” that propositional revelation is just one among many.

Their views on the nature of science are especially distinctive. Ramm has a high view of science and its achievements, and his overarching concern is that evangelicalism must “come to grips with the Enlightenment” and the modern advances of science if it is to have an intelligible witness to today’s generation. Henry takes exception to this in that he portrays an underlying attitude of distrust of science because in its progress scientific theories and conclusions are always shifting and are subject to change in the future.

On the basis of their outlooks toward scientific research, they develop sharply different models for reconciling science and Scripture, especially for reconciling the findings of geology with the book of Genesis. Ramm advocates progressive creationism, whereby God has intervened with works of fiat creation throughout the long geological ages, and the sequence between the geological and biblical records is only moderately in harmony. Henry disdains using any model to harmonize Scripture and science merely on the basis that science is always in flux, and if Scripture is allied with science, then it too will be constantly in flux. Where science has brought forth discoveries that conflict with the Bible, Ramm resolves the conflict by stating that many of the Bible’s scientific statements are culturally conditioned, and one should not expect to find close harmony. Moreover, the Bible does not use the language of science.

When it comes to the days of creation, Ramm brings about harmony by suggesting that they are days of revelation, not creation per se. Hence, what is being portrayed in

Gen 1 is a pictorial revelation of events that happened over multiplied millions of years through the creative hand of God. Henry also allows the symbolic view of the creation days as one possibility in addition to literal twenty-four-hour days, but he firmly rejects the idea that Gen 1 is a series of visions given to Moses in that one detects no visionary language in that chapter. His model for harmonizing Genesis and geology is indeterminate because the findings of geology in general are considered to be tentative.

All of the above differences between the two evangelical thought leaders can be subsumed under the differences in their methodologies, colored by the differences in their understanding of science, scientific pursuit, and scientific truth. They both had extensive training in philosophy on the doctoral level.¹ Early in their careers they had adopted their respective philosophically based methodologies: evidentialism for Ramm, and rational presuppositionalism for Henry. These positions laid the foundation for their theological base, which was a prominent doctrine of Scripture. For Ramm, a doctrine of revelation and inspiration is best derived inductively, which is the approach of evidentialism and which led him to allow for apparent conflicts between science and the Bible in his view of inerrancy. For Henry, a doctrine of revelation and its subsidiary doctrine of inspiration is derived from the clear statements of Scripture on the topic, not from an examination of the phenomena of Scripture. This is the approach of apriorism, which is a

¹Ramm's two graduate degrees are on the philosophy of science: see Bernard L. Ramm, "The Idealism of Jeans and Eddington in Modern Physical Theory" (M.A. thesis, University of Southern California, 1947), and idem, "An Investigation of Some Recent Efforts to Justify Metaphysical Statements Derived from Science with Special Reference to Physics" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Southern California, 1950). One of Henry's two doctoral dissertations was in philosophy and was published in book form: Carl F. H. Henry, *Personal Idealism and Strong's Theology* (Wheaton, IL: Van Kampen Press, 1951).

presuppositional approach. For him, the clear statements of Scripture support inerrancy, and thus where science seems to disagree with Scripture, then science is liable for error. The two theologians then have substantially different views of inerrancy as a result of the different philosophical methodologies each had adopted. This finding is consonant with Peter Van Bemmelen's doctoral study¹ of two evangelical theologians with opposite views on the inspiration of Scripture: Benjamin B. Warfield and William Sanday, the former being an example of a theologian who relied heavily upon the deductive method for his doctrine of inspiration (but also employed elements of the inductive method) and the latter being an example of a scientific approach to Scripture using the inductive method.

Once the two theologians, Ramm and Henry, took differing positions on revelation and inspiration, they found themselves often on the opposite side of the hermeneutical fence whereby Ramm was protecting Scripture from the inroads of modern science by pointing to the limitations of the Bible's scientific statements, being culturally

¹In Sanday's 1893 Bampton Lecture, published as William Sanday, *Inspiration* (London: Longmans, Green, 1896), Van Bemmelen ascertains what was his methodology: "Sanday's avowed purpose was to present an inductive or critical view of inspiration in contrast to what he called the traditional view, a view which in his opinion could no longer be maintained." Van Bemmelen, 105. In striking similarity to Ramm, Sanday stated that historical criticism made it impossible to maintain the Bible's infallibility for its historical and scientific statements. Ibid., 103. Thus, "for Sanday the true method in theology—as well as in other sciences—is the inductive one." Ibid., 129. This is the application of the Baconian approach to theological studies. Ibid., 132.

B. B. Warfield recognized that there are two major methods for approaching the subject of inspiration. The first one examines all the "phenomena" of Scripture as a composite of facts gleaned for developing a doctrine of inspiration. The second method starts with the exact statements that the Bible makes about itself and then tests those statements with the facts of Scripture. The second method "seems to Warfield to be 'the only logical and proper mode of approaching the question.'" B. B. Warfield, *The Inspiration and Authority of the Bible*, 223, quoted in *ibid.*, 214. Warfield rejected any attempts to place the inductive and deductive methods on equal footing, and for him the statements on the Bible's inspiration take precedence over the phenomena of Scripture. Ibid., 216.

determined, so that modern science could be unchallenged in its arena. Henry on the other hand was protecting Scripture from the inroads of science by pointing to the inherent weaknesses and fallibilities of science while upholding the infallibility of Scripture and its right to speak infallibly in the domain of science. Thus, one can account for their major differences in the arena of science and religion on the basis that their differing methodologies, evidentialism for Ramm and presuppositionalism for Henry, are the controlling factors for their basic conclusions.

Significantly both Ramm and Henry are agreed in concluding that the days of creation are non-twenty-four-hour days, even though they approach Scripture with quite different methodologies. How can this be?

Critique of the Views of Ramm and Henry

Their Understanding of Genesis

To evaluate the views of Ramm and Henry upon the days of creation in isolation from their views on Gen 1-11 or their views of the rest of the Old Testament would result in an incomplete picture, and to examine their views on creation in isolation from their views of revelation and inspiration would likewise give an incomplete picture. Any critique must examine the entire picture, and as I have just done, one must find the philosophical methodology behind each view. The resulting problem is that the differing philosophical methodologies do not lead to differing views upon the nature of the days of creation, although their methodologies do impact, however, on their respective systems of apologetics and their different ways of harmonizing Genesis and geology.

The tool employed in this study for evaluating the worthiness of each theologian's view upon Genesis is that of logical consistency. If a theological system is to be viable, it must be consistent as well as coherent.¹ Some of the key elements held in common by both Ramm and Henry in their doctrines of revelation are its propositional nature, the superiority of special revelation over general revelation, its historical nature (whereby it can be authenticated with valid evidences), its rejection of mythological elements,² and its emphasis on the supernatural or miraculous elements. These elements are all held in uncompromising fashion by both men (before 1983) as they are applied to the narratives of the Fall and the Flood found in Gen 3-11. Both the Fall and the Flood events are considered by both Henry and Ramm to be literal and historical, and the accounts of these events also are viewed as historical.

When these elements of their respective doctrines of revelation are applied to the Creation account(s) in Gen 1-2,³ again these two theologians take the events as historical events. The creation narratives are not considered to be poetry, strict theology, or mythology in any sense of the word, according to their pre-1983 understanding. They are theological narrative in a historical, concrete setting. But when these elements of their

¹Conceivably one could have certain inconsistent elements in a system that is coherent because coherence allows for elements that are somewhat disparate to be compatible within a system. Inconsistent elements should then be reinterpreted so as to demonstrate greater consistency with the theological system than what would appear on the surface. The added test of consistency beyond the test of coherence is needed for recognizing the viability of a theological system.

²With regards to mythological elements, I have summarized here Ramm's earlier position on mythology and for the time being have excluded a consideration of his book, *After Fundamentalism* (1983), from the discussion.

³One can view these as two complementary accounts of the same event—one creation, and not two creations. Thus, there is essentially one biblical creation account, and not two competing accounts.

views on revelation are applied solely to the time element of creation, especially to the creation “days,” then quite abruptly Henry and Ramm consider the days of creation to be no longer historical, literal narrative. While the days are not purely symbolic either in the minds of these two individuals, they are considered to be supra-ordinary days, not the ordinary days of human existence. The creation week is not considered by either theologian to be composed of seven, literal, twenty-four-hour days. The sharp contrast between their approach to the time aspect of Gen 1 and the physical aspect of the creation activity begs the researcher to uncover the reasons for this seemingly abrupt shift in their thinking. On what basis does one account for this well-defined shift?

Significantly Ramm and Henry reach similar conclusions on the nature of the creation days while adopting quite different methodologies for harmonizing science with the Bible. Ramm’s model is that of progressive creationism, which is definitely a concordist approach to harmonizing the scientific with the scriptural realm. Its starting point is that God is the Author of both science and Scripture, so that they cannot help but be in agreement. In fact, the two must agree. Since science has uncovered no evidence that the process of creation of this earth and life thereon took place in six literal days and since science has a variety of lines of evidence that seem to lead to the conclusion that the solar system, the earth, life upon the earth, and human life all came into existence at distinctly different times separated by long ages of time between each event, Ramm then allows science to superimpose its conclusions upon Scripture, so that the days of creation can be descriptive of creation events scattered over millions of years of time. Concordism then achieves its harmonious result at the expense of either science or

Scripture, or in some cases both.

Henry's model has been labeled in this study as "the indeterminate approach" to harmonizing science and Scripture. It assigns to science only a tentative role, not a permanent role, in leading the researcher to absolute truth. Only Scripture has absolute truth. In many cases this approach causes Henry to reject certain conclusions of science—for example, Darwinian evolution that outlines a line of development leading from molecules to humankind. One would expect that his model would lead him to reject the idea that God took millions of years to create life upon this earth, but it does not. Why is this so? One must keep in mind that Henry allows science to come to some "assured results," which are not being revised currently nor are expected to be revised in the future.

For Henry, science can achieve a high level of certainty in its discoveries in that science is merely uncovering the work of God in nature. While Henry clearly asserts that scientific research "can never traffic in absolutes"¹ and "science cannot establish any final truth or a final system of explanation,"² he also is confident that a valid theology of revelation will not conflict with "the assured results of science."³ For Henry, one of the

¹*GRA*, 6:117.

²*GRA*, 6:192.

³The full context of this latter statement is: "If the cleft between Christianity and science is to be repaired, the theology of revelation will not ascribe to nature and nature's God any course disputed by the assured results of science, nor will science find man's dignity, and its own renown also, in anything inferior to thinking the Creator's thoughts after him." "Science and Religion," 282. This is Henry's final thought in this essay. Earlier in the essay, Henry does not allow science to establish any finalities: "The danger of all attempts to reconcile Genesis and science . . . is the troublesome assumption that prevailing scientific theory has achieved finality." *Ibid.*, 275. He also cites with approval Gordon Clark's statements that science can never arrive at any truth and all its conclusions are probability statements, not finalities. *Ibid.*, 270-271.

“assured results of science” is that the earth and life therein is much older than the 6,000 years assigned it by traditional Christianity. Is Henry being consistent here when on the one hand he disallows any finalities for science in its research and on the other hand when he speaks of the certainties of science?

Henry’s view on revelation does not allow for any dichotomy between the truth found in the Bible and the truth discovered in nature. Specifically, all revelation is rational, reflecting the intelligibility of the mind of God. Since God is the Creator of all things in the universe, including the natural evil found in this world, one would expect that the impress of God’s mind will be found in nature. The work of science is to uncover the mind of God in nature through the vehicle of general revelation. Henry is the inheritor of the view popularized in the rise of modern science that “the work of the scientist is to think God’s thoughts after him.” For Henry, then, the intelligibility of God’s thinking has left its impress upon the radioactive dates and long ages of geology. The work of science is merely to uncover what is already there. The scientist can misinterpret that record, but the overwhelming consistency of the record in affirming long ages gives a high degree of probability that the scientist is correct in his/her conclusions on the age of the earth.

The main impetus in the thinking of Henry for shifting to a non-literal approach to the creation days is the consistent evidence uncovered by geology for a record of life on earth over a period of hundreds of millions of years. He has excised any time element out of the Genesis creation account, except for the chronological sequence—day one, second day, third day, etc. Along this vein he writes: “The primary thrust of the Genesis account

is teleological rather than chronological. The days of creation, indeed, are enumerated in sequence; they begin, succeed each other, and end, giving place to divine rest."¹ In the same manner that the Bible offers no absolute dates or absolute time scale for protology, it offers no dates or time scale for eschatology either, according to his thought.² When Henry refers to the non-literal aspect of the creation days, he often does so within the context of his rejection of the age of 6,000 years for earth's history.³

Likewise for Bernard Ramm, the rejection of the literal twenty-four-hour days for creation week are a result of modern science's discovery of the geological ages:

There is only one thing necessary to make impossible a view which holds that creation was in one ordinary week about 4000 B.C., and that is to show that the earth has been here considerably longer than that. We have already indicated in our discussion of creation that there is substantial evidence admitted by men of Christian faith and scientific ability that the earth and the universe is at least four billion years old. We shall discuss radio-active dating of the rocks in more detail later but for the present we observe that radio-active methods of dating rocks in the earth yield figures running from five million years for the Pleistocene epoch up to 500,000,000 years for the Cambrian.⁴

This is Ramm's primary reason for rejecting the literalness of the creation days, although

¹Henry, "Science and Religion," 278-279.

²His concluding thought in the paragraph containing the preceding quote is: "The day of creation becomes the background for the day of redemption. The interest in the historical and chronological is never merely secular." *Ibid.*, 279.

³One of the best examples of this is in the passage where he is perhaps the most explicit in rejecting the literal twenty-four-hour-days view: "Faith in an inerrant Bible does not rest on a commitment to the recency or antiquity of the earth or even to only a 6000-year antiquity for man; the Genesis account does not fix the precise antiquity of either the earth or of man. Exodus 20:11, to which scientific creationists appeal when insisting that biblical inerrancy requires recent creation, is not decisive; while God's seventh-day rest sanctions the sabbath day, Genesis hardly limits God's rest to a 24-hour period." *GRA*, 6:226. See also *GRA*, 4:357, where the discussion of the 4,000 years (B.C.) is tied to the debate on the twenty-four-hour days.

⁴*CVSS*, 122. Today the Pleistocene epoch is said to be about 1,600,000 years in duration, ending about 10,000 years ago.

he does hold to their apparent literalness in stating that they are days of revelation, not days of creation. What we discover is that Ramm's book is written a few decades after radiometric dating methods were developed for dating the earth and only a half decade or so after the radiocarbon dating method was developed. His theological view on the nature of the creation days has been colored by the findings of radioactive dating.

Both Henry and Ramm adopt a non-literal approach to the creation days of Gen 1, but for differing reasons. Henry's emphasis is on the intelligibility and rationality of revelation as part and parcel of his theological system, known as rational presuppositionalism. The rationality of propositions then must resonate in total harmony with the rationality that all of nature is composed with, since both nature and Scripture have the same author. The closest harmony then between Genesis and geology on the nature of the creation days, according to Henry, can be best achieved if the days are considered to be non-literal. The best clue that the days could be such comes internally from God's Word, and not externally from God's works. There are three different usages of the word day (*yom*) in the creation account alone, and many more usages in the remainder of the OT. This ambiguity then leads him to conclude that chronological concerns are not primary in the creation account, which can then lead him to turn to sound scientific research to find the nature of the time periods for creation.¹

¹In Henry's critique of Ramm that the Bible says only the "who" and "why" of creation, not the "when" and "how" he partly agrees with Ramm. For him the "when" is only described in vague terms: "While it [the Bible] is not indifferent to the *how* and *when* of creation, Scripture presents these themes only in a general and non-technical way. . . . The Genesis account extends the divine activity of creation over separate periods designated as successive days. But no date is stipulated for the origin of the universe." "The Bible and Modern Science," 1190. Thus the Bible gives no date for the beginning of the first creation day, according to this line of thought. But later in his writings, Henry disagrees with Ramm in that he finds that the Bible does give the "how" of creation: "The *how* of God's creation is his authoritative word or

Bernard Ramm is not enamored with the rational aspects of revelation as Henry is, so that he follows a different approach for harmonizing the creation days with geology. He allows science to have its say in the domain where it is authorized to speak. He has a high view of science in that his one life-long hope is that evangelicalism can come to grips with the enlightenment in recognizing the validity of the higher critical methods when applied to biblical studies and the validity of the scientific method when applied to geological studies. His concept of truth is different from Henry's: "Truth is truth and facts are facts no matter who develops them."¹ Ramm does not emphasize the incompleteness of scientific knowledge, nor does he attempt to correlate the truths of science with the truth of the divine Mind, as does Henry. Thus they have differing epistemologies within the general evangelical context.

Their Rejection of the Literal Days in Creation Week

Three major reasons can be advanced for critiquing the views of Bernard Ramm and Carl Henry on the days of creation. The evaluative tool is that of internal logical consistency for the first two critiques and external logical consistency for the final critique. Internal logical consistency can be defined on the basis of whether the same logic for one part of their respective studies is applied equally and fairly to another part of their studies—the part that is being questioned in this study. External logical consistency

command. God creates, nonetheless, in an orderly time-sequence." *GRA*, 6:114.

¹*CVSS*, 38. In this same context Ramm discusses the dangers and mistakes peculiar to scientific research as well. *Ibid.*, 38-43.

is the question whether their research, which they both would agree is scholarly in nature, is consistent with the wide breadth of biblical scholarship with respect to the area under examination.

**The Inconsistency of Non-literal Days
with a Literal Approach in Genesis**

This study applies the test of internal logical consistency to the views of Ramm and Henry on the historical statements of the Old Testament, including the book of Genesis, and the historical statements on the length of creation week.

Since both theologians have advocated propositional revelation—Ramm in the first half of his career and Henry throughout his long career—one finds that they take all the narratives of the Bible as not only propositionally revealed, but as historically based. The parts of the Old Testament that have been subject to the greatest criticism in modern times, such as Noah’s Flood, Jonah’s deliverance by a great fish, the virgin birth, and the resurrection both of Lazarus and Christ, are considered as reliable, authentic history. For Ramm, his philosophical and apologetic approach of evidentialism requires that one basis for a belief in the Bible’s divine origin is the credibility of the evidences of Scripture, many of which are in the realm of the miraculous. One peruses Scripture like a geologist looking for fossils in the field and assembles the facts that support belief. Ramm summarizes this approach: “To the Christian the phenomenology of the Bible is substantial enough evidence to accept the Bible as a divinely inspired Book.”¹

¹Ramm, *Protestant Christian Evidences*, 249. This is Ramm’s final statement at the end of the chapter, “Verification of Christianity through the Supernatural Character of the Bible.”

Miraculous events are strongly defended by both theologians. Ramm, for example, defends the resurrection of Lazarus by means of a chain of logic: If Lazarus had not been raised, then the Jews would not have been inflamed against Christ's benevolent works, and if there had been no inciting of the Jews against Christ, then there would have been no need for a trial and crucifixion of Jesus.¹ Elsewhere Ramm defends the following events as being literal and historical: Christ's miracles of healing,² the virgin birth,³ the story of Jonah,⁴ the long day of Joshua,⁵ Ahaz's dial turning back,⁶ a historical Fall,⁷ and a historical (although local) Flood.⁸ Carl Henry also defends the historicity of the biblical accounts, including those involving miracles such as Christ's resurrection,⁹ but he acknowledges that historical research alone cannot prove or disprove that Christ was raised from the dead.¹⁰ For Henry, the Fall, the Flood (even though it may not have been universal), and the Tower of Babel were historical events in the book of Genesis.¹¹

¹Ibid., 138.

²Ibid., 134-137.

³Ramm, *CVSS*, 205-207

⁴Ibid., 207-208.

⁵Ibid., 107-110.

⁶Ibid., 110-112.

⁷Ibid., 231-233.

⁸Ibid., 156-169.

⁹*GRA*, 1:218-223

¹⁰*GRA*, 2:316.

¹¹*GRA*, 3:391-392; 6:216-219, 239-242, 246.

The two theologians, Ramm and Henry, are to be faulted for their inconsistency in holding to the historical, literal nature of the Genesis narratives while concluding that the days of creation are not to be considered ordinary, literal days. Ramm would object to this analysis by stating that the days are literal in one sense of the word, in that when viewed from the experience of Moses upon Sinai they can be considered to be seven literal days occupying one literal week equivalent to the time period when Moses received the revelation of creation activities, each day having another creation event. This hypothesis could be defended if the text in Gen 1:1-2:4 offered clues that the narrative is couched in revelatory language, but the language is that of speaking, acting, and evaluating, not simply seeing and acting.¹ Ramm is attributing to Gen 1 two levels of meaning, the one level that is on the surface and pertains to the visions given to the prophetic writer perhaps on Mt. Sinai, and the other level is that of the ancient past when God carried out the actions summarized in Gen 1. This is close to, but not identical with, an allegorical approach to Scripture—a method which Ramm strongly disdains.² The literary genre for Gen 1 is not considered to be apocalyptic literature or a prophetic

¹On six separate days the narrative begins, “And God said,” and each of the six days’ episode ends with the words, “And God saw” (except for the second day). If these were revelatory days, each narrative would begin with the prophetic writer “seeing” what is taking place, followed by a description of God “acting,” as in the typical Old Testament visionary accounts. See Amos 7:1ff., 9:1ff., Zech 5:1ff., 6:1ff.

²Ramm criticizes allegorism found in the writings of early church fathers, such as Clement and Origen, as well as in modern Catholicism. *Protestant Biblical Interpretation* (1956), 28-45. Instead he recommends the literal (or historical) school of interpretation, represented by the Protestant reformers. He summarizes the literal approach as follows: “The spirit of literal interpretation is that we should be satisfied with the literal meaning of a text unless very substantial reasons can be given for advancing beyond the literal meaning.” *Ibid.*, 45. In the case of the days of creation, Ramm has not offered substantial reasons for rejecting the literal meaning and has not even come close to offering “very substantial reasons.”

visionary account, but rather it can be accurately described as “a historical prose-record.”¹

It follows in similar vein with ancient royal or annalistic accounts in the fact that creation is a description of God the Sovereign of the universe, transferring sovereignty over earth and its animals to newly created humankind.²

Some evangelicals apply the literary genre of analogy to Gen 1 in stating that these are literal days of creation when viewed from man’s perspective, but figurative (or long ages) days of creation when viewed from God’s perspective. This is an accommodationist approach that Ramm is sometimes enamored with in solving difficult challenges in harmonizing science with the Bible. In that Ramm’s literal days of revelation are symbolic of, or analogical to, the long-ages days of God, he is employing an analogical approach to the creation days. This again borders on the allegorical approach to Gen 1, which must be rejected unless the biblical text itself has significant clues to point in this direction of interpretation.³

¹Hasel, “The ‘Days’ of Creation in Genesis 1: Literal ‘Days’ or Figurative ‘Periods/Epochs’ of Time?” 20. In Hasel’s own words: “The creation account of Genesis 1 is a historical prose-record, written in rhythmic style, recording factually and accurately ‘what’ took place in the creation of ‘the heavens and the earth,’ depicting the time ‘when’ it took place, describing the processes of ‘how’ it was done and identifying the divine Being ‘who’ brought it forth.” *Ibid.*, 20. Hasel appears to be in agreement with Kaiser’s assessment that the literary style is definitely not that of poetry, but can be best defined as “narrative prose.” Walter C. Kaiser, “The Literary Form of Genesis 1-11,” in *New Perspectives on the Old Testament*, ed. J. Barton Payne (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1970), 60.

²Dominion over all the creatures of the earth is given by God to Adam (and Eve), according to Gen 1:26. The theme of rulership/kingship is also alluded to in the fact that the sun and moon are considered “rulers” over the day and the night, according to 1:16, and the opening statement, “In the beginning God,” is parallel to statements elsewhere in the Bible for dating events in terms of a king’s rule (Jer 26:1, 27:1, 28:1, 49:34).

³Evangelical scholars uncover one piece of evidence they believe calls for a dual interpretation of the creation days, whereby there are two levels of meaning, the one being the human days and the other, divine days. That is with regard to the Sabbath. They take Heb 4:1-11 to mean that God’s creation rest on the seventh day (Gen 2:1-3) is never-ending and will continue throughout eternity; therefore, the days of God’s creative action on the other six days are unbounded and not limited to twenty-four-hour days. On the

Carl Henry would no doubt object to the assessment of this study that his interpretation of the days of creation is inconsistent with his methodology and with his interpretation of other narratives in Genesis. He would argue that his approach still treats the days as “literal,” as he has already done in these words: “One should bear in mind that the sense is just as literal if the author literally intends either twenty-four-hour days or longer epochs, a detailed succession or a gap genealogy.”¹ Since the issue here is the meaning of the word literal, it is thought best to select an interpretation of the term “literal” taken from the *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* (2nd ed.):

The patristic distinction between the literal and ‘higher senses’ of Scripture was elaborated in the Middle Ages. The schoolmen dwelt on the fourfold sense of Scripture: (1) the literal sense, which related the things done and said in the biblical record according to its surface meaning; (2) the moral sense, which brought out lessons for life and conduct; (3) the allegorical sense, which deduced doctrine from the text; (4) the anagogical sense, which derived heavenly meanings from earthly

other hand, Adam’s rest on that first “seventh day” of history was within a literal twenty-four-hour period. The human-oriented days of that first week then parallel the divine activity days of creation. This argument is most often used to support the “day-age theory” of interpretation. It borders upon typology in that the original week of literal days becomes a “type” or “symbol” of the “divine creation week” occupying millions if not billions of years. But this interpretation is problematic if considered typological for two reasons: (1) There is a noted absence of any authoritative statement in Scripture establishing this typology for creation week. (2) The movement proceeds chronologically in the wrong direction—from present for the type back to the distant past for the antitype. Metaphorical days ought to be considered the antitype if typology is to be found here. Biblical examples indicate that the type must be established first, however, in order for the antitype at a later time to be illuminated or unveiled by the type. For a discussion of biblical typology, see Richard M. Davidson, “Typological Structures in the Old and New Testaments” (Ph.D. dissertation, Andrews University, Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, 1981).

¹*GRA*, 4:126. This comment is made in response to James Barr, who charges evangelicals with inconsistency when they adopt a non-literal approach to the days of creation and when they reject Ussher’s dates for Creation. It is worth noting Barr’s incisive criticisms at this point: “In fact the only natural exegesis is a literal one, in the sense that this is what the author meant. As we know from other parts of Genesis, he was deeply interested in chronology and calendar, and he depicted the story of creation in a carefully and deliberately arranged scheme of one week. As Kevan, cited above, rightly sees, the ‘evening’ and ‘morning’ phraseology clearly indicates that he thought of a day such as we understand a day to be.” James Barr, *Fundamentalism* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1978), 42. Barr is even more strident when he charges evangelicals with inconsistency in not adopting a date for creation in the fifth millennium B.C. while accepting the dates offered by geology. *Ibid.*, 43-44.

data. For example, a reference to water could denote on different levels (1) literal water, (2) moral purity, (3) the practice and doctrine of baptism, (4) eternal life in the heavenly Jerusalem.¹

The literal sense is defined as an interpretation according to “its surface meaning,” or in other words, its normal, customary usage within the context of the time in which it is written. Clearly Henry rejects the moral, allegorical, and anagogical meanings for *yom* in Gen 1, so that at issue is the “literal” meaning.

Meanings vary according to context and change with time. As Henry has correctly pointed out there are three different meanings for *yom* in the creation account, and a fourth meaning for *yom* in the account of the Fall (Gen 3:5). None of the four meanings of themselves denote “geological eons” or “creative eras.” The third usage does denote a period longer than twenty-four hours: “These are the generations of the heavens and of the earth when they were created, in the day (*b^eyom*) that the Lord God made the earth and the heavens.” (Gen 2:4) A parallel usage of this term, “in the day,” is to be found in dedication of the tabernacle’s altar: “This was the dedication of the altar, in the day (*b^eyom*) when it was anointed.” (Num. 7:84) This is a reference not to a long era of time, but to the sum total of the twelve days of dedication. Interestingly, each day of dedication is described with an ordinal number, “first day,” “second day,” “third day,” etc.—strikingly reminiscent of the ordinal numbers applied to the creation days of Gen 1. Thus *b^eyom* designates a week’s time in Gen 1, just as it designates twelve days time in Num 7.

Thus Carl Henry would have to argue, and he does seem to argue, that inherent in

¹Bruce and Scott, “Interpretation of the Bible,” 613.

the term *yom* as applied to the “first day,” “second day,” “third day,” etc. is the concept of vastly extended periods of time. This he calls the “literal” meaning of the term for all six of the creation days. He would likewise have to argue that both “evening” and “morning” as referenced to the six days (Gen 1:5, 8, 13, 19, 23, 31) would have an extended time connotation far longer than the twelve hours normally assigned to each. He reasons that “evening and morning” could not refer to alternating periods of “light and darkness” totaling twenty-four hours each for the first three days because the sun had not been created yet.¹ Here one encounters a logical inconsistency in Henry’s reasoning on two points: 1) Without the sun having been created until the fourth geological era of time, it would have been impossible for any life to have existed on this planet prior to that time. 2) If the sun is closely attached to the meaning of the “evening and morning” in the days four, five, and six, then this ought to define the parameter of “evening and morning” for the first three days. Otherwise what role does the sun play in the narrative if it is not an instrument for determining precise time periods?

And finally Henry does concede that the surface meaning of the term *yom* is that of twenty-four-hour days:

Despite its multiple meanings even in Genesis 1:1-2:4, six-day creationists do not believe the Hebrew word *yom* implies six geological ages of indeterminate duration; such meaning would only have confused readers prior to modern scientific times. The twenty-four-hour-day view, they argue, is much more compatible with the surface sense of “evening

¹Henry’s comments are significant: “To be sure, ‘day’ and ‘night’ are most often used in a way that refers most naturally to a twenty-four-hour light and darkness period; Genesis 1:14, in fact expressly distinguishes days from seasons and years. But the light source of Genesis 1:3 is clearly distinct from that mentioned in Genesis 1:14. Although periods of alternating light and darkness (1:4-5) and cycles of ‘evening and morning’ (1:5, 8, 13) precede the creation of the sun and moon on the fourth day, it is gratuitous to insist that twenty-four-hour days are involved or intended.” *GRA* 6:145-146.

and morning” days.¹

Here it is acknowledged that the “surface sense” of the Gen 1 creation account is a description of twenty-four-hour days. It is my contention that the “surface sense” is the equivalent of the “literal meaning,” the other alternative being to discover deeper meanings by exploring the metaphorical, allegorical, analogical, prophetic, or theological meanings of the Biblical text. In the modern era this would include possible geological meanings as well.

The arguments of both Ramm and Henry in defending their view that the creation days have more than a literal meaning are considered to be inconsistent with their firm belief in the propositional nature of revelation and the historical nature of the events attested by revelation, which uphold a literal, rational approach to the biblical record. They would have to find a dual connotation in the meaning of *yom* for the six creation days if they would wish to interpret the days as longer than twenty-four-hour days. Biblical prophecy often interprets Old Testament events, such as the fall of Jerusalem and the rebuilding the temple, as having a dual connotation. But Henry’s sharp critique of Ramm, who wishes to find in Gen 1 “prophecy in reverse,” does not permit the employment of this approach of a dual prophetic connotation for the days of creation. If only one level of meaning is intended by the inspired author, then the natural, surface meaning is that of normal twenty-four-hour days.

¹*GRA* 6:145. Some evangelicals have found a metaphorical usage of “evening” and “morning” in Ps 90 where “morning” denotes the beginning of one’s life and “evening” signifies the declining years of life preceding death (note especially v. 6). But neither Henry nor Ramm use this metaphorically-based argument.

The Inconsistency of Non-Literal Days with Their Methodologies

Internal logical consistency demands that one's conclusions should be consistent with one's methodology, for the methodology is a vehicle that leads naturally to valid conclusions. Henry's methodology is rational presuppositionalism, which holds that absolute truth can be found only in divine revelation. Any humanly derived truths obtained through philosophy or science cannot be considered absolute, according to his way of thinking. The greatest danger in harmonizing science and Scripture is that science becomes normative and Scripture becomes subservient. Henry rejects the culturally conditioned theory of Scripture that holds that major theological statements of the Bible, including theological statements in the area of natural phenomena, can be conditioned by the thought and world view of the local society in which Scripture was produced. Thus he disallows any possible impact that modern science can have upon the inspired Bible as far as its interpretation goes. Unwittingly, however, he allows science a major role in determining the nature of the creation days in Gen 1. How has that happened?

While it is not necessary to recount all the steps in this process, it should be noted that Henry creates a set of possible interpretations, three or more, for the days of creation in Gen 1:1-2:4 by a careful examination of the textual context for each.¹ Because there can be two or more other ways to interpret the days enumerated as "day one," "second day," "third day," etc., Henry postulates that each interpretation is a valid possibility, thus

¹Henry states: "The Genesis creation account itself uses the term *yom* in at least three senses." *GRA*, 4:123. Ramm lists five different ways *yom* is used in Gen 1:1 - 2:4. *CVSS*, 145.

preventing a final conclusion to be reached. However, the finality is reached when the maxims of geological thought are applied to the biblical record, showing that the days must be non-literal. This harmonizes the thoughts and intelligibility of God imprinted in nature with those same thoughts and intelligibility found in Scripture. The net effect is that science then is allowed to arrive at a measure of “certainty” if not “finality,” even though Henry disavows the ability of science to ever achieve finality in any of its pursuits or truths. This is another example of logical inconsistency.

One can object to this approach by stating that Ramm, on the other hand, *does* allow finality to be achieved in the scientific realm; therefore his conclusion on the nature of the creation days is not inconsistent with his methodology! Ramm’s methodology is that of evidentialism, whereby the biblical interpreter can assemble evidences from a variety of sources—from history, archeology, biblical testimony, and even science—to establish the trustworthiness of God’s word and the certainty of a belief in God as Creator and Redeemer. Ramm’s goal is to show the remarkable harmonization between the biblical record and geological science, but such is achieved by reinterpreting the biblical record. One example is the temporal aspect of the Creation account: Are the days of creation in strict, chronological order? Henry says “Yes,” and Ramm says “No.” Both men have followed approaches (for at least all or the greater portion of their careers) that have upheld propositional revelation. They both have ardently defended the absolute divine origin of Gen 1. Why would God then give a sequence that is not correct for the actual sequence by which he brought things into existence? Ramm would suggest that the order is topical and logical for the sake of the readership of the account. He finds the

visionary explanation of Gen 1 the best one for explaining why the sequence is not in correct geological order, but is in visionary order. Henry on the other hand believes that the order is in the correct sequence and that the geological picture is incomplete.

Ramm's inconsistency is that in his sincere attempt to find absolute harmony between Genesis and geology, he alters the sequence of the scriptural record in order that it can be stated that there is complete harmony between Gen 1 and geology. His heavy reliance upon evidentialism, especially in the early half of his career, gives unqualified support for the historicity of the biblical narratives, but his advocacy of Calvinistic accommodationism allows him to reshape the historical nature of the events. Certainly the chronology for events is not absolute in his thinking, just as the Bible is viewed as offering no date for the age of the earth. In this manner he is inconsistent in that he accepts the reality of biblical events, but not the chronology of those events, and his methodology of evidentialism is not adequate for him to maintain the total independence of the two lines of reasoning, the biblical and the geological.¹

Admittedly both men pursue different methodologies in their attempts to harmonize the biblical record with the geological, but in the case of the interpretation of

¹This approach to finding harmony between the two records is a form of "circular reasoning." Ramm starts with the premise that the biblical and geological records must agree, since they have the same Author. In a few cases the two records apparently do not agree, but in all those cases the traditional interpretation of Gen 1 can be found lacking in validity. When reinterpreted, the two records are remarkably found to be in agreement. This agreement gives "evidence" that God is behind the origin and creation of the two records. However, evidentialism is valid only when two totally independent lines of evidence are found to converge in supporting a given conclusion. Ramm has not maintained the independence of these two lines of evidence, the biblical and the geological, so that one can attribute to his thinking an element of "circular reasoning."

the days of creation neither Ramm nor Henry is completely true to their methodologies.¹

The Inconsistency of Non-Literal Days with Biblical Scholarship

The final test of logical consistency to be applied is an external one in that this study, if it is to be considered complete, must examine what the scholarly world in general has to contribute on the understanding of the days of creation. Especially in the case of Carl Henry, neo-evangelicals as opposed to fundamentalists are very anxious to interact with the best of scholarship in their respective fields.² One would expect to find in Henry's *God, Revelation and Authority* a discussion of the finest of exegetical studies on the meaning of the word *yom* within the context of the six days of Gen 1, but one does not find such.³ The scholars whom Henry cites in support of a figurative approach to the

¹Henry never rejects the historicity or factuality of Gen 1, at least in theory. He states: "But the creation story is prior [to history] also in a logical way, one that in some respects clearly claims to be no less factual (Gen. 2:4) than the chapters that follow it." *GRA*, 6:137. He bemoans the fact that when scientific concerns began to dominate the interpretation of Gen 1, "the literal meaning that later biblical writers attached to the Genesis account was dismissed as a matter of culture accommodation." *GRA*, 6:139. He does acknowledge that "the Genesis account does in fact make chronological claims (Gen. 2:4)," but inconsistently he rejects the idea that its chronology upholds six literal days. *GRA*, 6:112, cf. 226.

²The six volumes of Henry's *God, Revelation and Authority* can be described as an apologetic for evangelical theology, especially its doctrines of God and revelation, demonstrating the superiority of its positions over the best of scholarship outside of evangelicalism. Henry's style is that of a continuous scholarly dialog with a wide variety of scholars who are noted for their scholarly contributions.

³The only Old Testament scholar whom Henry interacts with on the meaning of the creation days is James Barr, whom Henry summarizes as saying: "Barr points to evangelical interpretation of the Genesis creation story in terms of geologic ages rather than of twenty-four-hour days. . . . Barr seems to insist that the only meaning that can properly be assigned in the context of Genesis 1 to the Hebrew word *yom* is a twenty-four-hour period (*Fundamentalism*, 42). But not all modern scholars will agree." It would have been most helpful at this point if Henry would have listed the "modern scholars" who support the non-figurative approach to Gen 1 as well as the figurative approach. The ones he refers to elsewhere are usually evangelical *scientists* who emphasize the figurative approach, as, for example, Davis Young, in *GRA*, 6:146. See following footnote for additional examples of evangelicals who have supported a metaphorical view.

creation days are evangelicals, and many of these are evangelical scientists.¹ Thus it is imperative that one should survey the thinking of non-evangelical as well as evangelical scholars on the nature of the creation days. Two groups will be examined: first, evangelicals, including those who are considered by evangelicals to be fundamentalists; and second, those considered by evangelicals to be liberal scholars.²

None of the leading evangelicals of the twentieth century have been firm advocates of the literalness and historicity of the creation days; such leading evangelicals include Edward J. Carnell, Clark Pinnock, Francis Schaeffer, James I. Packer, Harold Lindsell, Millard J. Erikson, Norman Geisler, and Mark Noll in addition to Bernard L. Ramm and Carl F. H. Henry. We do find among the “lesser lights” or less influential evangelicals of that century those who have strongly advocated the creation days as literal days.

Literal days among conservative scholars

In the first half of that century conservative Lutherans upheld the creation days as being twenty-four hours. Francis Pieper in his systematic theology affirms: “Scripture forbids us to interpret the days as periods, for it divides these days into evening and

¹The evangelical scholars Henry cites in support of the figurative interpretation of the creation days are Bernard Ramm (“Science and Religion,” 276-277, *GRA*, 6:112), P. J. Wiseman (*GRA*, 6:112), Nicholas Ridderbos and Meredith Kline (*GRA*, 6:134), Robert Newman and Herman Eckelmann (*GRA*, 6:146), and Davis Young (*GRA*, 6:146). The last three mentioned are scientists, and Wiseman was an archeologist, not a theologian. Another archeologist that Henry cites as supportive of the long geological ages for the creation days is William F. Albright, according to *GRA*, 6:146. While not an evangelical, Albright held views on the historicity of the Old Testament events that were upheld by evangelicals. In addition, Henry refers to members of the American Scientific Affiliation, all of whom are evangelicals and scientists and most of whom support a figurative interpretation of the creation days. Henry, “Science and Religion,” 277.

²Due to the length constraints of this study, the number of individuals cited must be limited.

morning. That forces us to accept the days as days of twenty-four hours.”¹ Another Lutheran scholar, Herbert C. Leupold, in his commentary on Genesis rejects the idea that the Hebrew “day” or *yom* can refer to a vast period first on the basis that no “reputable dictionaries” of the Hebrew language support that view and second because of the parallel between God’s rest on Sabbath and man’s rest: “Six twenty-four hour days followed by one such day of rest alone can furnish a proper analogy for our laboring six days and resting on the seventh day; periods furnish a poor analogy for days.”² While Pieper relies largely on Lutheran dogmatics starting with Luther for his conclusions, Leupold rests his case largely upon conservative nineteenth-century works.³ Reformed theologian Louis Berkhof follows much the same line of attack as Pieper and Leupold in arguing that the phrase “evening and morning” means that there is just one evening and one morning, which would not have held true over “a period of thousands of years,” and that the word “day” used in Exod 20:8-11 must have the same meaning as “day” in Gen 1.⁴

¹Francis Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics* (Saint Louis: Concordia, 1950), 1:468. Volume 1 of his *Dogmatik* was originally published in German in 1924. His main support for the literal view of the creation days is from Martin Luther and post-Reformation Lutheran theologians. *Ibid.*, 469. This approach is found in another reformed systematic theology written in the first half of the twentieth century, but not published until 1966 subsequent to the author’s death: Herman Hoeksema, *Reformed Dogmatics* (Grand Rapids: Reformed Free Publishing Association, 1966), 178-196, where seven arguments are given for literal days.

²H. C. Leupold, *Exposition of Genesis* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1953), 1:58. This was first published by the Wartburg Press in 1942. Leupold ends his elaboration on the arguments against the day-age view by recommending George McCready Price and Byron C. Nelson for their interpretations of earth history from the standpoint of Flood geology: “We believe that writers on the subject like Price and Nelson deserve far more consideration than is being accorded them.” *Ibid.*

³Leupold’s bibliography consists of fourteen commentaries of which five are dated to the early twentieth century (1901, 1905, 1913, 1919, 1925). He especially relies upon the word studies of Brown, Driver, and Briggs to support the conclusion that the days are literal.

⁴L. Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1941), 154-155. His systematic theology was first published as *Reformed Dogmatics* in 1932. As additional proof of the correctness of his position, he cites the works of George McCready Price and Harry Rimmer, who derive geological

In the second half of the twentieth century a few evangelical and most fundamentalist commentators and theologians have upheld the view that the days are literal. Charles C. Ryrie, now Professor Emeritus of Dallas Theological Seminary, defends the view that the creation days in Gen 1 were “solar days”: “Normal interpretation of that passage, the use of the word day with numbers, the accompanying phrase ‘evening and morning,’ and the two passages in Exodus constitute strong evidence from the biblical text itself that the days were solar days.”¹ In his commentary on Genesis, Reformed theologian Douglas F. Kelly devotes a whole chapter to defending the days of creation as literal as opposed to the framework hypothesis, which treats the days as literary and thus symbolic.² His study is accompanied by scientific arguments in favor of both a young earth and a young universe derived from material published by scientific creationists.³ Some rather exhaustive studies by fundamentalists in recent years supporting the literal-days view of Gen 1 have been produced by individuals who have

arguments for a young age of the earth, thus eliminating a conflict between science and Gen 1.

¹Ryrie, *Basic Theology*, 186. He goes on to ask the question, “If God wished to convey the idea of solar days, how could He have said it more clearly?” Ibid. In his popular study Bible, he sets forth this brief, but pointed, argument in favor of literal days: “Evening and morning cannot be construed to mean an age, but only a day; everywhere in the Pentateuch the word *day*, when used (as here) with a numerical adjective, means a solar day.” Idem, *Ryrie Study Bible* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1995), 4, emphasis original.

²Douglas F. Kelly, *Creation and Change: Genesis 1.1-2.4 in the Light of Changing Scientific Paradigms* (Fearn, Ross-shire: Mentor, 1997). Note especially chap. 6, “‘Days’ of Creation—Their Biblical Meaning,” 107-135. Subsequent to Kelly’s study, two other scholars have followed the same line of attack in dismissing the framework hypothesis and arguing in favor of the six literal days: Kenneth L. Gentry and Michael R. Butler, *Yea, Hath God Said? The Framework Hypothesis, Six-Day Creation* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2002). The framework view is rooted in the idea that the days are literary, not literal.

³Further on in his study he defends a young age for the universe on the basis of the slowing down of the speed of light and other studies published by the Creation Research Society. Kelly, 137-158.

strong links with scientific creationists and Flood geologists, such as James Stambaugh¹ and Raymond L. Scott.² Other fundamentalist and/or evangelical writers defending the literal days are James B. Jordan,³ Robert V. McCabe,⁴ J. Ligon Duncan and David W. Hall,⁵ Gerhard F. Hasel,⁶ Jacques B. Doukhan,⁷ Richard M. Davidson,⁸ and Joseph A. Pipa.⁹

New evangelical trends and the literal days

A trend has developed among evangelicals in the last half of the twentieth century,

¹Stambaugh, 70-78. At the time he wrote this he was the librarian at the Institute for Creation Research, which is one of the leading research agencies defending a literal six-days creation and a world-wide flood to account for the geological strata.

²Raymond L. Scott, "The Length of the Creation Days and the Age of the Earth: Historical, Exegetical, and Scientific Considerations" (Th.D. thesis, Grace Theological Seminary, 1984). Scott's major professor was John C. Whitcomb, who, along with Henry M. Morris, authored *The Genesis Flood*.

³Jordan, *Creation in Six Days*. The term "fundamentalist" applied to Jordan and others is not to be interpreted as denigrating their scholarship, but it is used in the sense that Carl Henry and Bernard Ramm used it to denote that branch of conservative Christianity that is not concerned about coming to grips with the challenges of the Enlightenment and thus does not employ the tools of historical-critical scholarship nor the scientific method in illuminating the meaning of Scripture.

⁴Robert V. McCabe, "A Defense of Literal Days in the Creation Week," *Detroit Baptist Seminary Journal* 5 (2000): 97-123.

⁵J. Ligon Duncan and David W. Hall, "The 24-Hour View," in *The Genesis Debate: Three Views on the Days of Creation*, ed. David G. Hagopian (Mission Viejo, CA: Cruypress, 2001), 21-119.

⁶Gerhard F. Hasel, "The 'Days' of Creation in Genesis 1: Literal 'Days' or Figurative 'Periods/EPOCHS' of Time?" *Origins* 21 (1994): 5-38.

⁷Jacques B. Doukhan, "The Genesis Creation Story: Text, Issues, and Truth," *Origins* 55 (2004): 12-33, esp. 25-26.

⁸Richard M. Davidson, "The Biblical Account of Origins," *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* 14, no. 1 (2003): 4-43.

⁹Joseph A. Pipa, "From Chaos to Cosmos: A Critique of the Non-Literal Interpretations of Genesis 1:1-2:3," in *Did God Create in Six Days?* ed. Joseph A. Pipa and David W. Hall (Taylors, SC: Southern Presbyterian Press, 1999), 153-198.

and that is a movement away from either the gap theory or the day-age view accompanied with an acknowledgment that the days are literal. But these individuals go a step further and view Gen 1 as poetry, saga, liturgy, drama, theology, theological narrative, or poetic narrative. In keeping with this trend, the framework view now has become a much more dominant view among evangelical commentators on the days of creation than it once was, both in commentaries and in systematic theologies.¹ Interestingly, this view was relatively unknown among evangelicals in 1955 when Ramm evaluated the various options for harmonizing Genesis and science and was little known in 1983 when Henry likewise evaluated the various options available.² The literary view of the creation days became widely disseminated, however, in 1984 by French theologian Henri Blocher, who reached this conclusion: “The literary interpretation takes the form of the week attributed to the work of creation to be an artistic arrangement, a modest example of

¹Evangelicals who endorse the framework hypothesis are Dale Moody, *The Word of Truth: A Summary of Christian Doctrine Based on Biblical Revelation* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981), 141-145; Ronald F. Youngblood, *How It All Began* (Ventura, CA: Regal, 1980), 25-33, idem, *The Book of Genesis: An Introductory Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1991), 22-32; Meredith G. Kline, “Because It Had Not Rained,” *Westminster Theological Journal* 20 (1958): 146-157; and Mark E. Ross, “The Framework Hypothesis: An Interpretation of Genesis 1:1-2:3,” in *Did God Create in Six Days?*, ed. Joseph A. Pipa and David W. Hall (Taylors, SC: Southern Presbyterian Press, 1999), 113-130. The framework hypothesis has been critiqued by systematic theologians Kenneth L. Gentry and Michael R. Butler, *Yea, Hath God Said?* They list Bernard Ramm as one of the proponents of this theory, but the only point Ramm has in common with the advocates of the framework hypothesis is that he views the days of creation as non-chronological. In distinction from their view, he holds that the days of creation also are revelatory—divinely given and not humanly contrived. The day-age interpretation perhaps reached its peak of popularity when it was the main view advocated at the International Council on Biblical Inerrancy, Summit II, 10-13 November 1982. See Walter L. Bradley and Roger Olsen, “The Trustworthiness of Scripture in Areas Relating to Natural Sciences,” in *Hermeneutics, Inerrancy, and the Bible*, ed. Earl D. Radmacher and Robert D. Preus (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984), 309; and Gleason L. Archer, “A Response to the Trustworthiness of Scripture in Areas Relating to Natural Science,” in *ibid.*, 319-334. Their day-age views were critiqued by Henry M. Morris, “A Response to the Trustworthiness of Scripture in Areas Relating to Natural Science,” in *ibid.*, 335-348.

²Ramm, *CVSS*, and Henry, *GRA*, vol. 6.

anthropomorphism that is not to be taken literally.”¹ Subsequently Allen P. Ross has pursued the literary approach to Gen 1 by noting the important role of the “generations” (Heb. *toledoth*) in the entire narrative of Genesis. While he set forth four arguments in favor of the literal days, he has characterized these days within the purview of the early chapters as “poetic narrative.” He states: “The primeval events are ancient traditions cast in a poetic narrative form that lends itself readily to oral transmission.”² His conclusion is that “out of the darkened chaos God sovereignly and majestically created the entire universe in six days,”³ but in an appendix he followed the footsteps of evangelical Bruce K. Waltke by postulating that the six days represent a creation of the earth in perfect condition out of a preexisting chaos that was less than perfect.⁴ This interpretation of

¹Blocher, 50. On the previous page he labels the literary interpretation “the framework view.” Blocher’s book was first published in 1979, as *Révelation des origines*.

²Allen P. Ross, *Creation and Blessing: A Guide to the Study and Exposition of the Book of Genesis* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1988), 63. He advocates the Mosaic authorship of Genesis in that Moses compiled “records and traditions” that were transmitted down through the centuries in poetic-narrative form (*ibid.*), as well as the historicity of the narratives themselves (*ibid.*, 59-60). His argument for the literal days of creation are fourfold: (1) Elsewhere when Heb. *yom* is accompanied by a numeral it signifies twenty-four hours; (2) the Decalogue and Sabbath hinge upon the days being literal; (3) the function of the sun to govern “days and years” also indicates solar days; and (4) if a day is viewed as an age, it is inexplicable how nighttime could be an eon in length. *Ibid.*, 109.

³*Ibid.*, 104.

⁴Appendix 1, “The Interpretation of Genesis 1:1-3” (*ibid.*, 718-723). For support he cites Waltke’s 5-part series in *Bibliotheca Sacra* (1975) (*ibid.* 116). He follows in part the argumentation from the framework hypothesis by correctly noting the parallelism between the first three and last three days of creation. But he rejects the framework approach by denoting these days as literal and not literary, interpreting the first three days as “correcting the waste or formlessness” of the pre-creation period, and the last three days as “correcting the void or emptiness.” *Ibid.*, 104. This argumentation is employed partially by the advocates of the framework hypothesis; they do not conceive a preexisting chaos, however. Blocher, for example, categorically rejects the gap theory, which is closely akin to Waltke’s view. Blocher, 41-43. For a good summary of Waltke’s views, see Bruce K. Waltke, “The First Seven Days: What Is the Creation Account Trying to Tell Us?” *Christianity Today*, 12 August 1988, 42-46; and *idem*, *Genesis* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), 56ff. In his most recent study Waltke definitely is utilizing the framework hypothesis approach to Genesis, however, as revealed in this statement: “Finally, all of the acts of creation follow a *chronological framework*. God does not create in time, but with time.” *Ibid.*, 57. For him,

creation out of chaos is also supported by non-evangelical Gerhard von Rad.¹

One approach among recent evangelicals advocating seven literal days of creation has not as yet received much support among fellow evangelicals, and that is to view the creation week as applying to a local creation. John H. Sailhamer has taken the novel approach that the word “earth” (Heb. *‘erets*) in Gen. 1 can be localized so as to signify “the land [*‘erets*] of Palestine.”² This view is a revival and remodeling of an old theory best articulated by the British scientist/theologian John Pye Smith in the early nineteenth century—the idea that the Gen 1 creation is a local Middle East creation superimposed upon an ancient earth.³ The one advantage of this view is that it preserves the literalness of the six creation days, but its major disadvantage is that it trivializes the cosmic view of creation in Gen 1. Most evangelicals in the last two or three decades who have interpreted the creation days as twenty-four-hour days have done so by deriving novel interpretations, such as the multiple-gap theory of Newman and Ecklemann⁴ or the local creation theory of Sailhamer; by advocating the days as purely literary days with no basis

creation did not happen “within seven literal days,” but rather God created by applying the pattern of seven days to his creative activity to serve as a pattern for all subsequent time. Thus the creation days become more literary than literal, a view that Ross does not accept!

¹Gerhard von Rad, *Genesis: A Commentary* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1961).

²John H. Sailhamer, *Genesis Unbound: A Provocative New Look at the Creation Account* (Sisters, OR: Multnomah Books, 1996). Sailhamer’s commentary on Genesis published in *Expositor’s Bible Commentary* lacks any reference to his unique theory. John H. Sailhamer, “Genesis,” *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelain (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1990), 2:1-284.

³John Pye Smith, *The Relation between the Holy Scriptures and Some Parts of Geological Science* (1850; first published in London in 1839).

⁴Robert C. Newman and Herman J. Eckelmann, *Genesis One and the Origin of the Earth*. While each day of creation is said to be exactly twenty-four hours in length in their view, the days are each interspersed with millions of years of geological activity. This view was previously advocated by evangelical scientist, Peter W. Stoner.

in reality, as in the case of Henri Blocher and Allen Ross; or by placing the creation account itself within the milieu of the ancient Near East with little relevance to modern scientific concerns.¹ The revelatory days view of Bernard Ramm is not considered a defense of the literal-days position because each visionary day is said to portray geological activity over long periods of time. Few evangelicals have defended his position after its having been introduced in 1955 to the evangelical world.²

Non-conservative scholars and the literal days

Non-evangelical, non-fundamentalist theologians and exegetes who support the literal nature of the creation days nearly always do so by means of relativizing the biblical creation account within the context of other ancient mythical accounts. These authors limit the authority of the biblical account by asserting that it has no scientific value, only

¹An outstanding recent example of an evangelical study placing the creation account within the ancient Near Eastern cosmologies is John H. Stek, "What Says the Scripture?" in *Portraits of Creation: Biblical and Scientific Perspectives on the World's Formation*, ed. Howard J. Van Till, Robert E. Snow, John H. Stek, and Davis A. Young (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 203-265. He finds much in common between ancient Near Eastern cosmologies and the biblical cosmology (226-229), yet he portrays the biblical account as being a polemic against the others (229-232). The creation days are not "long eons of time," but the *completion* of creation on the seventh day sets apart the first week as being unique, unconnected with our calendar or modes of reckoning (237). Thus, Genesis "presents a storied rather than a historiographical account of creation" (238), yet the account is not to be considered mythical (240).

²Three proponents of the revelatory days view among evangelicals in the last half century are P. J. Wiseman, *Creation Revealed in Six Days: The Evidence of Scripture Confirmed by Archaeology* (London: Marshall, Morgan and Scott, 1958), first published in 1948; D. F. Payne, *Genesis One Reconsidered* (London: Tyndale Press, 1964); and Duane Garrett, *Rethinking Genesis: The Sources and Authorship of the First Book of the Pentateuch* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1991). None of these three have won many converts to their view. Occasionally commentaries make passing mention of the revelatory days view. For example, H. L. Ellison and D. F. Payne, "Genesis," *The International Bible Commentary*, edited by F. F. Bruce (London: Marshall Pickering, 1986), 112, 114, states that this view is possible, but "unprovable." One reason that this view has had its struggles with being accepted by evangelicals is no doubt due to Carl Henry's sharp critiques of Ramm's views. See "Science and Religion," 276-277, and *GRA*, 6:146. In the latter case he faults Ramm's view for bordering on theistic evolution and for portraying a creation sequence that is not historical.

theological value. Thus, it cannot settle any modern-day controversies regarding the age of the earth or the mode of creation. For example, John Skinner avers: “The interpretation of יום [yom] as *aeon*, a favourite resource of harmonists of science and revelation, is opposed to the plain sense of the passage, and has no warrant in Heb. usage (not even Ps. 90:4).”¹ He is willing to speculate that the biblical creation account (as well as the Flood “legend”) has been adapted from Babylonian precedents.² Herbert E. Ryle in his commentary finds that “the hallowing of the seventh day, in chap. ii.2,3, presupposes the literal character of the previous six days,” and reminds us that with the modern discoveries of geology and astronomy “we must be careful, therefore, not to read back such notions into the mind of the writer and of those for whom he wrote this chapter.”³ He continues by asserting: “It is recognized that the Hebrew cosmogony is devoid of scientific value.”⁴ Marcus Dods remarks that although the Bible is not written to convey scientific truths, it is remarkably free of the scientific errors found in other ancient cosmologies; however, it speaks of the science of ancient times, not modern-day science.⁵ Why? “Had they [the biblical authors] been supernaturally instructed in physical knowledge they would so far have been unintelligible to those to whom they spoke,” is

¹John Skinner, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Genesis* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1930), 21.

²*Ibid.*, xi.

³Herbert E. Ryle, *The Book of Genesis* (Cambridge: University Press, 1921), 8.

⁴*Ibid.*, 10.

⁵Marcus Dods, *The Book of Genesis* (New York: A. C. Armstrong, 1907), 3-4.

his reply.¹ After reviewing the attempts at interpreting the creation days as geological periods or as part of a Mosaic vision, S. R. Driver offers this conclusion: “Consequently there is no occasion to understand the word in any but its ordinary sense.”² He can so reason because for him the Bible “has no claim to contain a *scientific* account of the origin of the world.”³ Skinner, Ryle, Dods, and Driver all wrote in the first half of the twentieth century.

In the last half of the twentieth century non-evangelicals have supported the literal interpretation of the creation days almost without exception while most have rejected the authority of Genesis as a historical or scientific document. The noted Old Testament commentator Gerhard von Rad makes this pointed assertion: “The seven days are unquestionably to be understood as actual days and as a unique, unrepeatable lapse of time in the world.”⁴ The United Bible Society, which is not known as an evangelical institute, in its *Handbook on Genesis* takes the same position: “Some interpret **day** to refer to an indefinite period of time, but there is nothing in the context that requires the Hebrew term for **day** to be taken as other than an ordinary day. . . . The author’s purpose

¹Ibid., 5. Dods adds the point: “Had the writer of this book [Genesis] . . . spoken of millions of years instead of speaking of days—in all probability he would have been discredited.” Ibid. Thus, “if, for example, the word ‘day’ in these chapters, does not mean a period of twenty-four hours, the interpretation of Scripture is hopeless.” Ibid., 4.

²S. R. Driver, *The Book of Genesis* (London: Methuen, 1943), 26.

³Ibid., xxxi, emphasis original. Elsewhere Driver admits that the Bible does have science, but it “is the science of the age in which it was written.” Ibid., 33.

⁴Von Rad, 65.

is clearly to explain that the seventh day Sabbath has its origin in creation.”¹ Jewish commentator Umberto Cassuto supports the literal view of the days of creation, as do most modern Jewish scholars.² Roman Catholic scholars in the past centuries have been favorable towards a symbolic view of the creation days, but the recent trend is to view the days of creation as literal, but again having theological and not scientific import.³

In the above review of both biblical commentaries and systematic theologies on the topic of the nature of the creation days, three patterns of interpretation emerge:

1. The days of creation are taken to be literal, and the Genesis narratives to be historical and scientifically accurate, not mythical. Modern geological science then has to be reinterpreted, and the most common form of reinterpretation is that of Flood geology. This approach is taken largely by *fundamentalists* and can be labeled as “strict concordism (young earth)” or “scientific creationism” (see Appendix A, parts A and B).

2. The creation days are interpreted as non-twenty-four-hour days, so that Gen 1 can harmonize with modern geology. This concept takes on two forms of concordism—

¹William D. Reyburn and Euan McG. Fry, *A Handbook of Genesis* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1997), 35-36, emphasis original.

²Cassuto emphasizes: “A series of *seven consecutive days* was considered a perfect *period*.” Umberto Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Genesis* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1961), 1:13, emphasis original.

³The Vatican actually endorsed concordism—the idea that the creation days can be extended to harmonize with geological periods—in 1909, which is now critiqued in official Catholic publications, as follows: “It is true that the Biblical Commission in 1909 made a gesture towards the concordists by stating that there was nothing contrary to faith in taking the word *yom* to refer to an indefinite period of time. However, it is contrary to good Heb. grammar so to take it. Furthermore, the Commission on the same occasion rejected the basic premise of concordism in its affirmation that ‘it was not the mind of the sacred author in the composition of the first chapter of Genesis to give scientific teaching about the internal constitution of visible things and the entire order of creation.’” Reginald C. Fuller, ed., *A New Catholic Commentary on Holy Scripture* (London: Thomas Nelson, 1969), 176.

“strict concordism (old earth)” and “broad or moderate concordism”—views which are held by the majority of leading *evangelicals*, including Bernard Ramm and Carl Henry (see Appendix A, parts C and D). It allows geological science to have a critical role in interpreting Scripture, and it is rooted in the belief in the inerrancy of Scripture.¹

3. The days of creation are interpreted as literal, but the narrative of Gen 1 is defined as myth, saga, narrative theology, drama, poetry, or poetical narrative. Little or no scientific value is found in Gen 1, and when it is found there it is couched within the symbolisms and limitations of ancient Near Eastern thought. This approach has been adopted by mostly *non-evangelicals* and historical-critical scholars, and it is rooted in the concept that even the theological thought of Gen 1 has been shaped by the legends of ancient times.² This position can be best designated as “non-concordism” (according to Appendix A, part F) and is most conducive to the acceptance of theistic evolution.

¹The *New Catholic Commentary on Holy Scripture*, not considered to be an evangelical work, states this position accurately: “Prompted by the laudable intention of defending the inerrancy of the Scriptures, another form of interpretation, called **concordism**, appeared with the advent of modern scientific discovery. Concordism tried to safeguard inerrancy without turning its back on indubitable scientific facts by positing a harmony between biblical and scientific thought. That is to say, the six ‘days’ of Gn in this explanation, are actually the geological periods, perhaps millions of years, during which the earth was gradually formed.” Fuller, *A New Catholic Commentary on Holy Scripture*, 176. Among evangelicals this position is most often known as “progressive creationism,” and they freely admit that geology has allowed its say in the interpretation of Gen 1: “In addition, *yom* in its nearly 1,300 occurrences in the Old Testament is variously translated by the AV as time, year, age, life, space, weather, etc. Carl Henry observes that ‘the term day in Genesis has no consistent chronological value’ Ultimately, responsible geology must determine the length of the Genesis days, even as science centuries earlier settled the issue of the rotation of the earth about the sun.” Ibid. For an evangelical critique of all forms of concordism, which would include those advocated by Ramm and Henry, see Davis A. Young, “The Discovery of Terrestrial History,” in *Portraits of Creation*, ed. Howard J. Van Till et al. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 58-60. Pinnock amplifies Young’s critique of concordism by comparing it with a “swamp” in which evangelicals have become mired. See Clark H. Pinnock, “Climbing out of a Swamp: The Evangelical Struggle to Understand the Creation Texts,” *Interpretation* 43 (1989): 143-155, esp. 144-147.

²Bernard L. Ramm in his work *After Fundamentalism* (1983) moved in the direction of this third position and away from his earlier loyalty to the second position, that of concordism. Even though by 1983 he had accepted the Barthian concept that Gen 1 is saga, he still held to his concordist view of the creation days being days of revelation.

A recent evangelical study on the literal days

These three approaches to resolving the apparent discrepancies between the term “day” and geological thought have been surveyed in a thorough scholarly study on the creation days by Gerhard F. Hasel, published in 1994.¹ First he lists the writers of commentaries who acknowledge that the days of creation are to be considered literal—Gerhard von Rad, Gordon Wenham, James Barr, Victor P. Hamilton, John Stek, and Herman Gunkel.² Certainly von Rad and Gunkel would be considered by evangelicals to be liberal Old Testament scholars. Then he lists the various lexicons and theological dictionaries that support a literal interpretation—Holladay’s Hebrew-English lexicon, the Brown-Driver-Briggs lexicon, the comprehensive *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, and the authoritative *Theologisches Handwörterbuch zum Alten*

¹Hasel, “The ‘Days’ of Creation in Genesis 1,” 5-38. This 1992 study was reprinted and has had wider circulation in *Creation, Catastrophe, and Calvary: Why a Global Flood Is Vital to the Doctrine of Atonement*, ed. John Templeton Baldwin (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 2000), 40-68. Hasel by virtue of his membership in the Evangelical Theological Society and his several publications in evangelical journals would be considered evangelical while his views on Flood geology would be considered fundamentalist. Unfortunately, his study was published long after both Ramm and Henry had completed their writings on creation, so that they were not aware of this and other more recent evangelical studies on the meaning of the term *yom* in Gen 1. For example, they would have profited from the exhaustive evangelical study on the meaning of *yom*: P. A. Verhoef, “יָוֵם,” *New International Dictionary of Old Testament*, ed. Willem A. VanGemeren (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 2:419-424, that takes the position that when *yom* is composed of “evening and morning,” as in Gen 1, it refers to one day-night cycle.

²Hasel, “The ‘Days’ of Creation in Genesis 1,” 21. Concurrent with Hasel’s 1994 study, *The New Interpreter’s Bible* endorses von Rad’s interpretation that the days are literal. Terence E. Fretheim, “The Book of Genesis,” *The New Interpreter’s Bible* (1994), 1:346. Cf. Fretheim’s studies on Gen 1-11, in which he comments: “‘Evening and morning.’ The fact that the writer uses this language and that the whole scheme culminates in the sabbath means that he intends the ‘days’ to be taken literally.” Idem, *Creation, Fall, and Flood: Studies in Genesis 1-11* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1969), 59.

*Testament.*¹

Finally, Hasel sets forth seven lines of reasoning why the days of Gen 1 can be considered only to be literal.²

1. *The semantical field.* According to the semantics or wide range of interpretative possibilities for the word *yom* in the Old Testament, the phraseology “age,” “long period of time,” or “aeon” never applies.

2. *The use of the singular.* The word *yom* consistently appears in the singular in enumerating the creation days in Gen 1, thus eliminating the possibility of much longer periods of time denoted by the plural (*yamim*).

3. *The use of numerals.* Whenever *yom* is associated with a numeral, especially an ordinal number, in the Old Testament, it always refers to literal days.

4. *The absence or presence of the article.* The first and sixth days have the article attached to the word day, but the other days are anarthrous or without the article. It has been argued that the anarthrous use of the word *yom* indicates that the days are indefinite and should not be taken literally, but Hasel rightly notes that the two usages with the article are in the first and last positions, thus forming an *inclusio*. The days within the *inclusio* are then to be understood as if they have the article.

¹Ibid., 22-23. Following Hasel’s 1994 study, an endorsement of the literal view comes from another scholarly word study, which states: “The term [*yom*] is also used for day in the sense of the complete cycle that includes both daytime and nighttime, e.g. Gen 1:5: ‘And there was evening, and there was morning—the first day.’” P. A. Verhoef, “*יו*,” *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 2:420. Verhoef adds the interesting argument in favor of literal days by suggesting that the continuation of the seasons after the Flood (Gen 8:22) signifies the continuation of the daily cycle unchanged. *GRA*, 2:421.

²Hasel, “The ‘Days’ of Creation in Genesis 1,” 20-31.

5. *The boundary between “evening/morning.”* The division of time is clearly denoted into two halves, which make up the whole known as “one day.” This cannot be anything else than a literal day.

6. *Pentateuch Sabbath passages.* Elsewhere in the Pentateuch, especially in reference to the fourth commandment, the days make sense only on the basis that they complete a weekly cycle culminating in the Sabbath.

7. *The sequence of events.* If the days were non-literal days applied to geological eras, then the vegetation created on the third “day” would not have the insect pollinators needed for its perpetuation because of their being created on the fifth “day.” In summary, none of the semantic or lexical usages within Gen 1 or elsewhere in parallel Old Testament usages suggest that the days ought to be understood other than literally. Other evangelical Old Testament scholars have produced scholarly studies since Hasel’s ground-breaking study in 1994, substantiating the literal interpretation of the creation days.¹

The decision that the days of creation in Gen 1 are best considered as literal days has been reached in this study of the thought of Bernard Ramm and Carl Henry after covering a wide variety of sources: commentaries, Bible dictionaries, Old Testament lexical studies, and scholarly books and articles. Likewise, the conclusion arises out of an examination of a wide variety of theological perspectives from Fundamentalism to

¹For example, Davidson, “The Biblical Account of Origins,” 4-43, esp. 10-19; Doukhan, 12-33, esp. 25-28; and Duncan and Hall, 21-66. The latter two individuals, Duncan and Hall, approach the subject more from a historical viewpoint and less from an exegetical one than the first two individuals. Also of significance is the lexical study of Verhoef, “דָּוָם.”

liberalism with a fair number of evangelical works included. A wide variety of confessional perspectives are represented as well—Protestant (Baptist, Lutheran, Presbyterian, etc.), Catholic, and Jewish. Because of the wide cross section of studies defending the literal nature of the creation days, one would need to conclude that mainstream evangelicalism is out of step with the majority interpretation of the days of creation, and then one must raise the simple question, Why?

Reasons for Evangelicals Rejecting the Literal-Days View

While this study focuses upon the writings of Bernard Ramm and Carl Henry, it has now examined both of these men as evangelical thought leaders within the larger context of evangelicalism. Both Henry and Ramm draw upon the larger evangelical heritage of the twentieth century to secure their intellectual and theological support in setting forth their models for harmonizing science and religion. Henry, for example, cites with approval the work of evangelical scientists who are members of the fairly influential evangelical organization, American Scientific Affiliation, and nearly all of whom have rejected the literal interpretation of the creation days.¹ Bernard Ramm was closely associated with the American Scientific Affiliation and contributed to it with articles in

¹For a description of the A.S.A. as it is known, see Mark A. Kalthoff, ed., *Creation and Evolution in the Early American Scientific Affiliation*. The majority of its members would describe themselves either as “progressive creationists” or “theistic evolutionists,” in contrast to the one other professional evangelical scientific organization, the Creation Research Society. The latter society, known as C.R.S., was formed of former A.S.A. members when the A.S.A. in the 1950s rejected Flood geology and shifted towards a metaphorical interpretation of the creation days and towards the acceptance of evolution. See William C. Duke, “The American Scientific Affiliation and the Creation Research Society: the Creation-Evolution Issue” (Ph.D. dissertation, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1982).

its scholarly publication and presentations at its annual meetings.¹ Because of his widely-read writings on the interface between science and evangelical theology, Bernard Ramm was probably the single most influential theologian among evangelical scientists of the twentieth century. Their ideas upon the nature of the creation days and their understanding of earth history definitely influenced his writings, and likewise his writings on these subjects made a deep impact upon their thinking. The influence was mutual. Ramm, even though at times he was criticized by Henry for his views on creation but more particularly for his views on inspiration, definitely had an impact on Henry's thinking in the area of science and religion. Ramm was the one evangelical theologian of the twentieth century who could bridge the gap between evangelical scientists and evangelical theologians more than perhaps any other. Thus evangelicalism can be described as somewhat of a "closed-loop system" when it comes to hammering out its views on the harmonization between science and religion. While Henry disdained having culture be a major influence shaping biblical writings, his own writings reveal to a much larger degree than he was aware of, the influence of evangelical culture and thought upon his own writings. This is inevitable with any theological system.

Many factors can be distilled from this research to explain why evangelicalism has largely adopted the non-literal days approach to Genesis one:

1. The belief in the uniformity of nature as following divinely ordained laws in the

¹Just before Ramm's death in 1992, Joseph Spradley wrote a glowing tribute to the contributions Ramm made to the A.S.A. Spradley, 2-9. This is the official publication of the A.S.A. Earlier, an entire issue of the A.S.A. journal was dedicated to Ramm as "A Bernard Ramm Festschrift," *Journal of the American Scientific Affiliation* 31, no. 4 (1979).

universe, resulting in the uniformity of the laws of radioactive decay, which in turn yield the long ages for life upon the earth

2. The recognition of general revelation as a valid revelation of God as creator and as a legitimate means for discovering truth, wherever that discovery may lead, even if to an acceptance of the conventional geological time scale

3. The sharp criticism of Fundamentalism by evangelicals who fault it for its scorn of modern scientific theories and who desire to come to grips with the Enlightenment by accepting critical methods for historical, biblical, and scientific research

4. The emphasis upon the rationality of the human mind in its ability to perceive truth, leading to the acceptance of the rationality apparent in the natural world, one example being the overall congruence of radiometric dates yielding long ages for the development of life on earth

5. The acceptance of the idea that death in the animal world is unrelated to the fall of Adam, thus making it possible for death in the fossil world to long predate the creation of Adam and Eve

6. The belief in the inerrancy of Scripture and the conviction that the biblical and geological records can be fully harmonized because of their having the same Author.

Certainly all of the above six factors can explain at least in part why evangelicals have adopted the metaphorical, non-literal approach to the creation days. The uniformity of nature is not a major factor for accepting long ages because not all evangelicals accept uniformity. While Ramm accepts it, Henry is critical of the concept of uniformity.

Evangelicals generally perceive general revelation as subservient to special revelation, not

an independent avenue to special revelation as held by Roman Catholics. Thus it is not the determining factor in accepting long ages. A criticism of Fundamentalism as being obscurantist of itself does not lead to rejecting the long ages. The idea that animal death is unrelated to the fall of Adam only allows for long geological ages, but it certainly does not demand such. The acceptance of a rational approach to truth does tilt the weight of evidence toward accepting long ages.

But the one all-encompassing remaining factor for accepting long ages and rejecting the literal seven days of creation is that of inerrancy and the nature of the biblical record. A belief in inerrancy disallows the possibility that science would ever find a major discovery that challenges the validity and authority of any biblical statement that has its domain in both the scientific and theological realms.¹ One perceived challenge to scriptural authority no doubt was the discovery of long geological ages, a discovery commencing at the end of the eighteenth century and increasing with new evidences to this day.² This direct challenge to scriptural authority is valid only if the

¹Historically, the belief in biblical inerrancy arose in the nineteenth century as a reaction against the Enlightenment and the influence of Deism in America. It found additional support in Scottish Common Sense Realism that was imported in the nineteenth century to Princeton Seminary and other seminaries and universities of the United States. Parallel to these developments, both theologians and scientists with a high view of scriptural inspiration started developing schemes to harmonize Scripture with modern science, especially geology—schemes such as the gap theory, the day-age view, and the Mosaic vision theory. Actually the seeds of these views were a result of the concept that since the Bible and nature have one Author, they cannot help but agree—a concept that has strong roots in the Reformation, but actually goes back to Francis Bacon and the Renaissance. The intimately close relationship between inerrancy and accomodationist views of Gen 1 supports the thesis that one's doctrine of revelation and inspiration determines one's view of the nature of the creation days. Other studies have demonstrated that one's view of revelation, inspiration, and inerrancy definitely controls one's view of soteriology. Note, for example, Ray C. W. Roennfeldt, "Clark H. Pinnock's Shift in His Doctrine of Biblical Authority and Reliability: An Analysis and Critique" (Ph.D. Dissertation, Andrews University, 1990).

²The one answer to the long-ages challenge in the early twentieth century was the Flood-geology theory of George McCready Price. Bernard Ramm categorically rejected such a model because of its lack of scientific substance (*CVSS*, 125, 160-168), as did Henry ("Science and Religion," 277).

Bible is believed to teach that the world and life therein were created within the first seven days of history (in other words, if the days of creation be considered literal days) and only if biblical chronology is deemed authoritative in establishing a recent creation.¹ To avoid this major conflict and its repercussions for undermining belief in the authority of Scripture and belief in God as creator, evangelicals, including Bernard Ramm and Carl Henry, have adopted ingenious ways to explain the days of creation on a non-literal basis. They do so by assuming that the intent of Scripture was *not* to teach six literal days for creation and was *not* to limit the earth's age to about 6,000 years.²

Moreover, evangelicalism could be severely crippled in its mission to dialog with the thought leaders of the world and in its goal to respond to the challenges raised by the Enlightenment if it did not assume such, according to the best thinking of its scientists

¹Conservative evangelicalism and Protestant Fundamentalism have held to the literalness of the six days of creation in a literal week as well as to the recency of the creation event in contrast to most of the thought leaders, biblical scholars, archeologists, and theologians within evangelicalism today. One important reason why conservative evangelicals and Protestant fundamentalists have largely resisted adopting a modernized view of earth history is that they are dispensationalist largely in their eschatology. A literalist approach to the book of Revelation is often, but not always, accompanied by a literal approach to Gen 1 and 2. The relationship between protology (creation) and eschatology (last-day events) is outside the scope of this dissertation.

²Bernard Ramm does address the issue of the intent of the inspired author of Gen 1: "The religious intent of the creation narrative was: (i) to evoke from man the worship, adoration, obedience, and love which belong to God as faithful, powerful, good, and omnipotent Creator; (ii) to prohibit any and all superstitious views of the universe; (iii) to deny any view of Nature which denied the existence of God and a spiritual order. It thereby does not tell science what is right, but what science must not lead to. . . . 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." *CVSS*, 150. Ramm therefore assumes that the intent of Scripture is not to teach twenty-four-hour days for creation week because science has taught otherwise. He further elaborates: "There is only one thing necessary to make impossible a view which holds that creation was in one ordinary week about 4000 B.C., and that is to show that the earth has been here considerably longer than that." *Ibid.*, 122. Thus geological science is allowed to become the deciding factor in the exegesis of Gen 1. It is granted that status by default, as revealed in this quotation from Joseph Pohle in Ramm: "For as Pohle observes: 'Since the true interpretation of the Hexaemeron with regard to the origin of the universe is uncertain, theologians and scientists are free to adopt whatever theory they prefer, provided only it be reasonable and moderate, and not evidently opposed to Scripture.'" Joseph Pohle, *God: The Author of Nature and the Supernatural* (St. Louis, MO: Herder, 1945), quoted in Ramm, *CVS*, 120.

and theologians.¹ Its over-riding concern is the carrying of an intelligible, persuasive gospel into all the world for a witness to all humankind—both uneducated and highly educated alike. Its very name indicates that it is gospel oriented and mission oriented.

Evangelicalism could have a more credible witness, it is proposed in this study, if it simply agreed with a widespread number of scholars that the days of creation as originally presented are literal days. Once this conclusion is reached, then it can move on to develop ways to harmonize ancient biblical cosmology with modern scientific cosmology without imposing the modern upon the ancient.

Conclusion

The differences between Bernard Ramm and Carl Henry on the much-debated topic of science and religion are many and distinct. This study has been brought to its culmination by a thorough examination or critique of the views of Ramm and Henry upon revelation and creation, first examining briefly the commonalities held by both men.

Then it has pursued an internal or introspective view of the topic as seen through the eyes

¹Davis A. Young, evangelical geologist and son of conservative evangelical OT scholar, E. J. Young, has graphically described the possibility of people losing faith when “indoctrinated” with a young age for the earth and has suggested that Flood geology may be a “stumbling block” to faith in the following manner: “Christians believe that the Bible is God’s Word and is free of error, and many of them have been thoroughly *indoctrinated* to believe also that creation occurred in six twenty-four-hour days, that the entire globe was completely submerged for an entire year by the Flood, that uniformitarian geology is based on a godless philosophy, that Flood geology offers a superior explanation of the facts of nature, and that ‘genuine science’ supports the creationist-catastrophist view of the Bible. Imagine the trauma and shock of finally realizing that Flood geology, which has been endorsed so enthusiastically by well-meaning Christian leaders, is nothing more than a fantasy. . . . Furthermore, creationism [i.e., scientific creationism] and Flood geology have put a serious *roadblock* in the way of unbelieving scientists. Although Christ has the power to save unbelievers in spite of our foolishness and poor presentations of the gospel, Christians should do all they can to avoid creating unnecessary *stumbling blocks* to the reception of the gospel.” Davis A. Young, *Christianity and the Age of the Earth*, 151-152, emphasis added. Young’s ideas expressed here are typical of evangelical thought in most circles, whether scientific or theological.

of both men, allowing each to criticize the position of the other. Additional differences between the two scholars have then been noted with a focus upon possible reasons for the differences. One reason that has emerged at the top is the fact that the two theologians employ differing methodologies: Ramm the methodology of evidentialism and Henry the methodology of presuppositionalism. These methodologies are developed out of philosophical presuppositions as well as theological concerns.

Once the differences between Ramm and Henry on both revelation and creation have been noted and summarized, then it has been possible to determine why they are both agreed that the days of creation are to be viewed more in a metaphorical sense than the traditional sense as literal, twenty-four-hour days. By a process of elimination, this study has narrowed down the list of possible reasons to one salient reason: evangelicalism's position on inerrancy could be in jeopardy *if* the days are to be interpreted as literal and *if* the science of geology is correct in assigning long ages to life on earth. In reacting against modern-day Fundamentalism with its own emphasis on scientific creationism and Flood geology, evangelicals, in particular Bernard Ramm and Carl Henry, have chosen not to attempt to reinterpret the entire science of geology within a short time frame; hence, in their efforts to preserve the inerrant nature of Gen 1-11 evangelicals have decided to reinterpret the meaning of the creation days based upon the premise that the Bible is not always consistent in its usage of terms for time, especially the word for "day." Their only other option is to suggest that Gen 1 is strictly theology, poetry, or religious saga, not history, but this would undermine its position on the propositional and historical nature of revelation. The end result is that the advocacy of

the creation days as being non-literal has put evangelicals out of step with biblical scholars, representing a wide array of perspectives, who agree that indeed the days of creation are best interpreted as normal, twenty-four-hour days.

CHAPTER 6

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Summary

The major purpose of this study is to determine the reasons why the two leading evangelical theologians, Bernard L. Ramm and Carl F. H. Henry, promote an interpretation of Gen 1 that undermines the literal nature of the days of creation and a literal creation week in light of the fact that they both championed the historical approach to the early chapters of the Bible. Another goal of this study is to uncover the reasons why these two theologians adopt quite different approaches to harmonizing Gen 1 with geological science, even though they both have been defenders of propositional revelation and inerrancy and have held many neo-evangelical theological positions in common. The differences between the two theologians are found to be rooted in differences in their approaches to the subject of revelation, which has been affected by their usage of different methodologies.

The two goals are closely related in that differences between two theological systems are often the key to understanding the commonality held by those systems. This study has begun by describing and analyzing the views of both Ramm and Henry upon the topics of revelation and creation. Their understanding of the nature of the days of creation has as much to do with their positions on revelation as upon creation. Before

one can fully account for the reason or reasons why Ramm and Henry are agreed in assigning to the creation days a figurative value, one must note the differences between the two theologians upon the major aspects of the doctrine of creation. If they differ upon one aspect of the creation doctrine in a significant manner, then that aspect in their doctrine of creation cannot be set forth as a major reason why both men have adopted a non-literal interpretation of the creation days when the bulk of biblical scholarship can be arrayed in support of a literal interpretation. For example, Ramm supports a uniformitarian approach to science, while Henry for the most part rejects it. Thus, uniformitarianism cannot be advanced as a major reason why the two men adopt a non-literal view of the creation days.

In pursuit of the two goals in this study I have examined evidence from a variety of perspectives (Protestant, Catholic, and Jewish; liberal and conservative) on whether the proper interpretation of Gen 1 is that the days are to be viewed literally, and not metaphorically, or solely theologically. One can best understand why evangelicalism has wedded its interpretations of Gen 1 with modern scientific thought by examining the historical background and intellectual roots of evangelicalism.

The Roots of Neo-Evangelicalism

Evangelicalism (or more specifically Neo-evangelicalism) has drawn its intellectual sources from Reformation and pre-Reformation thought on the question of harmonizing science with Scripture, reason with revelation, and geology with Genesis. These harmonizations generally revolve around the question of the length of the creation

days. Early on in church history, Origen of Alexandria (third century) adopted the allegorical method of interpretation employed by the Alexandrian Jewish scholar, Philo, resulting in the interpretation that the early chapters of Genesis are metaphorical as well as literal, thus harmonizing biblical thought with Greek science. Augustine (fifth century) and Thomas Aquinas (thirteenth century) synthesized their thought with the scientific and philosophical thought with its origin in Plato and Aristotle, respectively, yielding an interpretation of Gen 1 that was melded with the science of their day. This is known as concordism, the concept that the Scriptural account of origins must be interpreted within the constructs of contemporary science.

Evangelicals for the most part have welcomed concordism as a means of reconciling biblical teaching with modern science, as exhibited in their major harmonizations: the gap-theory, the day-age view, the multiple-gap theory, the revelatory days interpretation, the local creation theory, the framework hypothesis, and so forth. Bernard Ramm has adopted the revelatory days interpretation for reconciliation, whereby the seven days of Gen 1 are interpreted as days of revelation, not days of creation. By contrast, Carl Henry has refused to adopt any of the above views for the reason that if one wed a scientific view to a specific passage of Scripture, such as Gen 1, then when science is proven wrong on its side of the equation, Scripture also will be viewed as wrong.

While evangelicalism's theological roots go back most prominently to the Reformation and the views of both Calvin and Luther, which were grounded in the historical-grammatical interpretation of Scripture, its thinking on the relation between

science and religion has been unalterably shaped by the rise of modern geological thought in the eighteenth century. In 1785 James Hutton's dictum, that earth science discovers "no vestige of a beginning, no prospect of an end," provided all the time needed for modern geology to take root and flourish. Charles Lyell's uniformitarianism led to the demise of catastrophic thinking, in the 1830s, and the dismissal of the Flood as a major agent for geological change. The "antiquity of the earth" became just as firmly established in the minds of most late nineteenth-century scientists and theologians as the idea that the earth rotates around the sun became established in the thinking of the reformers and scientists in the sixteenth century.¹ Scottish Common Sense Realism became the theological vehicle, especially among Presbyterians, for the harmonizing of science and religion among conservative theologians in both England and America. It welcomed a rational approach to be used in one's quest for truth, which became a major influence in the rise of the neo-evangelical movement in the early 1940s. Both Carl Henry and Bernard Ramm became two of the top leaders of evangelicalism for the next three or four decades, championing the Princetonian views on both inspiration of Scripture and reconciliation of Scripture with science.² Time for creation was no longer an issue, the genealogies of Genesis were said to provide only approximate dates for the creation of man, and the concept that pre-Adamite life could have existed for millions of

¹Ramm compares the discovery of vast geological time as being one of the four great scientific discoveries, the first being the discovery of the heliocentric theory. Bernard Ramm, "Theological Reactions to the Theory of Evolution," 71-72; and idem, "The Battle Isn't over Yet," 17-18.

²For an analysis of nineteenth-century Princetonian theology and its relationship to Scottish Common Sense Realism, see David R. Plaster, "The Theological Method of the Early Princetonians" (Th.D. dissertation, Dallas Theological Seminary, 1989), esp. 86-126.

years was accepted.

Thus, one cannot correctly evaluate the variety of evangelical views on harmonizing science and religion without examining its historical roots extending back to Augustine, and even earlier in church history, and extending through the influence of Princeton's views on inspiration and the harmonization of science and religion. One must keep in mind that Neo-evangelicalism arose specifically as an attempt to address the concerns raised by the Enlightenment while holding to a high view of the Bible's inspiration and the authenticity of its revelation, thus emphasizing a rational approach to the discovery of truth.¹ One quickly discovers that a proper doctrine of creation cannot be developed without a corresponding solid doctrine of revelation, if one wishes to bring close harmony between Gen 1 and the findings of science.

The Thought of Bernard Ramm and Carl Henry Upon the Topics of Revelation and Creation

Only the high points of what Bernard L. Ramm and Carl F. H. Henry have said upon the subjects of revelation and creation can be summarized in this final chapter. Before one can evaluate their respective views through a method of comparison and contrast, one must summarize the similarities and differences in their thought. What is

¹At the 1990 American Academy of Religion annual meetings in New Orleans, LA, a symposium honoring Bernard Ramm was convened, after which the papers were published in *Perspectives in Religious Studies* (Winter 1990). As a result, several presenters acknowledged the lifelong quest of Bernard Ramm to "come to grips with the Enlightenment." According to Pinnock, "Most of Ramm's works give clear notice of what a large challenge he thinks the Enlightenment poses to the historic Christian faith." Pinnock, "Bernard Ramm: Postfundamentalist Coming to Terms with Modernity," 19. According to Mohler, "The Enlightenment represented the end of scholastic orthodoxy as a viable theological model as it dethroned Protestant orthodoxy from its reign in Western thought. Evangelicalism was, in Ramm's opinion, the alternative course to liberalism in a world shaped by Enlightenment values." Mohler, "Bernard Ramm: Karl Barth and the Future of American Evangelicalism," 30. He also points out that Ramm faults Fundamentalism for pursuing theology as if the Enlightenment never happened.

immediately discernible is that their similarities far outweigh their differences; that is, they hold much more in common than what they differ upon. One goal of this research is to explain how and why the two men differ in their thinking in light of the fact that they hold so much in common.

The Similarities between Ramm and Henry

Their doctrine of revelation

The evangelical doctrine of revelation is based largely upon the concept of propositional revelation—that divine revelation was transmitted to mankind in the form of intelligible propositions, or in the case that divine revelation came in the form of symbols, as in dreams or visions, the symbols can then be best articulated as propositions.¹

Bernard Ramm and Carl Henry have been the two preeminent evangelical theologians over a period of about fifty years, who have been champions of propositional revelation.² For them, final authority in all theological matters is to be found in Scripture—not in the impressions or voice of the Spirit, not in any ecclesiastical body, not in a divine-human encounter that precedes the process of inscripturation, not in human reason. One can trust Scripture for one's final authority in theological matters because Scripture itself has been

¹Dulles, 37-41. He writes: "Revelation, for these orthodox Evangelicals, is thus equated with the meaning of the Bible, taken as a set of propositional statements, each expressing a divine affirmation, valid always and everywhere." *Ibid.*, 39.

²In their survey of modern theology, Grenz and Olsen select two theologians, Carl F. H. Henry and Bernard L. Ramm, as "representative voices" for evangelicalism and as best articulating the concerns of evangelicalism. Grenz and Olsen, 288. They point out that while both men are Baptists, their theological contributions and concerns go far beyond denominational boundaries. These two authors point out that Henry's major contribution has been a detailed elaboration of the doctrine of revelation in his magnum opus, *God, Revelation and Authority*, and that Ramm's major contribution has been in the area of science, offering evangelicals a methodology for harmonizing the Bible with modern science. *Ibid.*, 298.

preserved from theological error through a process of inspiration. While evangelicals are much more in agreement on the nature, purpose, and role of biblical revelation, they are sharply divided on the question of inspiration, especially on the definition of inerrancy as it applies to inspired writings. This is true specifically in the case of Ramm and Henry.

The following major points in the doctrine of revelation are held in common by Ramm and Henry:

1. *The validity of both special and general revelation.* Special revelation takes priority over general revelation, which is the witness of God found in nature, history, reason, and human conscience. When general revelation is expanded into a natural theology, as in Roman Catholicism, then one has an independent means for establishing truth. This is rejected by both Ramm and Henry, although they concur that general revelation does attest to God's existence. It can offer no hope of salvation, however. General revelation is best interpreted in light of special revelation.

2. *The sovereignty of God as the initiator of divine revelation, and the helplessness of humankind without divine revelation.* In a sense, all revelation starts with the doctrine of God, for God is the initiator of revelation in evangelical thought. God is omnipotent, omniscient (seeing the end from the beginning), omnipresent, absolutely good and truthful. Because the revelation is from God and thus has a divine origin, that revelation likewise must retain the stamp of divinity. If the revelation itself in its basic essence were less than truthful, then its divine origin would be greatly compromised. Since man is unable through his own efforts to discover God or to initiate a revelatory experience, the encounter form of revelation offered by dialectical theology must be

rejected.¹ As one can infer from this approach to the relationship between God as initiator and man as receptor in the process of revelation, the doctrine of biblical inerrancy is a logical corollary of the teaching on the sovereignty of God.² But for both Ramm and Henry, inerrancy is not to be employed as a test of evangelical orthodoxy.³

3. *The rational nature of revelation.* The only means by which God communicates with mankind is through the human mind. While the fall of Adam and Eve has distorted and weakened the will power of the entire human race, it has not distorted the mind of mankind nor eliminated the possibility that the human mind can be a channel for divine revelation. Both Ramm and Henry emphasize the importance of the intellect for perceiving truth.⁴ If the mind is the only means for God communicating truth with his created beings, then the best means for communicating those truths is through propositions.

4. *The propositional nature of revelation.* As already noted, this can be stated as the foundation stone of the evangelical doctrine of revelation. For both Henry and

¹The three leading theologians of early twentieth-century encounter theology are Karl Barth, Emil Brunner, and Rudolf Bultmann. The second generation of encounter or word theologians consists of Ernst Fuchs, Gerhard Ebeling, and Eberhard Jungel, according to Avery Dulles, 85.

²The doctoral study of Ray Roenfeldt, "Clark H. Pinnock's Shift in His Doctrine of Biblical Authority and Reliability," is one of the best demonstrations of this thesis.

³Ramm, "Is 'Scripture Alone' the Essence of Christianity?" 107-123.

⁴Henry's guiding maxim for ascertaining truth is articulated as follows: "Divine revelation is the source of all truth, the truth of Christianity included; reason is the instrument for recognizing it; Scripture is its verifying principle; logical consistency is a negative test for truth and coherence a subordinate test." *GRA*, 1:215. Ramm's lifelong goal was to help evangelicalism come to grips with the challenge of the Enlightenment by offering a rational approach to truth that is superior to the rationalism of the Enlightenment. Grenz and Olsen correctly observe: "Ramm's overarching passion was the pursuit of Christian theology in the aftermath of the Enlightenment. (300)" That is why Ramm's earliest writings were all in the area of apologetics.

Ramm, divine revelation is both verbal and conceptual in content. The manner in which the word-oriented concepts are specifically stated is determined by the biblical author. Revelation is retained in the very words of Scripture, so that indeed the Bible is the veritable Word of God. Even the imagery, symbolism, and figures of speech of Scripture are viewed as propositional in their inherent nature in that such can be expressed as propositions.¹

The propositional nature of revelation has several corollaries in the area of biblical hermeneutics:

- a. Normally Scriptural statements should be interpreted literally, unless the style of language or the context demands a figurative application.
- b. The narrative portions of Scripture should be viewed from the standpoint of the historical nature of those events, not in terms of saga or myth. This includes the early events of Genesis.
- c. Biblical revelation comes in a wide variety of forms—dreams, Urim and Thummim, theophanies, divine speaking, incarnation, etc.—thus necessitating the usage of a variety of means for interpreting Scripture.² The language itself is expressed in a

¹Avery Dulles summarizes Henry's thought on this point, showing his dependency on the thinking of his mentor, Gordon Clark: "Elsewhere he [Henry] states: 'God's revelation is rational communication conveyed in intelligible ideas and meaningful words, that is, in conceptual-verbal form.' He approvingly quotes Gordon Clark as asserting: 'Aside from imperative sentences and a few exclamations in the Psalms, the Bible is composed of propositions.'" Dulles, 39. Ramm asserts: "Special revelation comes in the form of both speaking and writing and therefore has characteristics proper to them both." Ramm, *Special Revelation and the Word of God*, 63. He goes a step further than Henry in stressing the accommodationist nature of revelation. *Ibid.*, 33, 65-66. The analogy between the accommodation in the incarnation and in inscripturation is set forth in *ibid.*, 34.

²See Ramm, *Special Revelation and the Word of God*, 31-122, for a thorough discussion of the various modalities for divine revelation.

variety of ways, so that the biblical interpreter must become familiar with the language, style, thought patterns, and culture of ancient times.

d. A variety of historical-critical methods are appropriately applied to Scripture when done so from within a belief in the inerrancy of Scripture—as long as such do not lead to a rejection of the claims of Scripture regarding its nature and origin.

5. Scripture is viewed from a Christ-centered and Spirit-filled perspective, thus both Ramm and Henry pursue a trinitarian approach to divine revelation. The entire purpose of Scripture is to reveal Christ, the one who is both our creator and our saviour. He also is the author of Scripture, so that he is both the living Word and the written Word. The incarnation takes place in a symbolic sense in the writing of Scripture. The Holy Spirit is not only the activating power in creation, but the controlling power in the process of transmission of God's message to humankind. The Spirit is also the illuminator of the written Word, so that it cannot be comprehended without the aid of the Spirit. Creation cannot be conceived without the agency of the Holy Spirit, and so revelation cannot be understood apart from the role of the Holy Spirit in its origination, transmission, and interpretation.

In all aspects of the revelation process, from beginning to end, divine activity is the controlling power, yielding a revelation that is entirely trustworthy as a guide to truth and salvation, according to the thought of both Ramm and Henry.

Their doctrine of creation

The two theologians, Ramm and Henry, present the doctrine of creation within the

context of the doctrine of revelation, so much so that as much thought and effort are invested by Ramm and Henry in a discussion of the meaning of creation as in revelation, even when addressing the topic of creation.¹ The approach taken for discussing Henry's doctrine of revelation has been to divide up the subject into five subtopics revolving around the questions *why? what? who? how? and what for?*² It is thus appropriate to apply five similar questions to the following summary of both Henry's and Ramm's doctrine of creation within the rubric of the questions: *Who? how? what? why? and when?*

1. *Who?* Ramm and Henry offer a doctrine of creation that is distinctly trinitarian. God the Father is the all-mighty power behind creation and the divine originator of the universe. His existence is not dependent upon any preexistent matter, but all matter and life are dependent upon him. God the Son is the agent of creation. Both theologians emphasize Christ as Logos being the divine mind behind creation.³ Mankind's being created in his image is the result of primordial creation and the goal of re-creation, or redemption. The Holy Spirit is the omnipresent power and agent of creation, brooding over the waters of chaos in the beginning (Gen 1:2), just as he is a major force in bringing about the new creation, inviting all to drink of the water of life (Rev 22:17). Just as their respective doctrines of revelation are intensely trinitarian, so the respective doctrines of creation set forth by Ramm and Henry are definitely trinitarian, following in the footsteps of classic Christianity.

¹The prime examples of this are their major works on creation: Ramm, *The Christian View of Science and Scripture*; and Henry, *God, Revelation and Authority*, vol. 6.

²See chapter 4 of this dissertation.

³See, for example, Ramm, *CVSS*, 26; Henry, *GRA*, 3:203-205, 212.

2. *How?* God can employ both fiat and process in his acts of creation, but the major acts of creation are by fiat. The doctrine of creation *ex nihilo* is upheld by both Ramm and Henry. It is this one biblical teaching, perhaps more than any other, that causes them to reject theistic evolution and to defend progressive creation. Scattered throughout cosmic and geological history are divine acts of creation occurring *ex nihilo*, or as Ramm designates it, *de novo*. This is what distinguishes progressive creation from theistic evolution. Another distinguishing criterion is that creation takes place supernaturally in progressive creation, while it takes place naturally in theistic evolution. Ramm and Henry reject the idea that creation is by natural law.

3. *What?* All things, both material and spiritual, in the universe have been created by God.¹ The term, “heaven and earth,” in Gen 1:1 is inclusive of all things in the universe. God’s claim to be sovereign of the universe is dependent upon his claim to be creator. The cosmos is not dualistic, having one portion that is evil and standing apart from the creative activity of God. The universe is a unity. The one question that Henry and Ramm appear to differ upon is the question of the uniformity of natural law.

4. *Why?* The universe is created for the habitation of intelligent beings, including humankind. The purpose for creation is that God desires companionship for eternity in the future. Creation also is accomplished in such a manner that all things testify to the greatness, goodness, wisdom, and love of the almighty Creator. The role of created beings is then to “glorify God forever,” in the words of John Calvin, whose thought has

¹Henry in contrast to Ramm includes “natural evil” as part of God’s original creation. See a discussion of this below.

heavily influenced both theologians.

5. *When?* The most contentious question among evangelicals and fundamentalists in the arena of science and religion has been over the question of time in creation—the *when?* Both Ramm and Henry are agreed that the original creation cannot be limited to a period of 144 consecutive hours, that is, within a period of the six days of creation (Gen 1). Creation then has occurred over vast stretches of geological time, and the contemporary geological time-scale is probably somewhat accurate, although Henry holds the door open wide to the possibility that the timescale could have major revisions in the future. Both Ramm and Henry have categorically rejected the pre-modern view that mankind was created about 4000 B.C.¹ While Ramm allows for the possibility that mankind originated more than 100,000 years ago, Henry disallows such a possibility and places mankind's origin in the period 10,000 to 15,000 years ago.² Both theologians are agreed that the time necessitated for creation of the earth and life therein cannot be limited to six, literal, twenty-four-hour days.

In the questions requiring the highest level of thought—the *who?* and *why?*—Henry and Ramm fall in line with classic Christian thought over the last two millennia. In the questions that involve a thorough understanding of the natural world and cosmos—the

¹Or 5000 to 5500 B.C. according to the Septuagint. Ramm states: "It is admitted by practically all conservatives that *Ussher's system of dating the age of man* [to 4004 B.C.] *is not tenable.*" *CVSS*, 219, emphasis original. Henry reiterates this: "Arbitrary identification of the chronology of creation with the date 4004 B.C. . . . has reduced respect for Christianity as an authoritarian religion." Henry, "Science and Religion," 258.

²Ramm, *CVSS*, 220-230. He states: "It is problematic to interpret Adam as having been created at 200,000 B.C. or earlier." *Ibid.*, 228. Henry pegs Adam's creation at "no more than 10,000 to 15,000 years ago" or "at most at about 10,000 years ago." *GRA*, 6:141, 212.

what? how? and when?—they have definitely been influenced by modern scientific discovery and thought.

The Differences between Ramm and Henry

Their thought upon revelation

The thinking of Ramm and Henry on both revelation and creation differs more in degree, rather than in substance. Only the important differences are highlighted here in that the differences take each theologian's thought in a slightly different direction and subsequently have attracted other evangelicals to their respective positions based largely on those differences.

1. Ramm gives more credence to *general revelation* as shedding light upon special revelation than does Henry. By contrast, Henry states that general revelation can be interpreted only through the light of special revelation.

2. Ramm stresses the wide *variety of modalities* through which revelation has come to humankind, while Henry has emphasized the unity of all revelation, in that all revelation ultimately is propositional in his thinking.

3. Ramm derives his doctrine of revelation more from an *inductive* examination of a wide range of passages in Scripture, whereas Henry starts with a purely *deductive* approach to develop his doctrine of revelation, but he also engages in inductive examination in discussing the intricacies of particular issues.

4. Ramm stresses the *human aspect* of Scripture with its limitations, especially emphasizing the necessity of divine accommodation. Henry suggests that the human

aspect leaves unaffected the divine aspect of Scripture, so that the humanity of Scripture need not be a special focus, nor should accommodation be used as a major interpretative tool.¹

5. Their differences are most evident when it comes to their doctrine of inspiration, which is a corollary to their doctrine of revelation. Ramm limits *inerrancy* to the theological portions of Scripture, according to his thinking in the first part of his long career.² Henry, by contrast, always applied inerrancy to the historical and scientific statements of Scripture, as well as to the purely theological.

Many of the above differences between Ramm and Henry upon the subject of revelation can be understood in light of their differing understandings of the role of human reason in relation to revelation. Henry, while advocating rational presuppositionalism, always subordinated human reason to the written Word. His position is more that of Augustine in historic Christianity. Ramm, on the other hand, underscores the important role of human reason as a somewhat independent tool for Christian studies. His position comes closer to that of Thomas Aquinas. This understanding of reason shapes the thought of each scholar in understanding revelation in its relation to modern science. Ramm elevates the findings of modern science to the level

¹For Henry, accommodation of Scripture is important only to help illuminate and clarify certain difficult passages, but never to be used as a reason to totally reinterpret passages in a direction different from what the plain, literal meaning of Scripture would suggest.

²As noted in this research, Ramm even allowed for some errancy in the theological portions of Scripture when it came to his dialogs with Karl Barth's theology, but in the end he somewhat differs from Barth's view of an errant Bible in these words: "Barth pushes this infallible, inerrant point of reference back one stage to God himself. God is infallible, inerrant, indefectible, rational, and free from contradiction or paradox in his inner being." *After Fundamentalism*, 90. Nowhere in Ramm's writings do we find him pushing inerrancy back to only God himself.

of Scripture, as long as each is kept in its proper sphere. Henry, by contrast, subordinates modern science to Scripture.

Their thought upon creation

Because Ramm and Henry hold distinct differences on the subject of revelation, one would expect that they would likewise hold to striking differences on creation as well.

1. The two theologians differ over the importance of the concept of *uniformity* in the natural world. Ramm highlights the importance of uniformity for understanding the operations of nature and for laying the foundation for modern science.¹ By contrast, Henry is doubtful that uniformitarian thinking can shed light upon nature because of its exclusion of the divine element. Thus it is not surprising that Ramm entirely rejects catastrophism as a geological explanation, while Henry allows for a certain amount of catastrophism in geological thought, although it is probably not the reigning paradigm. It is also not surprising that Ramm gives much greater credence to the scientific endeavor than does Henry, in that modern science is founded upon the principle of the uniformity of natural law.

2. The two differ as to the amount of *evolution* that each is willing to accept within their respective models of creation. For Henry, Gen 1 erects non-negotiable constructs within which modern evolutionary thought can operate. For example,

¹While Ramm rejects the extremes of uniformitarian thinking when it is used to exclude the supernatural in its application of the critical methods to Scripture or the scientific method to nature, he finds a great deal of uniformity in nature, which he prefers calling the “regularity” of nature. *CVSS*, 20, 58-62.

according to the use of the expression of “after his kind,” there can be no new “kinds” develop through a process of evolution after the initial creation, that is, after God began his “rest.”¹ The acts of creation follow an orderly sequence, which Henry calls “graded levels of life” created “by transcendent power.”² Ramm allows for more evolution to take place than does Henry, but for him the evolution occurs only after supernatural acts of creation. This concept is called progressive creation, which by coincidence comes closest to Stephen J. Gould’s model of “punctuated equilibrium”—a contemporary geological model that views major episodes of evolution as taking place extremely rapidly, geologically speaking, interspersed with long periods of stasis.³ Henry allows for much less evolution occurring between the major acts of creation than does Ramm.

3. The two differ as to the *sequence of creation*. Ramm’s view is that of “moderate concordism,” which by definition allows for a distinctly different sequence in Gen 1 than what is found in the geological record. Henry argues that the overall sequence is the same between Gen 1 and the geological record, but it can be shown that Henry is

¹Henry asserts, “The biblical doctrine of creation ‘rest’ of God, on the other hand, asserts (1) that the creation of new *kinds* reached its climax and completion in the originally graded orders of being and life.” “Science and Scripture,” 256, emphasis original.

²Ibid., 252.

³Both Ramm and Henry comment briefly upon their fellow evangelical E. J. Carnell as to his view of “threshold evolution.” Ramm, *CVSS*, 202; and Henry, “Science and Religion,” 252. In this discussion Henry uncomprisingly rejects Carnell’s view of threshold evolution and Ramm’s view of progressive creation because of their importing too much naturalism into their models. Ibid. Carnell defines his view in the following way: “On the ‘threshold’ evolution view, there are gaps which exist between the original ‘kinds.’” Edward John Carnell, *An Introduction to Christian Apologetics: A Philosophic Defense of the Trinitarian-Theistic Faith* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1948), 239. He points out that evolutionists hold that there are still major gaps in the fossil record between groups of organisms. Gould, referred to immediately above, attempted to solve the problem of gaps by stating that evolution occurred so rapidly in the places we find gaps that it left no record of the transition between major groups of organisms. While Henry rejects both Carnell and Ramm on their views of evolutionary activity, his view allows for “micro-evolution” to occur between major acts of creation throughout geological time.

misinformed on this point.¹

4. The two differ as to both the nature and timing of *human origins*. Henry prefers to hold to a more biblically oriented date for the origin of *Homo sapiens*—about 10,000 to 15,000 years ago. Ramm is willing to allow anthropologists all of the time they need for tracing human history back to the origin of mankind, but he prefers to keep to a timescale under 200,000 years.² Ramm is not entirely clear as to whether he would accept genetic material from pre-humans becoming part of the human gene pool, but he does see a close continuity between the human body and the animal realm.³ Henry adamantly rejects the concept that there were pre-Adamites that formed part of the lineage

¹Henry quotes the great archeologist William F. Albright to the effect that modern science cannot challenge the sequence of creation in Gen 1 because of its amazing accuracy. Henry, “Science and Religion,” 275; *GRA*, 6:146. However, Henry has used an outmoded quotation, dating to the 1940s, which is no longer accurate today. Henry himself contradicts Albright’s statement by showing that in numerous ways the sequence in Gen 1 cannot be aligned with the sequence in the fossil record. See *GRA*, 6:147-148. One striking example of the discordance between Gen 1 and geology is the fact that angiosperms, or flowering plants, appear first in the fossil record in layers far above the strata where the first fishes appear, whereas Gen 1 places their origin before that of fishes (Day 3 versus Day 5).

²After Bernard Ramm ended his active career in the mid-1980s, genetic studies starting in 1987 suggested that the entire human race could be traced back to its origins in Africa a purported 160,000 years ago—an idea popularly known as the “African Eve hypothesis” nearly universally accepted by anthropologists today. Chris Stringer, “Out of Ethiopia,” *Nature* 423 (2003): 692-695. Ramm, if he were alive today, no doubt would concur with the dates being advanced for human origins. Henry, on the other hand, would reject the dates in the range of 100,000 to 200,000 years before the present in that they render the biblical genealogies obsolete and unusable. While the oldest reported finds of *Homo sapiens* skeletal remains are often debatable as to either taxonomy or dating, the oldest find for human artwork in the form of engraving suggests an origin of no more than 120,000-150,000 radiometric years ago, which still is in agreement with Ramm’s upper limit of 200,000 years for human origins. X. Gao et al., “120-150 ka Human Tooth and Ivory Engravings from Xinglongdong Cave, Three Gorges Region,” *Chinese Science Bulletin* 49 (2004): 175-180. Henry would probably reject the dating of these recent finds. (Radiometric years are based solely upon radioactive decay and may not coincide with solar years.)

³Ramm observes that Scripture has both men and animals as originating from dust, thus suggesting something in common between mankind and the animal world. *CVSS*, 229.

leading up to Adam on the basis of Gen 1:26-27, 2:7, and 1 Cor 15:40.¹

5. The *harmonizations* between Gen 1 and the geological record are quite different between Ramm and Henry. Ramm is a proponent of the “revelatory-days view,” whereby the creation days are transformed into days of revelation and Gen 1 is assigned to the genre of eschatological literature, for it is “prophecy in reverse.” Henry disdains advocating any position that would provide a scientific-theological model for harmonizing Genesis with geology, for the reason that future scientific discoveries may render such a model obsolete and thus call into question the accuracy of Scripture.²

6. As to their understanding of the *days of creation*, they differ a little, but still significantly. Ramm’s view on the days of creation being days of revelation takes on a semblance of authenticity as twenty-four-hour days. The six days are six visions, each of

¹Henry asserts: “Scripture declares man as bearer of the divine likeness to be a distinct ‘kind’ of being. The ‘dust’ into which Yahweh breathes ‘the breath of lives’ (Gen. 2:7) was clearly not a living animal.” *GRA*, 6:222. But an earlier statement opens the door to the possibility that the “dust” was animated. See “Science and Religion,” 282. Elsewhere he interjects a distinct separation between men and animals on the basis of 1 Cor 15:39-40, which makes a distinction between the “flesh of men” and the “flesh of beasts.” “Theology and Evolution,” 197.

²After stating that there would be no conflict between the two if the universe is billions of years old, if both plant and animal life required millions of years for evolution, and if the Scriptural date for man can be stretched out to a period much higher than a few thousand years, Henry concludes: “Theologians today reflect a fresh determination to let the biblical account of origins speak for itself, rather than to standardize some prevailing interpretation of the Genesis narrative.” Henry, “Theology and Evolution,” 217. He has further elaborated on this: “Since science is based on experimentation and observation, its truth is always on trial, always subject to revision, and never fully assured.” *Ibid.*, 214. Elsewhere he tells why he rejects all schemes of reconciliation: “The danger of all attempts to reconcile Genesis and science, from the standpoint of revealed theology, is the troublesome assumption that prevailing scientific theory has achieved finality.” “Science and Religion,” 275. For this reason he rejects Ramm’s attempts to reconcile the two: “By imposing the grid of empirical science on the Genesis account Ramm abstracts certain elements from the narrative as a whole that unlike other elements are to be regarded as factually significant. But this method of interpretation necessarily suspends what is or is not to be considered factual upon the changing theories of science.” *GRA*, 6:115. He spurns both “threshold evolution” and “progressive creation” on the basis that they attract contemporary scientists under “false pretenses,” because “creation” is by divine command and not by innate processes that can be scientifically analyzed. “Science and Religion,” 250-251.

which is set in the framework of a twenty-four-hour period. Henry, on the other hand, acknowledges that *yom* in Gen 1 can be interpreted as a twenty-four-hour period, but suggests that its variety of usages in the Hebrew OT makes allowance for the days as non-literal. In other words, they need not retain their literal aspect to retain their authenticity. Ramm attempts to retain a literal aspect to them, and thus appears to be closer to Scripture than is Henry on this point.

Explanation of the Differences between Ramm and Henry

Ramm is characterized as being more open to the findings of science, more apt to stress the role of reason, more enamored with the uniformity of nature (perhaps de-emphasizing the miraculous as a result), less likely to uphold inerrancy in the areas of history and science, and less likely to ascribe propositional revelation to all of special revelation, than is Henry. The reason they differ distinctly in their doctrine of creation is that they have definite differences in their doctrine of revelation. The theological underpinnings for their understanding of creation is based upon their concept of how revelation operates. Significantly their doctrine of revelation in each case rests upon a philosophical basis that determines its nature and application.

Evangelical theologians who have analyzed the contributions of Henry and Ramm note correctly that their systematic theologies rest upon quite different philosophical bases. Carl Henry advocates presuppositionalism (also known as apriorism) as his philosophical methodology for organizing his systematic theology, whereas Bernard Ramm utilizes the philosophical position of evidentialism. Henry's method is distinctly

deductive, although it may employ inductive approaches at times, and Ramm's method is definitely inductive.¹ Both approaches to evangelical theology are considered to be rational in nature, but Ramm in later years moved away from a rational/evidentialist approach and to discovery of the mystery in theology and the important role of the Holy Spirit as a source of revelation.² Ramm early on viewed his work as if he were a scientist, exploring the mine of truth in Scripture, collecting the facts of Scripture, and fashioning a theological system through a process of induction.³ The inductive approach no doubt led him to acknowledge the "humanity" of Scripture more than did Henry, and also to rely more heavily on the scientific method for discovering truth.

One possible explanation for the differences between Henry and Ramm that is touched upon only lightly in this study is the influence of Karl Barth's theology upon the thinking of Bernard Ramm. As noted in chapter 4, Henry was constantly critical of Barth's theology, warning evangelicals against adopting a Barthian or non-propositional approach to understanding Scripture. To accept such would have been the death knell of evangelicalism. Ramm in his later years defended Barth as far as his methodology is

¹Grenz, *Renewing the Center*, 96, 103-104, 114-115.

²According to Grenz, Ramm's later experience moved away from the strictly evidentialistic apologetics of his earlier years and to a less rationalist position for evangelicalism: "Ramm, in contrast, sought to move evangelical theology beyond rationalism, which he feared held it captive, and restore to it a profound sense of the mystery of revelation." *Ibid.*, 115. An evidence of this theological movement is Ramm's book, *The Witness of the Spirit* (1959).

³One of the finest explications of the difference between the inductive and deductive approach among evangelicals is that of Peter M. Van Bemmelen, "Issues in Biblical Inspiration: Sanday and Warfield." William Sanday as a proponent of the inductive approach was more likely to be enamored with higher critical approaches to Scripture than his counterpart, Benjamin B. Warfield, who followed largely the deductive approach. Warfield was a defender of strict inerrancy, much in the fashion of Henry, and Sanday was not a believer in inerrancy. Ramm's position is definitely closer to Sanday's than to Warfield's, even though he cited Warfield approvingly.

concerned in his book *After Fundamentalism* (1983). Could this defense of Barth have driven a wedge between Ramm and Henry? Ramm's open defense of Barth came only late in his career, so that it was not a determining factor in the differences between Ramm and Henry that were clearly in evidence as soon as Henry published his "Science and Religion" in 1957. While one evaluator of Ramm's relationship to Barth characterized Ramm's shift as a "major shift,"¹ another evaluation of Ramm's late-career theological shifts did not find any major change in Ramm's thinking on science and religion as a result of Barthian thinking or adopting a new theological paradigm.²

Ramm set forth Barth's theology as an example of one who has upheld orthodox theological positions and has also come to terms with issues raised by the Enlightenment. Ramm could have used Barth's emphasis upon Christology as a means of offering a viable harmonist position between Gen 1 and the findings of science, but he was leery of Barth's Christology, pronouncing it as "over-burdened christology."³ Further study certainly is merited on the Christological nature of Gen 1 in keeping with the general evangelical emphasis on the trinitarian aspect of the doctrines of creation and revelation.

¹Mohler, "Bernard Ramm: Karl Barth and the Future of American Evangelicalism," 39.

²Clark Pinnock addresses this question: "Did Ramm's mind change on this matter over the years? Perhaps it did in the area of exegetical liberties he allowed, but not fundamentally." Pinnock, "Bernard Ramm: Postfundamentalist Coming to Terms with Modernity," 23. If Ramm's shift in the arena of science and religion was not significant, as postulated by Pinnock, then probably his shift with regard to Barth's theology was not as significant as Mohler makes it out to be.

³By charging Barth as having an "overburdened christology," Ramm feels that Barth's emphasis on the New Testament goes too far when it finds Christology in the slightest of phrases and in fact every doctrine of theology. Ramm, *After Fundamentalism*, 203. Nevertheless, Ramm recommends Barth as a model for his Christological emphasis on Scripture: "Evangelicals ought to be grateful to Barth and Brunner for making it clear that revelation and its chief product, Holy Scripture, are to be understood and interpreted christologically." Ramm, "How Does Revelation Occur?" 20.

Conclusions

Two major conclusions have been reached in this study on the thought of Bernard Ramm and Carl Henry on revelation and creation. First, one of the major reasons for the theological differences between these two theologians, even though they have much in common as the thought leaders of the neo-evangelical movement, is that they operate from different philosophical and methodological premises. This study finds that their doctrine of creation has been heavily influenced by their doctrine of revelation, and in turn their respective understandings of revelation follow different directions because Henry's methodology is rational presuppositionalism and Ramm's is evidentialism. The former is largely deductive and the latter inductive. Ramm's use of the inductive method places his thought much closer to the scientific method and makes him more willing to acknowledge the humanity of Scripture.

Second, this study has raised the significant question of why neither Ramm nor Henry hold to a literal interpretation of the days of creation when their concept of revelation views the earliest chapters of Genesis as historical and their hermeneutical approach to Scripture is to pursue its literal meaning, unless context and extrabiblical considerations dictate otherwise. A thorough survey of contemporary thought on the interpretation of the term "day" (Heb. *yom*) in Gen 1, including studies from lexicons, Bible dictionaries, systematic theologies, and Bible commentaries, uncovers the fact that by far the predominant view within scholarship is to interpret the six days of creation as normal, twenty-four-hour days. This is true, whether the perspective of the contemporary

scholar is liberal or conservative; Protestant, Catholic, or Jewish. The one exception to this trend is that the majority of the neo-evangelical theologians of the last sixty years and the leading evangelical theologians of the last two centuries have devised non-literal interpretations for the days of creation.

One can suggest a variety of possible reasons why neo-evangelicals in general and Carl F. H. Henry and Bernard Ramm in particular have adopted non-literal interpretations of the creation days while treating the narrative of Gen 1 as literal and historical.

Evangelicalism in attempting to come to terms with the Enlightenment has adopted a form of rational thinking and has had a high view of the importance of scientific pursuits in discovering truth. But at the same time its concept of revelation and inspiration does not allow the authority of science to be exalted above that of Scripture. Yet when it comes to a consideration of the nature of creation days, it appears that science is given final consideration in determining the length of those days.

Perhaps evangelicalism has allowed the testimony of general revelation to influence its understanding of Scripture in line with Enlightenment thinking, but in the thought of Carl Henry and many others general revelation can only be understood in the light of special revelation. Or perhaps evangelicalism's allowing the existence of natural evil and death in the animal world before the fall of mankind has paved the way for the adoption of long geological ages with its death and carnage in the natural world. This may have certainly been one factor for facilitating the acceptance of a long geological

time scale, but not the leading factor.¹

Evangelicalism's emphasis on the uniformity of nature and the validity of natural laws may have led it to adopt the many and varied dating methods for dating the earth and its life, all of which are premised upon the uniformity of nature. The converse of this statement is that those who reject the uniformity of nature would then be more apt to accept the literal nature of the creation days. But the converse may not necessarily be true in all cases.

This study has concluded that the evangelical understanding of revelation as a tightly controlled, divine process by which an authoritative body of inspired writings has come into existence has led to the desire to bring about absolute harmony between Scripture and science. In other words, evangelicals and their intellectual forefathers have stated that since the world of nature and the written Word have the same divine Author, they must agree. To produce agreement, the days of creation have been reinterpreted metaphorically, yet scientifically. Inerrancy, which is a corollary to the doctrine of revelation, has mandated some type of interpretation that brings harmony between the findings of science and the understanding of Scripture. Evangelicalism has followed in the path of concordism, as exemplified in the writings of Augustine, Aquinas, and Francis Bacon, with its emphasis on having science be a final determinant of one's interpretation

¹Evangelicalism is heavily indebted to the thought of John Calvin, who once wrote that death and predation among animals "has sprung from the sinfulness of man," and thus would postdate Adam's fall. John Calvin, *Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Isaiah* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1948), 1:383. Calvin's influence would have propelled evangelicals in the direction of a short chronology for the fossil record had geological science gone that direction. Thus, the evangelical belief that animal death can predate the fall of mankind is best understood as not the *cause* of the acceptance of the long geological ages, but the *result* of the acceptance of such.

of Gen 1.¹ The theological roots of concordism are centered in inerrancy, for inerrancy is the operating premise of concordism.² The alternative to concordism is to have either a fallible account of how and when creation happened or an account that is considered to be strictly theological and not scientific in nature.³

¹An excellent critique of concordism as advocated by leading Christian thinkers, including Augustine and Aquinas, is Stanley L. Jaki, *Genesis 1 through the Ages*, yet his study lacks critiques of modern-day concordism. Two types of concordism exist today: the one as advocated by evangelicals and others who uphold inerrancy suggests that the Bible can be “reinterpreted” to bring about harmony with modern science, and the other advocated by “scientific creationists” and other fundamentalists proposes that modern science can be “reinterpreted” to fit biblical constraints. In both cases the starting premise for concordism is inerrancy. For the scientific creationist approach, see Henry M. Morris, *History of Modern Creationism* (San Diego: Master Book Publishers, 1984), and idem, ed, *Scientific Creationism* (El Cajon, CA: Master Books, 1974). For a critique of twentieth-century creationism, see Ronald L Numbers, *The Creationists*.

²Bruce Vawter summarizes accurately the relationship between the two: “Prompted by the laudable intention of defending the inerrancy of Scriptures, another form of interpretation [of Gen 1], called **concordism**, appeared with the advent of modern scientific discovery. Concordism tried to safeguard inerrancy without turning its back on indubitable scientific facts by positing a harmony between biblical and scientific thought. That is to say, the six ‘days’ of Gn in this explanation, are actually the geological periods, perhaps of millions of years, during which the earth was gradually formed. The ‘waters above the earth’ are the mists in the clouds, and so forth. It should be obvious that concordism satisfies neither science nor Gn. There are not six geological periods, but four, and this is but one of the minor discordances between the scientific view of the universe and that of Gn.” B. Vawter, “Genesis,” *A New Catholic Commentary on Holy Scripture* (London: Thomas Nelson, 1969), 176. Vawter proceeds further by discussing whether Genesis has been written to address modern science or to “anticipate” its discoveries. *Ibid.*, 176-177.

³Patterson in his analysis of the scientific aspects of Ramm’s writings proposes that Gen 1’s “purpose is basically theological rather than scientific.” Bob E. Patterson, “Modern Science and Contemporary Biblical Interpretation: Ramm’s Contribution,” 63. He faults “progressive creationism” as advocated by Ramm and others for turning “Gen 1 into a treatise in science to be evaluated, judged, and tested by science,” and he faults “scientific creationism” for transforming Gen 1 into a scientific textbook: “Thus, both the skeptical naturalist and the devout ‘Bible science’ student agree that Gen 1 should be interpreted as science or ‘literal’ history. And sadly, both have reduced religious meaning to scientific meaning. Both give the biblical text a secular reading. Both snatch Gen 1 from its original context of meaning, treating it like a manual on Creation. And both are misguided—the naturalist, by rejecting biblical statements as scientifically inaccurate, and the ‘Bible science’ student by trying to defend Gen 1 as a textbook in modern science.” *Ibid.*, 66, 63. Even though both Ramm and Henry state that Genesis is not a textbook on science, they treat it as a book of science. Hence, its scientific statements ought not only to agree with the findings of modern science but to be interpreted in light of contemporary science. This is known as “concordism.” Clark Pinnock praises Ramm for shifting away from the concordism of his earlier years: “I see him [Ramm] in the wisdom of his advancing years to be moving away from strong verification in apologetics, away from concordism with science in theological matters, and away from an emphasis on inerrancy in biblical authority. These changes may be seen as a mellowing with age and as growth in grace.” Pinnock, “Bernard Ramm: Postfundamentalist Coming to Terms with Modernity,” 26.

Two outgrowths of this study can be derived to serve as guidelines for evangelicals in their future quest to find harmony between science and Scripture, between geology and Genesis, as they profit from the thinking of both Ramm and Henry. First, the reticence of Carl Henry to offer any model of harmonization between science and Scripture should serve as a cautionary note to all evangelical scholars. His reasoning is that any model that ties Scripture that closely to science is putting the doctrine of inspiration at great risk. As soon as scientific findings once employed to verify Scripture are modified or even proven obsolete, then the accuracy of Scripture is immediately called into question.¹ An additional reason that can be advanced for being cautious in advocating a model for harmonization is that our understanding of Scripture is constantly changing as well. New insights then can lead to new models, meriting caution on the part of the harmonist. But the failure to address ways to bring about harmony also can lead to uncertainty in terms of evangelical theology.

Second, Bernard Ramm's realization that the Genesis account of origins does not closely parallel the geological sequence ought to serve a cautionary note to evangelicals before the adoption of any interpretative paradigm for harmonizing science with Scripture. The evidence of his reluctance to find the geological sequence in Gen 1 is the fact that he labels his view as "moderate concordism." He has performed a service to

¹An example of this could be the attempt to harmonize Gen 1:1 with the "big bang" model in modern cosmology. In that case, if astronomy should totally abandon the big bang model, then it leaves Gen 1 as being scientifically indefensible when the big bang has been melded with Genesis cosmology.

evangelicalism in pointing out the deficiencies of the day-age interpretation of Gen 1.¹

His revelatory-days view of creation has certain plausibility in that it recognizes the literal aspect of the creation days, but as Carl Henry and other evangelicals subsequently have pointed out, the one weakness of Ramm's theory "is that exegesis will not sustain the substitution of the notion that 'God showed' (or revealed) for the reading 'God made.'"²

If the day-age theory for harmonizing Genesis with modern science is inadequate and unsatisfactory according to the two prominent founders of modern evangelicalism, Bernard Ramm and Carl Henry, and if the revelatory-days view likewise has its weaknesses while on the positive side it holds more closely to the literal days view, then the most satisfactory solution for evangelicals is to start with the proposition that the natural interpretation for the creation days is that they are twenty-four-hour days in constructing a paradigm that harmonizes Genesis and modern scientific discovery. The literalness of the seven creation days then becomes the fundamental or starting premise for establishing the time dimension for an evangelical doctrine of creation as well as an evangelical philosophy of history.³ This can be done within the evangelical convictions

¹Ramm's critique of the day-age interpretation is fourfold: (1) The Gen 1 record is lacking in scientific detail, as for example, its failure to include gymnosperms and other non-angiosperms on the third day of creation. (2) The creation account is "not strictly chronological," but is more logical and topical in nature. (3) The creation account has no modern science; for example, no "Euclidian or Riemannian space in the word *firmament*." (4) The Hebrew word *yom* is not equivalent to a geological era: "We are not at present persuaded that it can be stretched so as to mean *period* or *epoch* or *age*, as such terms are used in geology." *CVSS*, 151, emphasis original. Carl Henry's critique of the day-age view is nearly identical to Ramm's. See "Science and Religion," 277.

²*Ibid.*, 276.

³The "day" is the essential building block for reconstructing the Biblical understanding of time, not the idea of "hour," which is non-existent in the OT, according to Roger T. Beckwith, *Calendar and Chronology, Jewish and Christian: Biblical, Intertestamental and Patristic Studies* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1996), 1-9; and Simon J. DeVries, *Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow: Time, and History in the Old*

that the creation accounts are historical in nature, and that the creation itself took place as a result of acts of divine fiat and not through a totally naturalistic process.

Recommendations for Further Study

The conclusion that the creation days are best interpreted as literal days opens the door for many further studies from an evangelical viewpoint. Instead of being the end of discussion on the topic, it ought to be the beginning of discussion. One of the issues raised but not settled in this dissertation is whether any portion of Scripture can be considered authoritative in the realm of scientific inquiry. Methodological naturalism by definition excludes the question of deity and the role of supernaturalism in the pursuit of science, and thus it would exclude writings from the realm of scientific inquiry purporting to be by or about a divine Being. This dissertation has not attempted to settle the question of whether the Bible can be considered scientific in any sense of the word. Biblical studies, I believe, do have something important to say in the realm of a philosophy of science, which includes the topic of origins. Bernard Ramm and other evangelicals have taken the position that the Bible can provide insights only into the *who* and the *why* of

Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975), 39-53. The concept of a "week" ending with a sanctified "day" or "Sabbath" can be traced back to Creation in Gen 1 and 2, even though allusions to the actual observance of the Sabbath are first referenced in Exod 16, according to Beckwith, *Calendar and Chronology, Jewish and Christian*, 10-13. The concept of creation in six days is the foundation stone for a biblically-based philosophy of history. But, as Rushdoony observes, "the Biblical philosophy of history is clearly and irrevocably at odds with the modern faith. . . . Creation is described by all of Scripture as a creative *act* of God, in six days, and thus it must be understood as *act, not process*. Every attempt to read process into the creation account, to turn the days into ages and make room for 'scientific' interpretations, is a surrender to process philosophies and an abandonment of the sovereignty of God." Rousas J. Rushdoony, *The Biblical Philosophy of History* (Nutley, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1977), 3, emphasis original. Carl Henry has correctly noted that the influences of classical Greek thought upon early Christianity and Darwinian evolutionary theory upon modern Christianity have resulted in a secularized view of time, devoid of divine supervision, and has blurred the distinction between time and eternity. Carl F. H. Henry, "Time," *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, 2nd ed., 1201-1202.

origins, not the *what*, the *how*, and the *when*. This position needs further evaluation.

Related to the question of how much science can be found in Scripture is the question of whether the science of Scripture is fully ancient, or both ancient and modern. And if modern, does the Bible offer insights into scientific discovery by means of what has been called “anticipatory science”? Fundamentalists, for example, have found purported references to atomic energy in the Bible. Scrutinizing study needs to be made of these and related claims to determine if there is any anticipatory science in Scripture. Bernard Ramm’s view that Gen 1 depicts visions given for the purpose of unveiling the geological history of the past to a largely illiterate people would seem to make allowance that the Bible would give insights into modern geological studies or perhaps even in the field of nuclear physics, but he strongly rejects the idea that the Bible anticipates modern scientific discoveries.¹ Carl Henry also disavows that there is any astronomy, cosmology, or geology (including “Flood geology”) to be found in the Bible.²

Those who find anticipatory science in the Bible are generally dispensationalists

¹While Ramm discovers in Genesis the broad outlines of geological history, he disallows it from providing us with any details of modern science. “We have in Gen. I a broad, general sketch of creation. To try to prove minute points of geology, biology, botany or anthropology from it is therefore impossible and should not be attempted.” *CVSS*, 36. Ramm has done more than perhaps any other evangelical author to counteract the claims of those advocating anticipatory science. See his critiques in *CVSS*, 48, 65, 86-94, 151; *Protestant Biblical Interpretation*, 135, 211-212; and *After Fundamentalism*, 44, 152-153.

²Henry consistently views the Bible as not teaching the sciences or serving as a textbook of science. “The Scriptures are not a textbook on cosmology, history or psychology.” *GRA*, 4:251. “Augustine says that the Spirit of God did not intend to teach astronomy through the biblical writers.” *Ibid.*, 4:456. “Nor does the doctrine of a universal flood demand flood geology.” *Ibid.*, 6:226. “The subject of Genesis is not quarks or quasars, but God.” *Ibid.*, 6:110. “If we turn to Genesis mainly for hidden information about geological ages we shall miss out on the main drama of the ages.” *Ibid.*, 6:11. This latter statement appears to be a variation of the oft-repeated statement by reconcilers of Genesis and geology to the effect that the subject of the Bible is not “the ages of the rocks,” but “the Rock of ages.” Ramm supports these concepts in his summarization of Charles Hodge’s thought on the Bible and science: “The authors of Holy Scripture were children of their times and knew nothing of modern astronomy, physics, geology, or biology.” *After Fundamentalism*, 44.

or at least firm believers in the concept that the Bible can offer accurate details of earthly events centuries or even millennia in advance. This opens the door to study the relationship between a firm belief in the literal interpretation of prophecy, such as found in dispensationalism, and an unwavering belief in the literalness of the six creation days, during which time the entire cosmos was brought into existence, according to contemporary fundamentalist thought. A preliminary survey of those who hold to the literal six days uncovers the fact that most dispensationalists who have a detailed timetable for earthly events outlined in the books of Daniel and Revelation are advocates for the literal days position for creation. Much more research needs to be done on this relationship to determine why this is so. One factor that cannot be overlooked is the question of one's view of revelation and inspiration. A strictly verbal form of inspiration that emphasizes the divine element and largely eliminates the human element often leads to a quite literal interpretation of the Apocalypse as an accurate predictor of present-day and future events. Is there a close connection between a literal view of prophetic interpretation and a literal view of Gen 1, and if so, why? Except for Bernard Ramm and a scant number of evangelicals, Gen 1 is not generally labeled as prophetic literature.¹

Closely connected to this is the question of chronology. In general, dispensationalists who place heavy reliance upon the accuracy of Bible chronology throughout the OT period will also defend the accuracy of the Gen 1 account and the

¹Ramm calls Gen 1 "prophecy in reverse." *After Fundamentalism*, 84. Henry, on the other hand, criticizes Ramm for this position by pointing out that "one weakness of the theory is that exegesis will not sustain the substitution of the notion that 'God showed' (or revealed) for the reading 'God made.'" "Science and Religion," 276. Henry has a valid concern here.

literalness of the days of creation.¹ Stating this in the converse, those who hold that the Bible has nothing important to say about the age of the earth also allow for the days to be symbolic, or if literal to be literary days, not historical days. Further exploration needs to be done to determine whether this is so and then why it is so. Carl Henry would be a good case study for this relationship in that he argues for the creation days being indeterminate (or non-literal) in length and the Bible's chronology non-specific as to its date for creation and early events in history.²

The relationship between the days of creation and Flood geology merits further inquiry. Is Flood geology the only scientific, rational means for holding to six literal, consecutive, twenty-four-hour days for the entire work of creation? If the Noachian Flood indeed was the primary agent for producing the bulk of the geological record, then it becomes a convenient means of reducing the age of the earth into a period of a few thousand years. And if the age of the earth is reduced from millions or even billions to thousands of years, then the Creation event could be limited to a period of 144 hours. On the other hand, would it be possible to discover a new scientifically defensible approach to the days of creation, acknowledging their literal, historical nature, and yet not rely upon

¹For example, Henry M. Morris, *The Genesis Record: A Scientific and Devotional Commentary on the Book of Beginnings* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1976), 42-46, 53-81, 153-162, 278-290.

²Henry proposes that "modern technological precision in reporting statistics and measurements" and "conformity to modern historiographic method in reporting genealogies and other historical data" is not mandated by inerrancy. *GRA*, 4:201. This echoes the sentiments of Ramm, who finds imprecision, not precision, in the biblical use of numbers: "The *mathematics* and *measuring systems* of the Bible are those of that prescientific era and not modern scientific methods of counting and measuring. Numbers were frequently used in the same way we use the words *many*, *some*, or *few*." *CVSS*, 51, emphasis original. He apparently supports the idea proposed by others that the Genesis genealogies have gaps within them. *Ibid.*, 159, 227. Likewise Henry argues that there is no chronology in Gen 1-11 on the basis of the presence of genealogical gaps: "Scripture gives no detailed chronology for the period Genesis 1-11; the genealogies are selective rather than complete." *GRA*, 6:227.

the uncertainties of Flood geology?¹

Even if one is not able to legitimize the detailed approach by dispensationalists to understanding both the Apocalypse and the early chapters of Genesis, one can study the themes of protology and eschatology in the Bible as a legitimate theological pursuit. This needs further work from an evangelical standpoint. Many studies have been done showing their interrelationship,² but it is not apparent whether doctoral-level studies have concentrated on this task, or whether many evangelical theologians have devoted themselves to this task. Overall, evangelical theology has made significant strides since the middle of the last century towards gaining a better understanding of the great doctrines of creation and revelation and how they intersect.

And finally the relationship between protology and Christology, or between the doctrines of creation and redemption, can offer a fruitful field for additional study for evangelicals. Scholars have long recognized that the themes of creation and redemption are inseparably woven throughout the Pentateuch³ and the rest of the OT.⁴

¹Henry's warning that as soon as one attaches a scientific model to support one's theological position one is vulnerable to the discrediting of Scripture when science changes, certainly applies to Flood geology. If many important aspects of Flood geology continue to be unsubstantiated by geological research, then this calls into question the scientific nature of Scriptural statements on both Creation and the Flood as far as the theology of creation intersecting the theology of the Flood is concerned. Modern science would need a major future paradigm shift to align itself more closely with catastrophism and Flood geology. Until that time, whenever geological science points to apparent existing weaknesses in Flood geology it is also pointing to potential shortcomings in current evangelical interpretations of the Flood, if the theology of the Flood is too closely united with the geology of the Flood within a concordist model. This is true whether the Flood itself is perceived as local or universal.

²For example, Claus Westermann, *Beginning and End in the Bible* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1972); and John T. Carroll, "Creation and Apocalypse," in *God Who Creates*, 251-260.

³A doctoral study on this topic is Se Young Roh, "Creation and Redemption in Priestly Theology" (Ph.D. dissertation, Drew University, 1991).

⁴Bernhard W. Anderson, ed., *Creation in the Old Testament* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984).

Evangelicalism can profit from a closer examination of the relationship between the two doctrines in the hopes of clarifying certain issues unique to evangelicalism. Bernard Ramm has proposed that evangelicals need to recognize the full range of the humanity of Scripture while yet upholding its divine aspect.¹ Likewise, the full humanity of the scriptural record of creation ought to be taken into consideration in attempting to understand the relevancy of Gen 1 and 2 for developing a Christian world view in today's world. This involves looking at the creation records in light of the Gospel records. If the Gospel narratives are treated as historical narrative, outlining the earthly acts of the Creator in human flesh, then it would be incongruous to treat the great acts of the Creator in his work of creation as mythological, and not historical.² Many other important implications can be explored and pursued when evangelicalism realizes the close ties that exist between redemption and creation and between methodologies applied to the Gospel accounts and the creation stories.³ Scripture has explicitly tied the two inspired accounts

¹Late in his career Ramm was willing to define the creation account as "saga" which he distinguished from "myth." *After Fundamentalism*, 83, 86. However, the distinction between saga and myth is not that clear upon scrutinizing his definitions.

²The mythological interpretation of the incarnation is incompatible with evangelical theology, as per Millard J. Erickson, *The Word Became Flesh* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1991), 346-358.

³Scholars tackling the synoptic problem of the four Gospels and attempting to resolve the apparent differences between the Gospels generally do not usually examine the "two" creation accounts (Gen 1:1-2:4a; Gen 2:4b-25) with the same methods and tools in mind. One challenge confronting evangelicals is to explain the differences in sequence between Gen 1 and Gen 2, paralleling the challenges of explaining the differences in sequence in the four Gospels. For example, a leading argument against the view that the days of creation are literal is the difficulty in harmonizing all the activities of Gen 2 with the sixth day of creation in Gen 1. See Archer, "A Response to the Trustworthiness of Scripture in Areas Relating to Natural Science," 328-329. A recent evangelical study that offers a potentially useful hermeneutical methodology for correlating Christology and creation is Jimmy McMath Givens, "Christ as Hermeneutical Referent: An Analysis of the Extension of Christological Motifs within the Theologies of A. H. Strong, E. Y. Mullins, and W. T. Conner" (Ph.D. dissertation, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2000). One objection to linking the two doctrines is that creation has its central roots in the OT, while Christology as a trinitarian concept has its central roots in the NT; thus one is imposing Christology on the record of Gen 1. To

together: “In the beginning God created. . . .” (Gen 1:1). “In the beginning was the Word. . . .” (John 1:1).

counter this objection one is referred to Brent A. Strawn, “And Theses Three Are One: A Trinitarian Critique of Christological Approaches to the Old Testament,” *Perspectives in Religious Studies* 31 (2004): 191-210. The methodology for a proper evangelical approach to Christology that should prove most helpful for establishing a valid approach to creation is that articulated by Millard J. Erickson, who finds that the classical and neo-orthodox Christologies emphasize the divine aspect of Christ (the “Christ of faith”) to the exclusion of his humanity. He also faults the Christology of Wolfhart Pannenberg, who excludes the divinity of Christ as the starting point in developing a Christology. His proposal for a third approach, that of recognizing the *full* humanity and *full* divinity of Christ, holds important implications for understanding the creation narratives of Gen 1 and 2. Rather than following the fideistic approach of the first model or the Thomistic approach of the second model, Erickson finds that the Augustinian approach, where “faith precedes but does not remain permanently independent of reason,” is the best approach for a third model. Millard J. Erickson, “Christology from Above and Christology from Below: A Study of Contrasting Methodologies,” in *Perspectives on Evangelical Theology*, ed. Kenneth S. Kantzer and Stanley N. Gundry (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1979), 54. In evangelical science and religion issues Carl F. H. Henry would represent the “fideistic model” and Bernard Ramm the “Thomistic model.” A *via tertia* would be the “Augustinian model,” proposed by Erickson and applied to the creation accounts, whereby both the divine and human aspects of those accounts will be fully recognized and appreciated.

APPENDIX A

STRATEGIES FOR HARMONIZING GENESIS AND GEOLOGY¹

A. Strict concordism—young earth, young universe (known as “scientific creationism”)

1. Beliefs

- a. Days of creation literal, consecutive, 24-hour days
- b. Geological time scale compressed by Flood geology (or other catastrophism) to a time frame between 6,000 and 25,000 years for history since creation
- c. In a general sense, Genesis treated as a scientific textbook and is always accurate when touching upon natural science
- d. Authority of Genesis placed above the authority of science

2. Examples

Henry M. Morris, *The Genesis Record* (1976), the designated founder of the modern creationist movement and the founder/president of the Institute of Creation Research (San Diego)

John C. Whitcomb, *The Early Earth* (1986), one of the leaders along with Henry Morris of the modern Flood geology movement

Charles Ryrie, *Basic Theology* (1986), heavily influenced by Henry Morris

Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (1941), heavily influenced by George McCready Price

Alfred Rehwinkel, *The Wonders of Creation* (1974), a Lutheran scholar indebted to Price

Noel Weeks, *The Sufficiency of Scripture* (1988), heavily influenced by Henry Morris

B. Strict concordism—old universe, possible old earth, young life (also known as “scientific creationism”)

1. Beliefs

- a. Days of creation literal, consecutive, 24-hour days
- b. Geological time scale for the Phanerozoic compressed by Flood

geology (or other catastrophism) to a time frame between 6,000 and 25,000 years for history since creation

- c. Stars and galaxies created prior to the six days creation
- c. Scriptures silent upon the question of whether the earth in its raw state (“without form and void”) may have existed for millions of years
- c. Neither Genesis nor the rest of Scripture treated as a scientific textbook, but all Biblical statements on science are accurate
- d. Authority of Genesis placed above the authority of science

2. Examples²

- a. C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *The Pentateuch* (1870), 1:47-49, 58-59
- b. George McCready Price, author of 22 books on geology and evolution, and science teacher who revived Flood geology, first taught by “Scriptural geologists” in the period 1820-1840
- c. Harold W. Clark, *Fossils, Flood, and Fire* (1968), who initiated the “ecological zonation theory” of Flood geology
- d. Harold G. Coffin, *Origin by Design* (1983), an updating of Clark’s view
- e. Ariel A. Roth, *Origins: Linking Science and Scripture* (1998), esp. chap. 19, an updating of Coffin’s view
- f. E. H. Andrews, *From Nothing to Nature* (1978), allowing an old earth.
- g. Gerhard F. Hasel, *The Bible Translator* 22 (1971): 154-167, who finds chaos to have been created prior to Day 1
- h. Richard M. Davidson, *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* 14, 1 (2003): 4-43
- i. Jacques B. Doukhan, *Origins*, no. 55 (2004): 12-33
- j. John T. Baldwin, Randall W. Younker, Norman R. Gulley, Edward Zinke, and Martin Hanna, according to statement in *Creation, Catastrophe, and Calvary* (2000).²

C. Strict concordism—old earth, old life (known as “progressive creationism”)

1. Beliefs

- a. Days of creation may or may not be literal, but are in strict chronological order
- b. Geological time frame of multiplied millions of years accepted as generally correct
- c. Genesis treated as scientifically correct and precise, and is understood as describing the process of creation and subsequent earth history accurately
- d. Genesis not necessarily a scientific textbook, although it gives correct geological information only when it addresses scientific issues

- e. Authority of science and the Bible equal in their own spheres, and each helps to interpret (or re-interpret) the other

2. Examples

- Newman and Eckelmann, *Genesis One and the Origin of the Earth* (1977), who insert millions of years between each of the 24-hour days
- Pattle Pun, *Evolution: Nature and Scripture in Conflict?* (1982), who bases his day-age views on those advocated by J. Oliver Buswell
- Gleason Archer, *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction* (1974), with a lengthy section arguing for the day-age theory
- Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary* (1873), vol. 1, advocating the gap theory whereby the days are literal, but a gap of millions of years must be inserted between Gen 1:1 and 1:3
- Henry Thiessen, *Introductory Lectures in Systematic Theology* (1949), who adopts the gap theory because the day-age view may lead to theistic evolution
- Hugh Ross, *The Fingerprint of God: Recent Scientific Discoveries Reveal the Unmistakable Identity of the Creator* (1991, 2nd ed.), an astrophysicist who harmonizes Gen 1 with "big bang" cosmology
- John H. Sailhamer, *Genesis Unbound: A Provocative New Look at the Creation Account* (1996), who sees the days as literal, but creation as local, not cosmic

D. Moderate or broad concordism (also known as "progressive creationism")

1. Beliefs

- a. Creation over long periods of time, but the days of creation in Gen 1 may be revelatory days, anthropological days, fiat days, literary days, liturgical days, or some other type of figurative days
- b. The order of creation not chronological, thus only a broad correspondence exists between Genesis and geology
- c. After each of the acts of creation, a certain amount of evolution has occurred
- d. Genesis not a textbook of science, for it gives only the "who" and "why" of creation, while science gives the "what" and "how"
- e. Characterized by the "double revelation" theory with science and the Bible on equality, although in two separate spheres; the Bible having final authority in the religious sphere and science final authority in the scientific realm

2. Examples

- Bernard Ramm**, *The Christian View of Science and Scripture* (1954), the main advocate among evangelicals of broad concordism and progressive creationism
- P. J. Wiseman**, *Creation Revealed in Six Days* (1949), Wiseman and Ramm being the most influential evangelicals in advocating the revelatory-days view
- Henri Blocher**, *In the Beginning* (1984), who has promoted the view that Genesis is a chronological framework for the creation narrative and the days are literary, not literal
- Nicholas Ridderbos**, *Is There a Conflict between Genesis 1 and Natural Science?* (1957), who was one of the earliest advocates of this framework view among evangelicals
- D. F. Payne**, *Genesis One Reconsidered* (1964), who understands the days as dramatic or liturgical
- Dale Moody**, *The Word of Truth* (1981), an advocate of the framework view of Gen 1, whereby the days of creation merely provide a literary structure
- V. P. Hamilton**, *The Book of Genesis* (1990), vol. 1, p. 55—viewing the days of creation as being both literary and literal
- W. Brueggeman**, *Genesis* (1982), p. 22—Gen 1 “a poetic narrative...for liturgical usage”

E. Idealistic or indeterminate concordism

1. Beliefs

- a. The days of creation may or may not be literal (not possible to settle the issue with certainty) and the age of the earth may be young, but most likely old
- b. Offers a philosophy of science based upon Scripture that corrects the evolutionary thinking of modern geology, but Scripture not a scientific textbook; concordance found on the philosophical level
- c. Important not to link science and the Bible too closely because science always is changing; Biblical faith always immune from any attacks of science and is a corrective to false views in science in regards to origins
- d. Science and Scripture are usually on par, but when they overlap and there is conflict, preference given to Scripture to resolve it

2. Examples

- Carl F. H. Henry**, *God, Revelation, and Authority*, vol. 6 (1983), who is a harmonist, but finds problems with the traditional models of concordism

Francis Schaeffer, *Genesis in Space and Time* (1972), not sure whether the days are literal or figurative, but opposed to macroevolution

E. A. Litton, *Introduction to Dogmatic Theology* (1912), proponent of fiat creationism, although not sure whether the days are literal or figurative

Lewis Sperry Chafer, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 6 (1948), founder of Dallas Theological Seminary, who is not sure whether the days are literal

F. Non-concordism (generally known as “theistic evolution”)

1. Beliefs

- a. The days of creation usually considered to be literal, but Gen 1-3 definitely not considered to be historical
- b. By means of historical-critical studies, Gen 1 interpreted as saga, myth, poetry, epic, allegory, or straight theology, but not history or science
- c. The geological time scale accepted as normative without questioning it
- d. Science and theology in two totally separate spheres, not intersecting, so that no need exists for bringing about harmony or concord between the two
- e. Theistic evolution accepted with only minor reservations—humankind usually considered a product of divine intervention, although not created ex nihilo
- f. Only initial creation occurring as fiat and instantaneous; all else is process
- g. Interprets Gen 1-11 in light of ancient Near Eastern cosmologies

2. Examples

John Leith, *Basic Christian Doctrine* (1993), advancing the concept that the Bible is not science or history, but theology

Helmut Thielicke, *Evangelical Faith* (1974), vol. 1, with a theistic evolutionary position

James Barr, *Fundamentalism* (1978) and *Beyond Fundamentalism* (1984), who considers Gen 1 to be legend or myth

Van Till, Snow, Stek, and Young, *Portraits of Creation* (1990), who oppose all forms of concordism (see especially p. 27, n. 2 in their work)

Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, vol. 3, pt. 1, p. 81-84, where he describes Gen 1 as “saga”—“a pre-historical reality of history which is enacted once and for all within the confines of space and time;” not “legend” or “fairy tales”

Conrad Hyers, *The Meaning of Creation: Genesis and Modern Science* (1984), describing Gen 1 as myth

Gerhard von Rad, *Genesis* (1961), p. 61—"it is not myth and not saga, but Priestly doctrine, i.e., ancient, sacred knowledge, preserved and handed on by many generations of priests"

¹ For helpful discussions of the various strategies or schemes for harmonizing Genesis and geology see the following: Warren H. Johns, "Strategies for Origins," *Ministry*, May 1981: 26-28; Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1985), 380-382; Richard T. Wright, *Biology through the Eyes of Faith* (San Francisco: Harper and Row Publishers, 1989), 76-92; Davis A. Young, "Genesis: Neither More nor Less," *Eternity* May 1982: 14-19; Charles F. Baker, *A Dispensational Theology* (Grand Rapids: Grace Bible College, 1971), 170-182; Merrill F. Unger, *Unger's Bible Dictionary* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1960), 225-226; Bruce Demarest and Gordon Lewis, *Integrative Theology* (1987), 2:17-68; J. Leo Garrett, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 1, (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1990), 312-314; Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1994), 262-314; Davis A. Young, "Scripture in the Hands of Geologists, Parts I and II," *Westminster Theological Journal* 49 (1987): 1-34, 257-304; Walter L. Bradley and Roger Olsen, "The Trustworthiness of Scripture in Areas Relating to Natural Science," in *Hermeneutics, Inerrancy, and the Bible*, ed. Earl D. Radmacher and Robert D. Preus (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984), 283-317, esp. appendix by Norman L. Geisler; David L. Wilcox, "A Taxonomy of Creation," *Journal of the American Scientific Affiliation* 38 (1986): 244-250; G. Cantor and C. Kenny, "Barbour's Fourfold Way: Problems with His Taxonomy of Science-Religion Relationships," *Zygon* 36 (2001): 765-781; Jerry Bergman, "Basic Positions on Origins," *Creation Matters*, November/December 2004: 1, 3-4; Steve Bishop, "A Typology for Science and Religion," *Evangelical Quarterly* 72 (2000): 35-56; Niels Henrik Gregersen and J. Wentzel van Huyssteen, ed., *Rethinking Theology and Science: Six Models for the Current Dialogue* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998); Clark H. Pinnock, "Climbing out of a Swamp: the Evangelical Struggle to Understand the Creation Texts," *Interpretation* 43 (1989): 143-155; John T. Baldwin, "Inspiration, the Natural Sciences, and a Window of Opportunity," *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* 5 (1994): 131-154; Ariel A. Roth, "Implications of Various Interpretations of the Fossil Record," *Origins* 7 (1980): 71-86; Ariel A. Roth, *Origins: Linking Science with Scripture* (1998), 339-354; J. P. Moreland and J. M. Reynolds, eds., *Three Views on Creation and Evolution* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1999); and David G. Hagopian, ed., *The Genesis Debate: Three Views on the Days of Creation* (Mission Viejo, CA: Cruixpress, 2001).

² According to John T. Baldwin, the above mentioned creationist scholars, all of whom authored chapters in the book he edited, hold to the old universe, possible old earth, but young life model for origins: "The authors hold that biblical and contemporary scientific evidence combine to indicate convincingly that the total galactic universe is at the minimum billions of years old." John Templeton Baldwin, "Introduction," in *Creation, Catastrophe, and Calvary* (2000), 7.

APPENDIX B

THE FIFTEEN THESES OF CARL F. H. HENRY¹

1. Revelation is a divinely initiated activity, God's free communication by which he alone turns his personal privacy into a deliberate disclosure of his reality.
2. Divine revelation is given for human benefit, offering us privileged communion with our Creator in the kingdom of God.
3. Divine revelation does not completely erase God's transcendent mystery, inasmuch as God the Revealer transcends his own revelation.
4. The very fact of disclosure by the one living God assures the comprehensive unity of divine revelation.
5. Not only the occurrence of divine revelation, but also its very nature, content, and variety are exclusively God's determination.
6. God's revelation is uniquely personal both in content and form.
7. God reveals himself not only universally in the history of the cosmos and of the nations, but also redemptively within this external history in unique saving acts.
8. The climax of God's special revelation is Jesus of Nazareth, the personal incarnation of God in the flesh; in Jesus Christ the source and content of revelation converge and coincide.
9. The mediating agent in all divine revelation is the Eternal Logos—preexistent, incarnate, and now glorified.
10. God's revelation is rational communication conveyed in intelligible ideas and meaningful words, that is, in conceptual-verbal form.
11. The Bible is the reservoir and conduit of divine truth.

12. The Holy Spirit superintends the communication of divine revelation, first, by inspiring the prophetic-apostolic writings, and second, by illuminating and interpreting the scripturally given Word of God.

13. As bestower of spiritual life the Holy Spirit enables individuals to appropriate God's revelation savingly, and thereby attests the redemptive power of the revealed truth of God in the personal experience of reborn sinners.

14. The church approximates the kingdom of God in miniature; as such she is to mirror to each successive generation the power and joy of the appropriated realities of divine revelation.

15. The self-manifesting God will unveil his glory in a crowning revelation of power and judgment; in this disclosure at the consummation of the ages, God will vindicate righteousness and justice, finally subdue and subordinate evil, and bring into being a new heaven and earth.

1. The fifteen theses are set forth in Henry, *God, Revelation and Authority*, 2:7-16, and form the structural backbone for the remainder of his six-volume set, *God, Revelation and Authority*.

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