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EDITORIAL: CONTINUING THE CONVERSATION ON CREATION

This past semester I led a doctoral seminar on the “History of the Interpretation of Genesis 1 and 2.” As we read and discussed the literature of the ages, it became evident that interpreters often shifted their methodology of biblical interpretation when they addressed the opening chapters of Genesis. There was an evident attempt to interpret the creation stories in harmony with the conceptual view of the cosmos and the origins of the cosmos in each age. For example, Philo of Alexandria, in *De opificio mundi*, attempted to describe the Mosaic rendering of creation as a reflection of Plato’s instantaneous creation portrayed in the *Timaeus*. Many Christians, including Augustine, continued the *tendenz*. Similarly, the theological point that the cosmos is one just as God is One, with which Philo ended this work, fits well into the geocentric cosmos received from Pythagoras and perpetuated by Ptolemy. In the wake of the Copernican revolution and the shift in worldviews from theocentric to naturalistic, the interpreters of Genesis tended to shift from a creation without time to a creation through greater and greater time. With the popularization of progressive evolution the onus was felt to accommodate Genesis 1 and 2 to the dictates of science. The text of Genesis did not change, but the reception of it certainly did.

It is true that these chapters are a different kind of history than Judges, Samuel, and Kings. There were no human eye witnesses to the creation of our world. The descriptions of God’s creative acts are given as both theology and history. They are both brief and all encompassing. As such, these first two chapters of the Bible leave more questions than answers, and yet present the basis for the whole relationship between God and humans.

This issue of *Andrews University Seminary Studies*, focusing on creation, is intended as part of a continuing conversation on the part of those who want to retain a high view of Scripture, even in the opening chapters of Genesis. The articles contained in this issue cover a wide range of issues in biblical theology related to the doctrine of creation. Of course, it is not possible in one small journal either to address all aspects of creation or be exhaustive on any single question. The intent is to add to the discussion.

Roberto Ouro demonstrates the importance in seeing the differences as well as the similarities between Hebrew Scriptures and other texts from the ancient Near East. Though he did not write this article specifically for a creation issue, it is included here because his conclusions are helpful for interpreting the opening chapters of Genesis. Similarly, though she does not address Genesis 1 and 2 directly, Jo Ann Davidson’s article on biblical narratives as both aesthetically pleasing and true emphasizes a principle that is appropriate

here. Jiří Moskala offers an exegetical study on “in the beginning,” identifying six grammatical options and five interpretive possibilities for the first word and first sentence in Genesis. He also demonstrates how the literary structure of Genesis 1 organizes the creation as a “forming” and “filling” sequence. Moskala’s second article shows the unified diversity of the two creation accounts in Genesis. Karen K. Abrahamson suggests that the theology-and-science dialogue is too often dominated by the Augustinian underpinnings of most Western thought, including both theology and science. She suggests that the answer lies not in abandoning Christianity in favor of non-Western thought, but in fresh biblical study that can critique the Augustinian foundations. Her article critiquing dual soul-and-body creations within the Christian tradition cautions those who see God’s special creation as including all of nature, not just the human soul, and to recognize the presence of “immortal soul” issues throughout science and theology. Terry D. Robertson addresses the tensions of authorities faced by the student researcher in addressing information on the creation/evolution debate. Randall W. Younker and Richard M. Davidson address *nāqiu’* in Gen 1:6-7 as it has been interpreted and misinterpreted throughout history and then provide a fresh study of the word as used in biblical contexts. The book reviewed by H. Thomas Goodwin also relates to an important issue involved in the creation discussions: care for the Earth.

Every few months yet another book comes out proclaiming itself to be the answer for how evangelical Christianity can accommodate the first chapters of Genesis to evolutionary explanations for the origin of life and the beginnings of humans. Many have nothing new to add to the discussion. John H. Walton’s *The Lost World of Genesis One: Ancient Cosmology and the Origins Debate* is an exception. Walton does have something new to add. His proposal that the Genesis creation accounts are intended to describe functional creation, rather than material creation, is presented in new detail. This issue includes four appreciative critiques of Walton’s book by Jan Åge Sigvartsen, Martin Hanna, Nicholas Miller, and Jacques B. Doukhan. Together they show how Walton’s insights into the functional aspects of the Genesis 1 creation story are helpful, but that his rejection of any material creation within the narrative causes more problems than it solves, especially regarding the aspects of evil and death.

This issue on creation neither answers nor even asks all the questions. It is offered to help those who are seeking to view Genesis 1 and 2 as an integral part of God’s revelation about Himself in relation to ourselves and our world.

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