

## A REVIEW ARTICLE

### *Coming to Grips with Genesis: Biblical Authority and the Age of the Earth*

Reviewed by  
Matthew A. Postiff<sup>1</sup>

*Coming to Grips with Genesis: Biblical Authority and the Age of the Earth*, edited by Terry Mortenson and Thane H. Ury. Green Forest, AR: Master Books, 2008. 478 pp. \$16.99.

*Coming to Grips with Genesis* (CGWG) is a compendium of 14 articles written by young-earth creationists to defend the young earth and global flood interpretations of Genesis 1–11. The immediate goal of the editors is to present to evangelicals the “key historical, exegetical, and theological arguments demonstrating that the Bible teaches a recent and literal six-day creation and global catastrophic Flood” (p. 20). Ultimately the editors are trying to convince the reader that the age of the creation is of foundational importance for Christian doctrine—particularly for inerrancy, hermeneutics, the theology of death and evil, and the authority and perspicuity of Scripture (pp. 20, 433).

#### HISTORICAL ARGUMENT, CHAPTERS 1–3

The first three chapters are siblings, each covering an era in the historical development of the interpretation of the early chapters of Genesis. James Mook opens this section by reviewing the writings of the church fathers. He believes that the Fathers are an important witness to consider as to the boundaries of correct interpretation but that they do not have the same authority as Scripture (pp. 24–25). Mook’s thesis is that the Fathers have been frequently misread as if they taught “deep time,” such as the day-age theory. He argues that a careful review of their writings demonstrates that no church father believed in deep time, and basically *all* of them believed in literal days, a young earth, and a global flood. He marshals evidence from numerous of their writings to prove his point and does not shy away from dealing with “problematic” Fathers such as Augustine.

Along the way, Mook makes two helpful points. First, though the Fathers came long before Darwin, they still had to deal with similar

---

<sup>1</sup>Dr. Postiff is currently a postgraduate student at Detroit Baptist Theological Seminary.

naturalistic and pagan presuppositions handed down from the Greek philosophers. Second, Mook pinpoints a possible reason for the misreading of the Fathers. Namely, many of their writings referred to the days of creation as if they *pre-figured* the length of history as seven thousand years. Thus each day, in their view, represented an age to come, and they saw the entirety of world history fitting within seven thousand years. Modern old-earth proponents incorrectly use this day-age formulation to suggest that the Fathers taught an ages-long creation, when the Fathers actually used it to refer to the ages of world history *after* creation was done in a week or even in an instant.

David Hall continues the historical theology lesson by covering the Reformation to the rise of uniformitarian naturalism. In so doing, Hall presents the case that the uniform voice of this period was certainly not supportive of an old-earth view but that these interpreters “took Genesis 1–11 as straightforward literal history” (p. 77). His work on the Westminster divines and the phrase “in the space of six days” is particularly thorough and convincing (p. 70).

The first two essays in *CGWG* are excellent reference material for historical theology on the interpretation of Genesis. However, Hall’s chapter would be better if it did not limit its discussion to theologians, but also included references to Newton and other scientists of the same period who addressed the issue of the length of the days and age of the earth. In this way, Hall could buttress his case against previous criticisms<sup>2</sup> and avoid seeming to make the historic dividing line between the traditional view and the modern scientific view too clean-cut.

In chapter 3, Terry Mortenson’s concern is to explain how the deep time view arose and why it became so pervasive, given the uniform views of the previous two eras. He limits his examination to geology studies from the 1600s and shows how long ages of time and uniformitarian principles began to take hold. Mortenson argues that the scientists who promoted these views were not unbiased, but instead were affected by a host of factors that shaped their approach to geology and Scripture. One such factor was the presuppositional denial of catastrophism, and a resulting denial of the biblical flood. An alternative explanation for the sedimentary strata was constructed, based on uniformitarian principles that usually included long ages of deposition. These views became established geological dogma, and the likes of Charles Spurgeon, Charles Hodge, and B. B. Warfield all took compromising positions on the age of the earth and evolution (pp. 96–97).

Terry Mortenson makes too strong a conclusion when he implies that old-earth theories led to apostasy (p. 100). The old-earth theories may indeed *correlate* with this slide into apostasy, but are not strictly *causal* of it. At institutions that went into apostasy, other doctrines, particularly the fundamentals of the faith, were given up as well. Some

---

<sup>2</sup>See Hugh Ross and Gleason L. Archer, “The Day-Age Response,” in *The G3N3S1S Debate*, ed. David G. Hagopian (Mission Viejo, CA: Crux Press, 2001), pp. 68–69.

Christians took an old-earth position from the early 20th century (for instance, those holding the gap theory), but that did not guarantee a slide into unbelief. Mortenson could have profitably included some references to astronomers and physicists from the same period to show where the other sciences were on the issues. Mortenson is right, however, in saying that compromise with long-age uniformitarianism is unnecessary, as even modern secular geologists have suggested catastrophism as a prominent process in geologic history (pp. 101–2).

In relation to the larger controlling thesis of the book, the first three chapters present a good case that the Scriptures are clear as to their six-day, young earth, global flood teaching, if for no other reason than many early interpreters plainly saw it that way. A shift away from these traditional views necessarily undercuts the doctrine of Scripture's perspicuity—or else it calls into question the basic intelligence of the early church interpreters.

### HERMENEUTICAL CRITIQUES, CHAPTERS 4–5

The second group of chapters in *CGWG* shifts from a historical focus to a critique of various interpretive approaches to general revelation and Genesis.

In chapter 4, Richard Mayhue's stated thesis is that nature is not the 67th book of the Bible. His chapter is a refutation of Hugh Ross, who essentially teaches that nature rises to a level equal to scriptural revelation (p. 106). Mayhue supports his contention with the following: (1) Ross gives a suspect accounting for his position, with just a few texts that he cites potentially supporting his view and many texts not germane; (2) Ross effectively reopens the canon for his 67th book; (3) Ross elevates his interpretation of nature to the level of natural revelation when that revelation is in fact very limited in scope according to the Scriptures (p. 115). Mayhue does an excellent job of uncovering what underlies Ross's approach and why that approach is severely flawed. Mayhue continues the chapter by developing a positive perspective on the proper understanding of natural revelation along six lines: relevant biblical texts, the authority of Scripture, the character of revelation, man's fallen mind and empiricism, proper hermeneutics, and a biblical worldview.

Two of Mayhue's points are very significant. The first is that information gained by the human senses cannot be equated with general revelation, which is a disclosure of humanly unknowable information (pp. 119, 122, 129). Ross's error is that he first makes that very equation (general knowledge of science = revelation); then he effectively equates that with the value and authority of Scripture. Mayhue's second point is that man's mind has been so debilitated by sin that empiricism is fundamentally flawed. Special revelation is required to ensure that one's interpretation of general revelation is correct (p. 119), and divine illumination is required to ensure a correct interpretation of special revelation (p. 124). Mayhue's positive argument

then is that Scripture is sufficient to give us a clear and accurate outline of how creation happened.

The chapter by Todd Beall has as its goal to categorize, explain, and critique the various hermeneutical approaches to the first 11 chapters of Genesis. He finds four such approaches along a continuum from myth to literal.

The myth approach, Beall grants, is consistent since it assigns all of Genesis to the mythical category (p. 133). But it is wrong in that it denies inspiration. Furthermore, scholars tend to over-value the parallels of the ancient Near-Eastern (ANE) accounts to the biblical account, while ignoring the major differences between them. As for the question of borrowing, Beall says that it is clear that the ANE accounts borrowed from creation and flood history.

The “largely figurative” hermeneutical approach is weak, Beall argues, because it says that Genesis 1–11 is primeval history and thus is to be interpreted differently than chapters 12–50. Beall gives a good reply—namely that there are no indications in the text that the two sections are disconnected from one another; in fact chapter 11 is tightly coupled with chapter 12.

Many evangelicals fall into the third approach, namely the “partly figurative” view. The framework and anthropomorphic day views fit under this heading. Beall shows that Genesis 1 cannot be handled as a special case compared to the other chapters of Genesis—it is tightly connected to the other chapters and of similar style. He helpfully points out that while Genesis 1 is unique in *content*, it is not unique in *form* because it is narrative like most of the rest of Genesis. Supporters of the partly figurative view mistake unique content for a unique form.

Beall does not cover the literal approach, the one he agrees with, apparently considering it unnecessary after critiquing the other three. But he could have profitably provided a summary of arguments for the literal view, documentation on who takes the view, and what variants there might be. This would have made the chapter more symmetric. Otherwise it provides a good taxonomy of views.

Relative to the thesis of the book, the critiques contained in these two chapters set forth a good defense of the sufficiency and clarity of Scripture with respect to creation, and defend the view that special revelation is the starting point in creation studies, as opposed to science, general revelation or extra-biblical texts.

#### **EXEGETICAL ARGUMENTS FROM GENESIS 1–11, CHAPTERS 6–10**

The third group of chapters in *CGWG* turns to various exegetical supports of the young-earth creationist view. Steven Boyd’s focus in chapter six is on the literal and historical qualities of the Genesis text. Boyd points out two important preliminary thoughts before going into the body of the chapter. First, Boyd understands the genre of a text to

be an important starting point for its study.<sup>3</sup> He admits that the genre may indeed show that the text says nothing about the age of the earth (pp. 167–68). Second, he states that physical evidence must be interpreted in light of the Scriptures.

Boyd's primary argument is that the text of Genesis is a literal historical account. He supports it with three sub-points: (1) A statistical analysis shows that the Genesis account is most certainly narrative when compared to other known narrative texts in terms of finite verbal forms; (2) Other biblical narratives demonstrate that their authors intended their narrations to be read as referring to real events; (3) The doctrine of inspiration demands that the text, which seems to portray historical events in its straightforward reading, actually be interpreted as such because of the intent of its human author and the corresponding intent of the Divine author.

It would have been helpful, given the discussion in Beall's chapter as to the connectedness of Genesis 1–2 with 3–11 and 12–50, if Boyd had shown by the same statistical methodology that those later sections of Genesis are also narrative. One weakness with his analysis of other biblical narratives (pp. 176–83) is that some interpreters will claim that Genesis 1:1–2:3 is *sui generis*, so arguments from the whole canon are simply not germane.

In chapter 7, Trevor Craigen's thesis is that deep time cannot be found embedded in Genesis. He starts by defining the concept of deep time and shows its connection to evolution. He supports his case against it with these major arguments: (1) The order of events in Genesis contradicts the order in evolutionary proposals; (2) The grammar surrounding the use of *yôm* in the OT shows its usage is straightforward and refers to a literal day; (3) Many scholars, even those not holding the young-earth position, take *yôm* to refer to literal time; (4) The normal use of *yôm* outside of Genesis 1 shows it may not mean a single literal day, but it always means a span of literal days; (5) Non-literal approaches to *yôm* seem to arise from outside influences and assumptions which tend to make the days "elastic" to a greater or lesser extent; (6) Time in Genesis is presented linearly, in sequential form; (7) When science is given a primary place in exegesis, then more time becomes mandatory.

Craigen's chapter amounts to a summary of the evidence for the literal 24-hour day view. As such, it would have formed a good concluding section for Beall's chapter (see above). However, the flow of thought of Craigen's chapter seems to be somewhat scattered. Craigen is to be commended in that he integrates Hasel's work on the length of the creation days, and calls old-earth proponents to task for missing this important contribution to creation studies.<sup>4</sup>

---

<sup>3</sup>For an opposing view on the genre issue, see James B. Jordan, *Creation in Six Days: A Defense of the Traditional Reading of Genesis One* (Moscow, ID: Canon Press, 1999), pp. 30–34.

<sup>4</sup>Gerhard F. Hasel, "The 'Days' of Creation in Genesis 1: Literal 'Days' or

In chapter 8, Robert McCabe critiques the framework view of the creation account. He begins by distilling the three major supporting arguments of the framework view, and then structures the essay in three sections corresponding to his explanation and evaluation of each of the three.

To address the framework's contention that the creation account is figurative, McCabe argues that the text is "permeated with a grammatical device that sets it apart as an unambiguous narrative account" (p. 216). He treats all the uses of this device, the *waw* consecutive, in exhaustive fashion, showing that the preponderance of the evidence demonstrates that the account is a sequential, though certainly stylized, narrative. There are a handful of exceptions to the sequential use of the *waw* consecutive which McCabe carefully analyzes. Framework supporters err, according to McCabe, when they discard a literal reading based on these few exceptional uses, in the face of strong evidence that the account is basically arranged sequentially. He further supports his argument by summarizing the evidence for the literal use of *yôm* in the creation account.

The second major support of the framework view is that the creation account was dominated by ordinary, instead of miraculous, means. Upon a cursory reading, McCabe seems to overstate his case because he argues that the framework teaches "God's *exclusive* use of ordinary providence during the creation period" (p. 228, emphasis added). Irons and Kline reject the "exclusive" modifier as a misstatement of their view.<sup>5</sup> But even this rebuttal needs to be nuanced. Irons and Kline assign all the events in the creation account to either special creative acts or to simple ordinary providence. Young-earth creationists readily accept both of these categories during the creation week, but add a third category of short-term supernatural sustenance of the creation while certain necessary parts were in an incomplete state. It is the framework's apparent exclusion of supernatural sustenance in favor of simple ordinary providence that McCabe is arguing against, because it is this view that supports the framework's non-chronological approach. McCabe is also right in stating that the "unargued presupposition" of normal providence in Genesis 2:5 is an unwarranted stretch of the verse. The immediate context is concerned with showing the situation of the creation immediately preceding the entrance of man into the picture. It does not intend to teach the dominating mode of providence during the creation week.

The third major support of the framework view is the unending nature of the seventh day, which in turn suggests that the other six days are not literal days. McCabe argues the evening-morning formula

---

Figurative 'Periods/EPOCHS' of Time?" *Origins* 21 (1994): 5–38.

<sup>5</sup>See Lee Irons with Meredith G. Kline, "The Framework View," in *The G3N3S1S Debate*, ed. David G. Hagopian (Mission Viejo, CA: Crux Press, 2001), pp. 235–6. See also Meredith G. Kline, "Because It Had Not Rained," *Westminster Theological Journal* 20 (May 1958): 147–48.

is omitted from the seventh day because that formula is a conclusion and divider between the days of the creation week, and as such is not needed on the closing day. As for the divine rest motif in Hebrews 4, McCabe rightly points out that this spiritual rest is quite different than God's rest from creative activity and cannot be used to determine the length of the seventh day—something that can easily be ascertained by more direct means in the text.

McCabe's chapter clearly calls out the deficiencies of the framework view. It recognizes that the framework view is not monolithic, but that it has several variants. It treats the exegetical data very thoroughly. The chapter concludes with a pointed critique of the current situation in the church vis-à-vis the general evangelical acceptance of the standard scientific consensus regarding origins.

William Barrick's thesis in chapter 9 is that a careful study of the scriptural witness to the flood and its chronology allows us to make headway in determining the global geological effects of the flood. Barrick takes a presuppositional approach to the Bible, and shows how the Flood account is unified, with internal unity and coherence. He gives a detailed chronology of the flood and explains the two-fold purpose of the flood, namely the first half for global judgment and the second half for cleansing and restoration. These correspond to the two phases of water prevailing and subsiding, both of which included violent wave action.

The essay leaves the reader wondering if much work has been done in flood geology. The chapter would have been better had Barrick connected his arguments about the flood chronology with previous creationist geological research, and made clear what was left for future work. Nevertheless, his work on the literary structure and chronology of the flood account is valuable.

In the next chapter, Travis Freeman takes up the issue of gaps in the genealogies. This chapter is probably the most controversial in terms of the intramural debate among young-earth creationists. The "Affirmations and Denials" section at the end of the book admits this debate and states the age of the earth is 6,000 to 10,000 years (pp. 454–55). Freeman falls on the shorter end of this scale, taking an age of 6,000 years and supporting the thesis that the genealogies of Genesis 5 and 11 are strict chronogenealogies with no gaps.

He starts by outlining the non-chronological view of the genealogies, followed by the chronological view. The issue boils down to whether there are gaps in the genealogies due to various causes of fluidity. The five major arguments for the non-chronological view are listed and then addressed in turn.

Freeman should be helpful to those who have not made up their mind on this issue. He points out a number of important facts: (1) There are different types of genealogies suited to different purposes; (2) Several factors demonstrate a level of "fluidity resistance" between the Genesis 4 and 5 lists that show they cannot be the same genealogy; (3) The supposed ten-generation symmetrical nature of the two

genealogies is overstated because Shem's list in Genesis 11 only has nine names; (4) The Sumerian king lists are not germane; (5) The overlap of lives of the patriarchs is only a problem if you do not accept the genealogy at face value; (6) The "became the father of" formula does not necessarily leave room to support multiple intervening generations. The "became the father of" discussion is helpful because it points out that the numbers used in the genealogy would be largely meaningless if there were hidden generations. Also, many of the "begottens" are known to be direct father-son relationships. In addition, Jude speaks of Enoch as the seventh from Adam, which corroborates the no-gap view.

Freeman's weakest argument has to do with the extra-biblical evidence for the antiquity of man. He objects to the argument on the grounds that man did not evolve and that the dating methods used by most scientists are flawed. He does not mention archaeology, or the Egyptian timeline problem, or Sumerian writings, all of which seem to demand a slightly longer timeline than his chronology allows. This objection to the chronological genealogy view calls for an entire paper, if not a doctoral dissertation, yet Freeman deals with it in a mere paragraph. Freeman's case would be more believable if this issue were examined and handled sufficiently.

The problem of Cainan was reserved for the last six pages of the essay. The Cainan issue is a major problem and should have been integrated into the body of the essay. For Freeman, the issue boils down to textual criticism. Supporters of the "gap" view suggest that Luke is correct, that there is an error in the MT, and that the LXX supports Luke. Freeman (and others) suggests that Cainan was not in the MT, was erroneously included in the LXX, and was not in Luke's original text but came in through a scribal correction. Freeman argues that Cainan was not part of the original genealogy because: (1) The LXX is full of errors in the genealogies, so is not a reliable source; (2) Many Greek uncial MSS do not include Cainan's name (though he only lists Codex Beza). Freeman's case is suspect in that he goes against the weight of the NT textual evidence. Freeman should have interacted with Benjamin Shaw's dissertation on this topic to improve his case.<sup>6</sup>

These five chapters present a convincing exegetical case for taking the creation account as literal history, supporting the young earth and global flood interpretation. Once again, the editors' thesis is amply demonstrated—to take the old-earth view calls into question the perspicuity of Scripture.

---

<sup>6</sup>Benjamin Shaw, "The Genealogies of Genesis 5 and 11 and Their Significance for Chronology" (Ph.D. dissertation, Bob Jones University, 2004). Like Freeman, Shaw argues the chronogenealogy view, but unlike Freeman, he believes Cainan should be included in the genealogy.

**THEOLOGICAL ARGUMENT FROM THE  
NEW TESTAMENT, CHAPTERS 11–12**

Chapters 11 and 12 turn to the support that can be found in the New Testament for the young-earth view. Terry Mortenson starts by examining the teachings of Jesus in the gospels and asserts (anachronistically) “that Jesus clearly was a young-earth creationist” (p. 316). This is defined as one who believes “in a literal 6-day creation a few thousand years ago and the global Flood at the time of Noah” (p. 318). He observes Jesus’ view of Scripture, comments on Jesus’ references to Genesis 1–11, and critiques various old-earth scholars’ views of Jesus’ teaching.

Mortenson argues that (1) Jesus treated the OT as literal history and fully authoritative; (2) In Mark 10:6, Jesus speaks of the beginning of the entire creation, not just the first man and woman; (3) In Mark 13:19, Jesus believed that “human suffering commenced essentially at the beginning of creation, not billions of years after the beginning” (p. 321); (4) In Luke 11:50–51, Jesus shows he believed that Abel lived very near the foundation of the world. Taking these comments together with the fact that Jesus took Genesis as historical fact, this gives us “strong grounds to conclude that He believed in a literal six-day creation week which occurred only a few thousand years ago” (p. 325). Finally, Mortenson gives a careful accounting of his examination of 61 old-earth proponents. He found only three that dealt with the verses listed above. He charges that they are basing their conclusions on an *a priori* of evolutionary geology, not on scriptural presuppositions.

Mortenson is right that Jesus’ words are consistent with and support the young-earth interpretation. This is especially true if we consider the possibility of a 14.5 billion year old universe. If the universe were that old, man came into existence “at the *very tail end* of creation” (p. 342) and not at all “from the foundation of the world.” However, Jesus’ words are not direct statements as to the precise *age* of the earth. It is more accurate to say that Jesus’ words do not support an old-earth view and do not at all seem to adopt an accommodationist stance to the first century audience but rather take the Genesis text at face value. Because Mortenson included the global flood as part of his thesis, it would have been good for him to include some comments on Jesus’ mention of the flood (Matthew 24:39 and Luke 17:27). In the conclusion to the chapter, Mortenson quotes Collins, an old-earth advocate, to support Mortenson’s point that if death was taking place millions of years before the fall of Adam, then Jesus was mistaken about creation and could not be God. The problem with the quote is that it misrepresents Collins. Collins is simply rehearsing the young-earth creationist’s argument with which he does not agree. He explains why he does not agree, and in doing so he clearly upholds the orthodox doctrine of Christ.<sup>7</sup>

---

<sup>7</sup>See C. John Collins, *Science and Faith: Friends or Foes?* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2003), pp. 106–7.

Ron Minton's chapter expands on Mortenson's by continuing to the next section of the canon. Minton's thesis is that the apostolic writings in the NT do not teach an old-earth view of creation, but instead are consistent with a literal creation week, a young earth, and a global flood. His flow of argumentation simply follows the NT text by text as he comments on each one and shows how they are consistent with his thesis.

He gives several arguments: (1) Many old-earth creationists overlook the apostolic teaching on the subject; (2) Quotations of the Pentateuch confirm the apostolic view of its factuality; (3) Man has been present since the beginning of creation to see God's creation-displayed attributes; (4) God's curse on creation did nothing if animal death and other natural evils existed before the curse; (5) The whole world perished during the flood, supporting its global extent.

Minton offers a good survey of NT texts that have to do with creation. Some of his claims may seem to be a stretch to those who do not agree with him. For instance, commenting on Revelation 14:6–7, he writes, "It is noteworthy that John again brings in the Genesis account of creation as a vital element in the gospel and the work of God." However, the text to which he refers is in a relative clause that describes the one who is to be worshipped, and is not a main point of the paragraph.

The exegesis carried out in these two chapters is basically a simple reading of the NT text. The real load-bearing argument is theological, something like this: "If Jesus and the apostles agreed with the literal interpretation of the creation account, then that interpretation must be right." This line of argumentation also assumes that Jesus and the apostles did not adopt an accommodationist view and were truthful in their statements. To take an old-earth view would amount to questioning the veracity and authority of the NT writers. These chapters certainly add to the weight of the case developed in *CGWG*.

#### **THEOLOGICAL ARGUMENTS REGARDING DEATH AND NATURAL EVIL, CHAPTERS 13–14**

The last two chapters move into more theological and philosophical issues concerning the origin of death and natural evil. James Stambaugh attempts to answer the question, "Who is the immediate culprit of physical death—God or man?" In other words, did physical death exist before the fall, or only after? Stambaugh's argument is that death did not begin in Genesis 1, but that instead it began at the curse, consistent with the plain reading of Genesis 1–3. Further, this conclusion is the only one that allows a consistent theodicy in the sense that if natural evil existed before the fall, then God put it there, and furthermore, then the atonement is gutted of its real significance, since there was no perfect creation to begin with.

Stambaugh develops his argument by first defining physical death. The majority of this section is used to show that plants do not "die." It

only becomes clear in the chapter's conclusion that death is defined as a separation of body and soul. Common biblical texts like James 1:26 and Genesis 35:18 are not cited. Stambaugh continues his argument by addressing the question of whether the original creation was subject to physical death. Stambaugh's position is clear enough, but he should have more thoroughly appealed to biblical texts like Romans 5 and 8 to show that death did not come until after sin and that it was the result of God's curse.

His third section is the longest and contains the crux of his argument. Death had to come after the fall because of the character of God and because of the plan of God to renew the creation (which assumes the renewal is to some previously good state). Stambaugh attacks various harmonizing views that say the creation was "good" but not "perfect." He refutes these alternate views on the basis that they disagree with the biblical text, create a huge ethical problem if God created death before the fall, and undermine the atonement by effectively denying the fall and thus any need for the atonement as a solution for it (p. 395).

Thane Ury's goal in the final chapter is not to provide a comprehensive theodicy, but rather to examine the logically prior issue of the impact of interpretation of Genesis on theodicy. In particular he explores the import of God's declaration that the finished creation was *very good* to a biblical theodicy. The title of the essay indicates that it will focus on three key theologians to see how they defended a very good creation in the face of the existence of evil. However, Ury focuses on an additional six theologians and contrasts their views on theodicy related issues, by which means he attempts to show that there has been "a subtle evolution of the Church's understanding of divine goodness" (p. 413).

His basic point is that the traditional view explains its theodicy on the grounds that the evil present today is not part of the original design of creation. Moral and natural evil "were intrusions into God's perfect creation" (p. 401). The accommodationist view leaves room for millions of years of death and destruction before man appeared. This suggests that God's original creation, before the sin of man, had built-in natural evil. The accommodationist theodicy must suggest that this trail of blood is somehow part of God's beneficence. The evolution in the Church's view of God's goodness is just that the accommodationist *includes* natural evil in his explanation of the goodness of God, whereas the traditionalist *excludes* natural evil as originating directly from God's goodness. Ury essentially asks whether the accommodationist's God is really all that good if he included paleonatural evil in his original creation.

In the end, Ury suggests that the accommodationists' God is very different from the God of the traditionalist. As such, the prelapsarian natural evil view radically changes one's view of God's goodness, is in conflict with the Scriptures, and does not provide any level of comfort to those who are presently suffering.

Ury makes a key admission when he says, “In the wake of the new geology, the accommodationists appear overly optimistic in their ‘handling of the difficult problem of pain...they either ignored the problem or dealt with it superficially...’” (p. 422). In other words, the accommodationists may not have followed their reasoning to its logical end. They were “stuck” on the issues of origins, geology, and the old earth, and did not carefully consider the implications of their view for God’s goodness. If this is the case, Ury’s charge that the accommodationist’s God is different than the traditionalist’s God is somewhat stretched. Regardless, Ury’s conclusion is helpful, in that he points out that a proper view of Genesis 1 assists in defending God’s goodness in light of the evil that is so prevalent.

The final two chapters do a good job of raising the question of whether the old-earth view can successfully explain its adherence to prelapsarian death, particularly in the face of the *very good* declaration and passages such as Romans 8. The Scriptures are certainly plain in their presentation of death entering as a result of sin; the question is whether this presentation can be taken at face value. The authors show that it indeed can be.

### OVERALL EVALUATION

I highly recommend *Coming to Grips with Genesis* as an essential introduction and standard academic text on young-earth creationism. The book is a scholarly, biblical, and comprehensive defense of the young-earth view. The authors easily achieved their immediate goal—to present the key arguments for the young-earth view. They also successfully raised the issue that the age of the creation has a serious impact on foundational truths of the Christian faith. Issues such as the sufficiency, authority, and clarity of Scripture and consistency in hermeneutics are indeed at stake. The authors wisely avoid the error of making the young-earth view a fundamental of the faith. A major strength of the book is that it is a compilation of works by authors whose expertise is particularly focused on the topics on which they write.

The book could use another edition to fix some problems. Consistency throughout the book could be improved. For instance, Boyd contradicts Beall on the issue of the phonetic similarity of *ʾhôm* to *Tiamat* (pp. 134, 190). Freeman’s strict 6,000-year approach could be squared better with the later “Affirmations and Denials.” The important concept of “deep time” is used early in the text (p. 20), but a careful definition is not attempted until chapter 7 (p. 199). In several places there was overlap between the chapters that could have been avoided if each chapter remained focused and referred to other chapters for incidental points. For example, the mention of the flood at the end of chapter 6 should be handled in chapter 9. Theodicy issues could be removed from chapter 13 and limited to chapter 14.

The editors devoted a few pages in the epilogue to intelligent

design, an important current topic that was not mentioned in the body of the book. An entire chapter explaining and critiquing that movement would be a valuable enhancement to a future edition.

As a *festschrift* to Dr. John Whitcomb, *CGWG* admirably supports the kind of traditional, conservative approach that Whitcomb has taught for years in support of young-earth creationism. It is a must-read.