

# REFORMATION TODAY

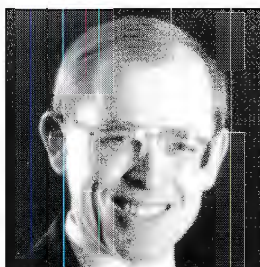


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*Mostyn Roberts*



*Wayne Grudem*



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## **Contributors to this issue**

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*Front Cover: While the new building to accommodate a congregation of about 900 is under construction the Lai Baptist Church has been meeting for Lord's Day services at the Myanmar Institute of Theology, Insein, featured on the cover. The editor preached there to a congregation of about 550 on February 13 on the subject of 'The Great Invitation' (Luke 14).*

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# Editorial

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## Micro-and macro-evolution

It is rare for anyone to be given the opportunity to challenge the popular idea of evolution. It was a surprise therefore to find that on the evening of March 17th Jeremy Vine, one of the presenters of Newsnight, BBC 2 TV, introduced three scientists and a creationist, the creationist being the Christian creationist Ken Ham. In fact four scientists were involved in vigorous debate – 3 who believe in evolution and one who believes in biblical creation. Mr Ham has a degree in Applied Biology and was a science teacher.

In the course of the debate Ken Ham challenged his opponents to state one example of evolution that can be sustained by scientific proof.

The example of salmon was cited, the supposed ‘change of a species of salmon to two new species’. Ken Ham contended that there is variation in species of salmon and while there is a marked behavioural difference at the end of the day it is still the same species.

The difference between micro- and macro-evolution is important for all of us to understand. Wayne Grudem accomplishes this clearly. He describes the harm done by evolutionary humanism as ‘incredibly destructive’ and gives sound reasons for this.

During the debate in Newsnight Prof Jones described creationists as ‘stupid’ and creationism as ‘nonsense’. To resort to abuse is tantamount to losing the argument.

Evolutionary humanism based on Darwin’s ideas has become the religion in the Western secular world. We must not be surprised at the horror expressed when these cherished notions are challenged.

## Creation in six days

Douglas Kelly’s book *Creation and Change* – Genesis 1.1 – 2.4 in the light of changing scientific paradigms, was reviewed in *RT 165*.<sup>1</sup>

In this book Kelly states that Genesis chapters 1-3 are literal and not to be interpreted as mere poetry. He points to Prof. James Barr, a notorious opponent of evangelicalism, who declares that he does not know any professor of Hebrew or Old Testament at any world-class university who does not believe that the writer(s) of Genesis 1-11 intended to convey to their readers the idea that creation took place in a series of six days which were the same as the days of 24 hours we now experience (p 51). Anyone reading that review will see that my view of Genesis is the same as that of Douglas Kelly and that has not changed.

This issue raises the question, What is our attitude toward those who see the creation account in a different way? Bob Letham's article shows the diversity of views among leading theologians. He warns against impugning wrong motives to those who differ with us on this subject.

### **Creation: A Preacher's Perspective**

The idea that the next world is all heavenly as though we will be permanent astronauts needs correction. This is not the prime thrust of the article by Mostyn Roberts but it certainly is implied when he says, 'Salvation is assuredly physical. Moreover, its constituent elements are already in existence although to be transformed into something incorruptible. Redemption is a re-creation not another creation. The resurrection body is the body we inhabit on earth. The new order is an order of things in which the Lord's own resurrection appearances disclose both continuity with, and transformation of, the present (old) order. We may say therefore that creation is not only presupposed by redemption but is affirmed by redemption and at the same time superseded by it. The new heavens and earth, like our resurrection bodies, will be radically renewed and reconstituted versions of the present order.'

1 Douglas F Kelly. *Creation and Change*. A Mentor imprint published in 1997 by Christian Focus Publications, 272 pages, £9.99. Douglas Kelly is professor of Systematic Theology at the Reformed Theological Seminary, Charlotte, North Carolina.

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# Micro- and Macro-Evolution

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*The central issues of evolution/creation are explained with wonderful clarity by Dr Wayne Grudem and we are grateful for his goodwill to publish this extract from chapter 15 of his Systematic Theology. Apart from the references to Philip E Johnson as well as to Kofahl and Segraves, the footnote references are omitted. Those who wish to follow these are encouraged to purchase Grudem's Systematic Theology, 1264 pages, IVP in the UK, Zondervan in the USA, which publishers have kindly consented to this admittedly more than 'brief' extract.*

The word *evolution* can be used in different ways. Sometimes it is used to refer to 'micro-evolution' – small developments within one species, so that we see flies or mosquitoes becoming immune to insecticides, or human beings growing taller, or different colours and varieties of roses being developed. Innumerable examples of such 'micro-evolution' are evident today, and no one denies that they exist.<sup>1</sup> But that is not the sense in which the word *evolution* is usually used when discussing theories of creation and evolution.

The term *evolution* is more commonly used to refer to 'macro-evolution' – that is, the 'general theory of evolution' or the view that 'nonliving substance gave rise to the first living material, which subsequently reproduced and diversified to produce all extinct and extant organisms'. In this chapter, when we use the word *evolution* it is used to refer to macro-evolution or the general theory of evolution.

## 1. Current Challenges to Evolution:

Since Charles Darwin first published his *Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection* in 1859, there have been challenges to his theory by Christians and non-Christians alike. Current neo-Darwinian theory is still foundationally similar to Darwin's original position, but with refinements and modifications due to over a hundred years of research. In modern Darwinian evolutionary theory, the history of the development of life began when a mix of chemicals present on the earth spontaneously produced a very simple,

probably one-celled life form. This living cell reproduced itself, and eventually there were some mutations or differences in the new cells produced. These mutations led to the development of more complex life forms. A hostile environment meant that many of them would perish, but those that were better suited to their environment would survive and multiply. Thus, nature exercised a process of 'natural selection' in which the differing organisms most fitted to the environment survived. More and more mutations eventually developed into more and more varieties of living things, so that from the very simplest organism all the complex life forms on earth eventually developed through this process of mutation and natural selection.

The most recent, and perhaps most devastating, critique of current Darwinian theory comes from Philip E Johnson, a law professor who specialises in analysing the logic of arguments. In his book *Darwin on Trial*, he quotes extensively from current evolutionary theorists to demonstrate that:

i. After more than one hundred years of experimental breeding of various kinds of animals and plants, the amount of variation that can be produced (even with intentional, not random, breeding) is extremely limited, due to the limited range of genetic variation in each type of living thing: dogs who are selectively bred for generations are still dogs, fruit flies are still fruit flies, etc. And when allowed to return to the wild state, 'the most highly specialised breeds quickly perish and the survivors revert to the original wild type'. He concludes that 'natural selection', claimed by Darwinists to account for the survival of new organisms, is really a conservative force that works to preserve the genetic fitness of a population, not to change its characteristics.

ii. In current evolutionary arguments, the idea of 'survival of the fittest' (or 'natural selection') is popularly thought to mean that those animals whose different characteristics give them a comparative advantage will survive, and others will die out. But in actual practice almost any characteristic can be argued to be either an advantage or a disadvantage. So how do Darwinists know which characteristics have given an advantage in survival to certain animals? By observing which kinds survive. But this means that natural selection is often at bottom not a powerful new insight into what happens in nature but simply a tautology (a meaningless repetition of the same idea), since it boils down to saying that the 'fittest' animals are those who have the most offspring. In this sense, natural selection means: animals who have the most offspring have the most offspring. But this proves nothing about any supposed mutations to produce different, more fit offspring over the course of many generations.

iii. The vast and complex mutations required to produce complex organs such as an eye or a bird's wing (or hundreds of other organs) could not have

occurred in tiny mutations accumulating over thousands of generations, because the individual parts of the organ are useless (and give no 'advantage') unless the entire organ is functioning. But the mathematical probability of such random mutations happening together in one generation is effectively zero. Darwinists are left saying that it must have happened because it happened.

An amusing example of the need for all the parts of a complex organic system to be put in place at once is pointed out by Robert Kofahl and Kelly Segraves in their book, *The Creation Explanation: A Scientific Alternative to Evolution*.<sup>2</sup> They describe the 'bombardier beetle', which repels enemies by firing a hot charge of chemicals from two swivel tubes in its tail. The chemicals fired by this beetle will spontaneously explode when mixed together in a laboratory but apparently the beetle has an inhibitor substance that blocks the explosive reaction until the beetle squirts some of the liquid into its 'combustion chambers', where an enzyme is added to catalyse the reaction. An explosion takes place and the chemical repellent is fired at a temperature of 212°F at the beetle's enemies. Kofahl and Segraves rightly ask whether any evolutionary explanation can account for this amazing mechanism:

Note that a rational evolutionary explanation for the development of this creature must assign some kind of adaptive advantage to each of the millions of hypothetical intermediate stages in the construction process. But would the stages of one-fourth, one-half, or two-thirds completion, for example, have conferred any advantage? After all, a rifle is useless without all of its parts functioning... Before this defensive mechanism could afford any protection to the beetle, all of its parts, together with the proper explosive mixture of chemicals, plus the instinctive behaviour required for its use, would have to be assembled in the insect. The partially developed set of organs would be useless. Therefore, according to the principles of evolutionary theory, there would be no selective pressure to cause the system to evolve from a partially completed stage toward the final completed system... If a theory fails to explain the data in any science, that theory should be either revised or replaced with a theory that is in agreement with the data.

In this case, of course, the amusing question is, What would happen if the explosive chemical mixture developed in the beetle without the chemical inhibitor?

**iv.** The fossil record was Darwin's greatest problem in 1859, and it has simply become a greater problem since then. In Darwin's time, hundreds of fossils were available showing the existence of many distinct kinds of animals and



plants in the distant past. But Darwin was unable to find any fossils from 'intermediate types' to fill in the gaps between distinct kinds of animals – fossils showing some characteristics of one animal and a few characteristics of the next developmental type, for example. In fact, many ancient fossils exactly resembled present-day animals – showing that (according to the chronological assumptions of his view) numerous animals have persisted for millions of years essentially unchanged. Darwin realised that the absence of 'transitional types' in the fossil record weakened his theory, but he thought it was due to the fact that not enough fossils had been discovered, and was confident that further discoveries would unearth many transitional types of animals. However, the subsequent 130 years of intensive archaeological activity have still failed to produce one convincing example of a needed transitional type.

Johnson quotes noted evolutionist Stephen Jay Gould of Harvard as saying that there are two characteristics of the fossil record that are inconsistent with the idea of gradual change through generations:

1. Stasis. Most species exhibit no directional change during their tenure on earth. They appear in the fossil record looking pretty much the same as when they disappear; morphological change is usually limited and directionless.
2. Sudden appearance. In any local area, a species does not arise gradually by the steady transformation of its ancestors; it appears all at once and 'fully formed'.

So difficult is this problem for Darwinian evolution that many evolutionary scientists today propose that evolution came about in sudden jumps to new life forms – so that each of the thirty-two known orders of mammals, for example, appeared quite suddenly in the history of Europe.

But how could hundreds or thousands of genetic changes come about all at once? No explanation has been given other than to say that it must have happened, because it happened. (A glance at the dotted lines in any current biology textbook, showing the supposed transitions from one kind of animal to another, will indicate the nature of the gaps still unfilled after 130 years of investigation.) The significance of this problem is demonstrated forcefully in a recent book by a non-Christian writer, Michael Denton, *Evolution: A Theory in Crisis*. Denton himself proposes no alternative explanation for the emergence of life in its present form upon the earth, but he notes that since Darwin's time,

... neither of the two fundamental axioms of Darwin's macro-evolutionary theory – the concept of the continuity of nature, that is the idea



of a functional continuum of all life forms linking all species together and ultimately leading back to a primeval cell, and the belief that all the adaptive design of life has resulted from a blind random process – have been validated by one single empirical discovery or scientific advance since 1859.

v. The molecular structures of living organisms do show relationships, but Darwinists simply assume that relationships imply common ancestry, a claim that certainly has not been proven. Moreover, there are amazing molecular differences between living things, and no satisfactory explanation for the origin of those differences has been given.

Of course, similarity of design at any level (including levels above the molecular level) has often been used as an argument for evolution. The assumption of evolutionists is that similarity of design between two species implies that the ‘lower’ species evolved into the ‘higher’ species, but the proof for that assumption has never been given. Gleason Archer illustrates this well by supposing that one visits a museum of science and industry and finds a display of how human beings evolved from earlier ape-like creatures into progressively more human-looking beings and finally into modern man. But he rightly notes that

... a continuity of basic design furnishes no evidence whatever that any ‘lower’ species phased into the next ‘higher’ species by any sort of internal dynamic, as evolution demands. For if the museum visitor were to go to another part of that museum of science and industry, he would find a completely analogous series of automobiles, commencing with 1900 and extending up until the present decade. Stage by stage, phase by phase, he could trace the development of the Ford from its earliest Model T prototype to the large and luxurious LTD of the 1970’s.

Of course, a much better explanation for the similarities in various models of Ford automobiles is the fact that an intelligent designer (or group of designers) used similar structures in successively more complex automobiles – if a steering mechanism works well in one model, there is no need to invent a different kind of steering mechanism for another model. In the same way, similarities in design among all living things can equally well be taken as evidence of the work of an intelligent master craftsman, the Creator himself.

vi. Probably the greatest difficulty of all for evolutionary theory is explaining how any life could have begun in the first place. The spontaneous generation of even the simplest living organism capable of independent life (the

prokaryote bacterial cell) from inorganic materials on the earth could not happen by random mixing of chemicals: it requires intelligent design and craftsmanship so complex that no advanced scientific laboratory in the world has been able to do it. Johnson quotes a now-famous metaphor: "That a living organism emerged by chance from a pre-biotic soup is about as likely as that "a tornado sweeping through a junkyard might assemble a Boeing 747 from the materials therein." Chance assembly is just a naturalistic way of saying "miracle".'

At a common-sense level, a simple illustration will show this. If I were to take my digital watch, hand it to someone, and say that I found it near an iron mine in northern Minnesota, and that it was my belief that the watch had come together by itself simply through the operation of random movement and environmental forces (plus some energy from a few bolts of lightning, perhaps), I would quickly be written off as mad. Yet any one living cell on the leaf of any tree, or any one cell in the human body, is thousands of times more complex than my digital watch. Even given 4.5 billion years the 'chance' of even one living cell arising spontaneously is, for all practical purposes, zero.

In fact, some attempts have been made to calculate the probability of life arising spontaneously in this way. Kofahl and Segraves give a statistical model in which they begin with a very generous assumption: that every square foot of the earth's surface was somehow covered with 95 pounds of protein molecules that could mix freely, and that are all replaced with fresh protein every year for one billion years. They then estimate the probability that even one enzyme molecule would develop in each one billion years of the earth's history. The probability is 1.2 times  $10^{11}$  or one chance in 80 billion. They note, however, that even with the generous assumptions and starting with fresh protein every year for a billion years, finding one enzyme molecule – for all practical purposes an impossible task – would not solve the problem at all:

The probability of finding two of the active molecules would be about  $10^{22}$ , and the probability that they would be identical would be  $10^{70}$ . And could life start with just a single enzyme molecule? Furthermore, what is the possibility that an active enzyme molecule, once formed, could find its way through thousands of miles and millions of years to that randomly formed RNA or DNA molecule which contains the code for that particular enzyme molecule's amino acid sequence, so that new copies of itself could be produced? Zero for all practical purposes.

Kofahl and Segraves report a study by an evolutionary scientist who formulates a model to calculate the probability for the formation, not just of

one enzyme molecule but the smallest likely living organism by random processes. He comes up with a probability of one chance in  $10^{340,000,000}$  – that is, one chance in 10 with 340 million zeros after it! But Kofahl and Segraves note, ‘Yet Dr. Morowitz and his fellow evolutionary scientists still believe that it happened!’

If someone were to ask me to entrust my life to ride on an airplane, and then explained that the airline company completed its flights safely once in every  $10^{340,000,000}$  times – or even one in every 80 billion flights – I certainly would not get on board, nor would anyone else in his or her right mind. Yet it is tragic that the common opinion, perpetuated in many science textbooks today, that evolution is an established ‘fact’, has continued to persuade many people that they should not consider the total truthfulness of the Bible to be an intellectually acceptable viewpoint for responsible, thinking individuals to hold today. The myth that ‘evolution has disproved the Bible’ persists and keeps many from considering Christianity as a valid option.

But what if some day life were actually ‘created’ in the laboratory by scientists? Here it is important to understand what is meant. First, this would not be ‘creation’ in the pure sense of the word, since all laboratory experiments begin with some kinds of previously existing matter. It would not give an explanation of the origin of matter itself, nor would it be the kind of creating that the Bible says God did. Second, most contemporary attempts to ‘create life’ are really just very small steps in the gigantic process of moving from nonliving materials to an independently living organism, even one consisting of only one cell. The construction of a protein molecule or an amino acid nowhere approaches the complexity of a single living cell. But most importantly, what would it demonstrate if the collective work of thousands of the most intelligent scientists in the world, with the most expensive and complex laboratory equipment available, working over the course of several decades, actually did produce a living organism? Would that ‘prove’ that God did not create life? Quite the opposite: it would demonstrate that life simply does not come about by chance but must be intentionally created by an intelligent designer. In theory at least, it is not impossible that human beings, created in the image of God and using their God-given intelligence could someday create a living organism out of nonliving substances (though the complexity of the task far surpasses any technology that exists today). But that would only show that God made us to be ‘God-like’ – that in biological research as in many other areas of life we in a very small way can imitate God’s activity. All such scientific research in this direction really ought to be done out of reverence for God and with gratitude for the scientific capability with which he has endowed us.

Many unbelieving scientists have been so influenced by the cumulative force of the objections brought against evolution that they have openly advocated novel positions for one part or another of the proposed evolutionary development of living things. Francis Crick, who won the Nobel Prize for helping to discover the structure of DNA molecules, proposed in 1973 that life may have been sent here by a spaceship from a distant planet, a theory that Crick calls 'Directed Panspermia'. To the present author, it seems ironic that brilliant scientists could advocate so fantastic a theory without one shred of evidence in its favour, all the while rejecting the straightforward explanation given by the one Book in the history of the world that has never been proven wrong, that has changed the lives of millions of people, that has been believed completely by many of the most intelligent scholars of every generation, and that has been a greater force for good than any other book in the history of the world. Why will otherwise intelligent people commit themselves to beliefs that seem so irrational? It seems as though they will believe in anything, so long as it is not belief in the personal God of Scripture, who calls us to forsake our pride, humble ourselves before him, ask his forgiveness for failure to obey his moral standards, and submit ourselves to his moral commands for the rest of our lives. To refuse to do this is irrational, but, as we shall see in the chapter on sin, all sin is ultimately irrational at its root.

Other challenges to the theory of evolution have been published in the last twenty or thirty years, and no doubt many more will be forthcoming. One only hopes it will not be too long before the scientific community publicly acknowledges the implausibility of evolutionary theory, and textbooks written for high school and college students openly acknowledge that evolution simply is not a satisfactory explanation for the origin of life on the earth.

## **2. The Destructive Influences of Evolutionary Theory on Modern Thought:**

It is important to understand the incredibly destructive influences that evolutionary theory has had on modern thinking. If in fact life was not created by God, and if human beings in particular are not created by God or responsible to him, but are simply the result of random occurrences in the universe, then of what significance is human life? We are merely the product of matter plus time plus chance, and so to think that we have any eternal importance, or really any importance at all in the face of an immense universe, is simply to delude ourselves. Honest reflection on this notion should lead people to a profound sense of despair.

Moreover, if all of life can be explained by evolutionary theory apart from God, and if there is no God who created us (or at least if we cannot know anything about him with certainty), then there is no supreme Judge to hold us morally accountable. Therefore there are no moral absolutes in human life, and people's moral ideas are only subjective preferences, good for them perhaps but not to be imposed on others. In fact, in such a case the only thing forbidden is to say that one knows that certain things are right and certain things are wrong.

There is another ominous consequence of evolutionary theory: If the inevitable processes of natural selection continue to bring about improvement in life forms on earth through the survival of the fittest, then why should we hinder this process by caring for those who are weak or less able to defend themselves? Should we not rather allow them to die without reproducing so that we might move toward a new, higher form of humanity, even a 'master race'? In fact, Marx, Nietzsche, and Hitler all justified war on these grounds.

Moreover, if human beings are continually evolving for the better, then the wisdom of earlier generations (and particularly of earlier religious beliefs) is not likely to be as valuable as modern thought. In addition, the effect of Darwinian evolution on the people's opinions of the trustworthiness of Scripture has been a very negative one.

Contemporary sociological and psychological theories that see human beings as simply higher forms of animals are another outcome of evolutionary thought. And the extremes of the modern 'animal rights' movement that oppose all killing of animals (for food, or for leather coats, or for medical research, for example) also flow naturally out of evolutionary thought.

## References

- 1 Philip E Johnson, *Darwin on Trial* (Downers Grove, Ill: IVP 1991), points out that some studies frequently claimed as evidence of evolution are really just temporary population differences with no genetic change. For example, he mentions Kettlewell's observation of 'industrial melanism' in the peppered moth, whereby the prevailing colour of the moths changed from white to black and back to white again when leaves on trees were light coloured, then covered with soot from pollution, then again light coloured when the pollution ended. But at every stage, both black and white moths were present, even though in differing proportions (moths that did not match the leaf colour were more easily seen and eaten by predators). No evolutionary change occurred at all, for both black and white moths were still industrial moths, just as black and white horses are both horses. In fact, the moth functioned to preserve its genetic identity in differing circumstances, rather than evolving or becoming extinct.
- 2 Robert E Kofahl and Kelly L Segraves, *The Creation Explanation: A Scientific Alternative to Evolution* (Wheaton, Ill: Harold Shaw, 1975). This book is a fascinating collection of scientific evidence favouring creation by intelligent design.

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# A Command from Heaven for Justice

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*Let justice roll like the waves of the sea*

*Prof Jannie du Preez*

*Jannie du Preez is emeritus professor of Missiology at the University of Stellenbosch, South Africa. This is a popular version of a scholarly article which he has written for The Journal of Theology for Southern Africa (Cape Town) to be published during 2000. The application has been added with the author's approval.*

Amos is one of the first of the so-called writing prophets of Israel. Round about 762BC he lashed out, in the name of Yahweh, against the social injustice of his days as practised in the Northern Kingdom with Samaria as its metropolis. The leaders in Samaria oppressed the poor, ignoring even their most basic needs (Amos 2:6-7; 8:4-6). They perverted justice, bribed judges and cheated the poor in the market place (5:10-12). In all of this priests of the state temple had a specific hand. They were powerful economic and political officials of the king and exerted their power on all levels of society.

Thus, by the mouth of Amos, Yahweh announces his dislike of Israel's religious feasts, his total rejection of their offerings and songs. A recent commentator points out that the cumulative image of verses 5:22-23 is 'God's holding the nose, shutting the eyes and closing the ears to Israel's ceremonies'. Israel has to hear the following admonition:

Away with the noise of your songs!  
To the music of harps I will not listen.  
But let justice roll on like waters,  
Righteousness like a never-failing stream! (Amos 5:23-24)

These words form the climax of an oracle (5:21-24) which is recognised as being of central importance in the message of Amos. Some commentators understand verse 24 as an announcement of divine judgment on Israel because of her unjust behaviour. But elsewhere in Amos the terms 'justice' and 'righteousness' are used throughout as something which God expects from his

people, as is clear from 5:7,12 and 6:12. Furthermore a similar line of thought is followed by prophets like Isaiah in ch. 1:10-17). Consequently most commentators quite correctly interpret Amos 5:24 as a divine summons to Israel to practise justice.

God's rejection of Israel's feasts and offerings in 5:21-23 does not mean that his call for justice in verse 24 is to be understood as a call 'for morality without religion, service without services', but simply because justice and righteousness are essential activities of the covenant God of Israel (Isa 3:13-15, Micah 7:9), they should be prime covenant duties of his people, especially of the leaders.

Amos uses justice (*mišpāt*) and righteousness (*sêdāqâ*) consistently as terms for the qualities which ought to be present in the social order of a covenant society (5:7,24; 6:12). The first is associated specifically with the judicial process by which right order is maintained in social relations, especially the protection of the weak and the poor. The second is the rightness belonging to those who fulfil the responsibilities which may be expected from them in their relationship to others.

In his call for justice and righteousness in the name of God, the farmer-prophet makes use of two similes from nature: justice must roll on like waters and righteousness like a never-failing stream. Many commentators interpret the first simile as pointing to a sudden overflow of justice and righteousness, the second as expressive of the unceasing application thereof in society:

Justice and righteousness must roll down like floods after the winter rains, persist like those few wadis whose streams do not fail in the summer drought (Deut 21:4, Psa 74:15). That is, the response should swell with sudden force, and continue unabated. (Mays, James L, 1969, 109, *Amos*, SCM London).

This is a plausible interpretation of verse 24. There are, however, those who prefer to understand the verse in terms of a so-called synonymous parallelism: the two similes both point to the one idea of *constancy* in exercising justice and righteousness:

Israel's God requires regular, consistent keeping of the covenant. . . A society truly in harmony with Yahweh's will must practise justice . . . and righteousness . . . routinely: always and everywhere. (Stuart, Douglas 1987, 355, *Hosea-Jonah*, Word Biblical Commentary, Waco, TX, USA).



The Hebrew word *kamayim* in verse 24a, translated ‘like a river’ in many versions (e.g. NEB, NIB, REB), means literally ‘like water(s)’ as in other versions (e.g. NAB, RSV, JB). The Hebrew word *gālal* (to roll) in verse 24 may suggest the rolling on of waves of the sea. . . Could this be what Amos had in mind? He must have been well acquainted with the sea for no less than four times he makes explicit mention of it in his prophecies.

If the first simile of verse 24 may indeed be understood as referring to the waves of the sea, it would mean that the prophet here makes use of two striking phenomena of nature in order to explain the urgent call for the constant pursuit of justice and righteousness in Israel: the uninterrupted rolling on of the waves of the sea, and the unceasing flow of a never-failing stream.

Thus by making use of a double image from nature, Amos underscores emphatically the divine summons for the constant pursuit of justice in society – a summons which may well strike the keynote of the entire urgent and lasting message of the prophet’s book for all times and all countries.

## Application

That God requires justice in civil government is true for every administration under heaven as we see expressed by the apostle Paul in Romans 13:1. ‘The authorities that exist have been established by God, for rulers hold not terror for those who do right but for those who do wrong.’

It can be said that the greatest calamities that have afflicted the human race have taken place in the 20th century when atheistic governments have sought to force their godless creeds on their peoples: Hitler, Stalin, Mao Tse Tung and Pol Pot. Other despots have ruled to satisfy their own ego. On the African continent there are many examples. For all injustice and atrocities those responsible will be brought to justice on the Judgment Day. ‘Vengeance is mine, I will repay,’ says the Lord.

Paul exhorts us to pray for kings and all those in authority that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness. I end with a striking quotation from P H Kelley in *The Book of Amos*, p 69, Baker Book House, 1966 which he borrows from a study on Amos by John E McFadyen:

Let justice . . . run through society, unimpeded by avarice or selfishness or cruelty, let it roll on without let or hindrance like the waves of the sea; let it roll on uninterruptedly, all the year round, whatever be the political weather; let it roll on ‘like a perennial stream’ which even in the fiercest heat of summer never dries up.

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# Creation in Six Days?

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Robert Letham

In the past year or two many correspondents have urged the Orthodox Presbyterian Church to commit itself to a binding belief that the days of Genesis 1 are periods of twenty-four hours. Throughout these communications two myths constantly recur.

**Myth #1:** The idea that the days of Genesis 1 are not to be interpreted literally is a recent development. It follows that those who read Genesis this way are capitulating to evolutionary theory.

This is simply wrong. A figurative interpretation of the days of Genesis 1 was advanced a millennium and a half before Darwin was ever heard of.

As early as the third century Origen (c185-c254) dismisses a literal interpretation of Genesis 1 as impossible. 'Nor even do the law and the commandments wholly convey what is agreeable to reason. For who that has understanding will suppose that the first, and second, and third day, and the evening and the morning, existed without a sun, and moon, and stars? and that the first day was, as it were, also without a sky?' *De Principiis* (4:1:16). See also *Contra Celsum* (50, 60).

In *De Civitate Dei* (11:6-7) Augustine (354-430) argues that the meaning of the details of Genesis 1 surpass our ability to grasp. 'What kind of days these were it is extremely difficult, or perhaps impossible for us to conceive, and how much more to say! ... but what kind of light that was, and by what periodic movement it made evening and morning, is beyond the reach of our senses; neither can we understand how it was.' Earlier, in his important *De Genesi ad Litteram* (The Literal Meaning of Genesis) he develops at length a view of simultaneous creation. God created only one day, recurring seven times (4:20, 26) and it is not to be taken in the sense of our day, which we reckon by the course of the sun; but it must have another meaning, applicable to the three days mentioned before the creation of the heavenly bodies. This special

meaning of 'day' must not be maintained just for the first three days, with the understanding that after the third day we take the word 'day' in its ordinary sense. But we must keep the same meaning even to the sixth and seventh days (4:26).

These days are beyond the experience and knowledge of us mortal earthbound men. And if we are able to make any effort towards an understanding of the meaning of those days, we ought not to rush forward with an ill-considered opinion, as if no other reasonable and plausible interpretation could be offered. Seven days by our reckoning, after the model of the days of creation, make up a week. By the passage of such weeks time rolls on, and in these weeks one day is constituted by the course of the sun from its rising to its setting; but we must bear in mind that these days indeed recall the days of creation, but without in any way being really similar to them (4:27).

Augustine is not dogmatic about this. He says, 'I certainly do not advance the interpretation given above in such a way as to imply that no better one can ever be found' (4:28). In Genesis 1 God accommodated himself to the capacities of those unable to grasp simultaneous creation. Elsewhere in Scripture it is written that God created all things simultaneously – 'those who cannot understand the meaning of the text, "He created all things together", cannot arrive at the meaning of Scripture unless the narrative proceeds slowly step by step' (4:33).

Much later, Anselm of Canterbury (c1033-1109), in *Cur Deus homo?* (1:18) in discussing the abstruse (and to us absurd) question of whether God intends the elect to make up the number of the fallen angels, refers to one's interpretation of the days of Genesis 1 as having tangible effect on the issue. While he does not commit himself to any particular view, he considers Augustine's proposal as a legitimate option and acknowledges that the majority in his day held to it – nearly seven hundred years after it was first advanced! He thinks it likely that the angels did not constitute the perfect number (and so the number of the elect will exceed that of the fallen angels). This is possible, even if man was not created at the same time as the angels, and it seems necessary if they were created together – as the majority think, because it is written, 'He that liveth forever created all things together.'

Calvin (1509-1564) in his commentary on Genesis does not address the question. But, in the midst of some superb exposition of the theology of creation and God's self-revelation in it, he stresses that God is accommodating himself to our limited human understanding, speaking to us on a simple, barbaric level. It is written like this 'for our sake' (on v 4) for Moses 'accommodated his discourse to the received custom' (on v 5). He continues, on verse 16:

‘Here lies the difference; Moses wrote in a popular style things which, without 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 . . . but because he [Moses] was ordained a teacher as well of the unlearned and rude as of the learned, he could not otherwise fulfil his office than by descending to this grosser method of instruction.’

In the documents of the Westminster Assembly (1643-1649) the most obvious reading supports the literal view of the six days. However, the Westminster divines were not ignoramuses. They knew and read Augustine, Origen and Anselm. Their statements simply reflect the language of Genesis 1 and make no attempt to define it further (WCF 4:1, WSC 9, WLC 15). Moreover, surprisingly there is no record of a book specifically on creation nor of a single commentary on Genesis written by any English Puritan before 1647, the year the Confession was completed. Nor does any Reformed confession comment on this question in the century or more before the Assembly, despite the variety of views that existed. Evidently, it was hardly a matter of controversy or even discussion.

**Myth #2:** Those who interpret the days of Genesis 1 in a nonliteral manner are basing their interpretation of Scripture on anti-Christian scientific theory. They prefer to follow modern science rather than the plain teaching of the Word of God.

This is a serious accusation. If true, it would justify charges of violating ordination vows. It implicitly impugns the integrity of those who hold this position. Conversely, if false it borders on slander.

Reasons for taking a nonliteral view of the days of Genesis 1 stem from the Bible, the text of Genesis itself, and it should be on that basis that the issue is discussed.

The word *yom* (day) is used in four different ways in the context; (1) for daylight as opposed to darkness, in 1:5, (2) for the seventh day, of which no end is specified, in 2:2-3 (cf Heb 4:1-11, where the seventh day is equated with eternity, God’s rest, which he calls us to enter), (3) for the one day in which God created the heavens and the earth, in 2:4 (obscured by the NIV translation), and (4) the sense under discussion. Of course, it does not necessarily follow that because *yom* has these other meanings elsewhere in the context that it does here too. But it at least poses a major question mark over adopting a literal reading here and so restricting valid interpretations of Genesis 1 to but one. On the other hand, the absence of the sun and the moon

in the first three 'days' reinforces the likelihood of a flexible and figurative meaning at this point too.

Again, the literary structure of Genesis 1 shows two parallel sets of three days. In the first three days God creates light, the expanse and dry land, while in the second set of three days he creates objects and sentient beings to inhabit or direct these spheres. This argues more for a topical than chronological interest in Genesis 1 and so for a figurative, rather than literal, view of the six days.

A vital principle in all biblical interpretation is that we should view any passage in the light of the whole of Scripture. This applies as much to Genesis 1 as to the rest of the Bible. Simply because it comes first we may be tempted to suppose that we can thereby view it in isolation. This is wrong. If anything, the majestic words of God in Job 38 may have been composed before Genesis, and there he spells out his supremacy in creation in no uncertain terms. Again, read in the light of the exodus on the one hand (a prominent Old Testament theme) and of the fullness of God's self-revelation as triune on the other, it is clear that there are far more prominent themes in this chapter than the issue of the nature of the six days.

I am not arguing here that the literal view of the days of Genesis 1 is impermissible, nor even that it is wrong. After all, it has the weight of Karl Barth to back it, in his extensive exegesis of the chapter in his *Church Dogmatics* 111/1:99-228. Sufficient to say that it is not the only interpretation of this passage that can claim the sanction of Scripture. Speaking for myself, the text of Scripture is determinative, for it is the Word of God. There is much more we could say at this point but I am not sure it is necessary. One thing, however, is clear – this chapter has yet to disclose all its secrets.

These myths rest on ignorance and misrepresentation. The first is lamentable, but can be corrected in time. The other is far more serious. It affects the way we treat other people. Attacking people's motives is a dangerous business. It calls for more than a realignment of our exegesis.

As an antidote I suggest a thorough reading of Calvin's commentary on Genesis. He does not address this topic but what he does do is immeasurably better. He unfolds the lavish theology of creation taught here. More attention to this would do wonders. In many ways the creation science debate has brought in its wake pernicious damage, robbing the Church of its birthright. Amidst the rich jewels of the scriptural revelation of God, man and creation in Genesis 1, many are looking in the wrong direction, at minute pebbles that have nothing to do with the system of doctrine taught in the Holy Scriptures or with the awesome grandeur of God's infallible revelation in creation.

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# Creation: A Preacher's Perspective

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*Mostyn Roberts*

That our God is the Creator of the universe is foundational to every other Christian doctrine. In the Christian mind it has a profound place, referred to by the biblical writers to expand our faith and to inspire worship, praise, repentance and godly fear. A song of praise to the Creator will resound in eternal ages (Rev 4:11).

This, however, is from the standpoint of faith. In this article I want to make a brief survey of the relationship between creation and redemption and look at some of the implications of the doctrine of creation for the preacher of the gospel.

## **Creation presupposes Redemption**

The ultimate purpose of God is the praise of his glory, the great means of which is the bringing of 'all things in heaven and earth together under one head, even Christ' (Eph 1:10). Central to this is the adoption, as sons, of those whom from eternity he predestined for redemption.

Assuming for the moment the priority of his glory, redemption and its consummation is the grand design of God laid out for us in the Bible. Putting it another way, grace renews nature and God always planned that it would. God's plan is one and indivisible and he has integrated his purpose in creation into his redemptive purpose. To this extent, therefore, creation presupposes redemption.

Therefore the Man who really counts was always to be Christ, not Adam. Before creation, there was God in triune fellowship; there was love, thought



and communication. There was also the predestination of Christ (1 Peter 1:20) and the election of a people for adoption and holiness (Eph 1:4; 2 Tim 1:9; Tit 1:2). From the foundation of the world Christ was slain (Rev 13:8). There was a relationship of Christ to his Church and a rest for the people of God on which the creation ordinances of marriage and sabbath were patterned and to which they point (Eph 5:22-32; Heb 4:1-10). Seen in this way, creation is a glass through which we see redemptive realities, even as in another way it is the stage on which redemption takes place.

Creation was therefore out of nothing, but it was not for nothing. It was for the glory of the Father through the Son via his mediatorial role. Creation is for a purpose and the 'out of nothing' is lent significance by the purpose for which God brought all things into existence. When we think and speak about creation we must be Christ-centred, thinking of his redemptive work and not only of him as the agent of creation.

### **Creation is presupposed by Redemption**

After 'the beginning', we see however the drama of redemption played out against the backdrop of creation and creation providing the 'raw materials' with which God works to fulfil his eternal purposes.

#### *a. 'Leaning forward' to a new creation*

We may see this firstly from the viewpoint of the end of redemption, the consummation. The New Testament leans forward to the last things. We are in the last days but they are yet to arrive in fulness. Salvation has come but is still coming. Christ's first coming brings in a new order, but a new order that will only be completed on his return. It is also a new order that bears within it the seeds of its own completion. Personal faith contains the guarantee of participating in the new heavens and new earth. The idea of a new beginning, implying an end, is in the concepts of regeneration, new creation and resurrection which are spiritually the personal experience of the believer at conversion but are fulfilled in the resurrection and new creation of the last days.

Meanwhile, the gift of the Spirit is seen as the earnest of a fuller inheritance (Eph 1:14) and creation groans to be released into the glorious liberty of the children of God (Rom 8:18-21).<sup>1</sup> Salvation is a process (Rom.13:11) charac-



terised by hope, always looking forward to our inheritance from the Lord as a reward and longing for his coming.

What is clear in the leaning forward of the New Testament towards the end is that redemption is of a created order. Nowhere is the material nature of the new creation made clearer than in 1 Corinthians 15. ‘Corporeality is the end of the ways of God.’<sup>2</sup> In the end, salvation is assuredly physical. Moreover, its constituent elements are already in existence although to be transformed into something incorruptible. Redemption is a re-creation not another creation. The resurrection body is the body we inhabit on earth. The new order is an order of things in which the Lord’s own resurrection appearances disclose both continuity with, and transformation of, the present (old) order. We may say therefore that creation is not only presupposed by redemption but is affirmed by redemption and at the same time superseded by it. The new heavens and earth, like our resurrection bodies, will be radically renewed and reconstituted versions of the present order.

#### *b. The uncreated Redeemer*

Second, there is the agent of redemption. Jesus Christ through whom all things are being made new is the one through whom, for whom and by whom all things were made (John 1:3; Col 1:16; Heb 1:2). This asserts the deity of Christ; the Redeemer is uncreated. The pivotal point in the redemptive process was the Word becoming flesh, entering into what he had made, specifically taking on human nature, being made like his brothers in every respect (Heb 2:17) so that he might redeem them.

Moreover, the phrase ‘for as in Adam all die, so in Christ shall all be made alive’ (1 Cor 15:22) sums up another redemptive theme: Christ is the last Adam, the second man (Rom 5:12-21; 1 Cor 15:45-49).<sup>3</sup> At the heart of redemption is the bearing by believers of the image, no longer of the man of dust, but of the heavenly man. There is some truth therefore in the idea of recapitulation, whereby Christ through assuming real flesh in the incarnation retraced the steps of Adam in order to bring humanity to perfection. His obedience and death restored what was lost through the disobedience of the first Adam – though we may want to qualify how we see all of humanity represented in the Redeemer’s work, and say, rather, that in the redeemed God saved the human race.

It is equally clear that the incarnation is not to glorify the old creation, nor an end in itself, but rather the precondition of the cross – he took on flesh and

blood so that through death he might destroy the power of the devil, and was made in the likeness of his brothers to make propitiation for them (Heb 2:14,17). The same emphasis is seen in Colossians 1:15-20 and Philippians 2:5-11.

### *c. Destroying sin*

This brings us to the third theme, the reason for redemption, that is sin. Christianity has sometimes fallen into the trap of being anti-material. This is a profound error. When God had made all things, he saw that it was very good. What is bad is not what is created but sin. Redemption presupposes sin and sin bears a certain relation to creation. John Murray<sup>4</sup> reminds us that sin is not eternal nor did it inhere in the origin of creation. If it were eternal there would be another power beside God outside God's power. If it inhered in creation God would have created something evil. In the one case God is not all-powerful, in the other he is not good. In either case, man is not responsible. But sin came in as the free act of free agents. 'So we may say that sin is the one and only thing in which contradiction to God inheres. Yet it is sin that redemption overcomes and destroys. Redemption cannot be defined as anything less than the making an end of sin and its evil consequences.'<sup>5</sup>

### *d. The heart of the atonement*

A strong theology of a creation that was good, by a God who is all good and all powerful, is therefore the backdrop to redemption. Nor is our theology of the cross unaffected. The uncreated Son of God, the agent of redemption through whom also the world was created, takes on created human nature. In that nature he dies. Is the means of redemption in his incarnation? Then what do we make of his death? Is judgment being passed on creation as such? Certainly not!

The cross is the great reminder that, whereas creation was an act of power bringing things into being *ex nihilo*, the recreation is an act of power against enemies – Satan, sin, God's own wrath and death. Redemption is a battle from first to last. For the new creation to come into being, something had to be left behind, cancelled, destroyed. That was not anything God had created, but sin and all evils that accompany it. Thus the cross is a negation not of creation but of sin.

It is the principle of penal substitution that is the heart of atonement, for here three things are seen: first, in the death of Christ God is against sin and not against creation – the created order survives to be renewed in the resurrection,

sin does not; secondly, the death of Christ satisfies God's justice – the original divine order of things is vindicated because what opposed and destroyed it is itself destroyed in the very (human) flesh through which it entered creation; and thirdly, the death is not merely of a representative man but of one whose death takes the penalty for others – for those who will not die – those for whom he is substitute. God had to condemn sin in the flesh of one who came in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin. But it was sin and not the flesh per se that he condemned. The resurrection proclaims the arrival of a sin-free new order of things, the first instalment of which believers now enjoy.

## **Conclusion: Creation and the Preacher**

Some conclusions may be drawn with reference to preaching the gospel and we can see that the preacher engages in his task with considerable encouragements and challenges drawn from the doctrine of creation.

'Creation's *raison d'être* salvation, assuredly then is to serve the redemptive purposes of God.'<sup>6</sup> It is the backdrop for redemption. We are to preach redemption knowing that we are not working against, or indifferent to, but with the plan of God in creating the world. Moreover the whole creation groans for the liberation of the sons of God – a work that the gospel inaugurates.

When we are preaching the gospel:

We are using the instrument through which God created the world – the Word of God.

We have the promise of the assistance of the person of the Trinity who hovered over the waters and brought order out of chaos – the Holy Spirit.

We are preaching to people who are precisely fitted to hear and understand and respond to his message – made in the image of God.

We are seeking their renewal in the image of the one we preach, through whom they were created.

While the heavens declare God's glory and earth reveals his eternal power and deity, creation however can do no more than condemn; it is the gospel that introduces sinners to the Redeemer, to redemption and to a true appreciation of creation (for it is only 'by faith' that we understand that the world was formed at God's command – Hebrews 11:3).

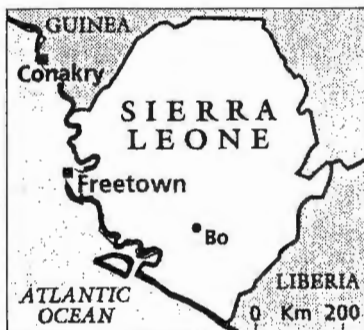
Urgency is lent to our task because sinners will not come to the knowledge of the Saviour any other way. 'The characteristic activity of the present age is missions.' Preaching the gospel reverses the historical sequence of Creation – Fall – Redemption – Consummation. In preaching we work with the model Consummation – Redemption – Fall – Creation. New Testament preaching begins at the end, pointing people to the last things – the return of Christ, judgment, resurrection and renewal. In the light of this constantly forward reference, it proclaims the redeeming work of Christ and calls sinners to repentance and faith. The gospel preacher heralds a work that in Christ has been completed. Are we therefore in our preaching (a) leaning forward to the last things – the return of Christ, bodily resurrection, judgment, eternal destinies and the corporeal blessings of the redeemed; and (b) true to the material nature of our future hope and its implications for the way we live in the present life (1 Cor 15:19, 32-34; 2 Peter 3:14)?

We must preach against sin. Sin is the only thing in creation inherently against God. The two 'black spots' of history are the Fall, which was sin's entry, and Calvary, which was both its climax and downfall. The cross is to deal with sin. This is what gospel preaching should have in its sights.

We must preach Christ, crucified-and-risen – especially the cross. It was a death for sin and the death of sin. To preach Christ crucified is to honour Christ, to do man good, and to be 'creation friendly' in the richest possible sense of that term. Thus the 'new song' of heaven is not to the Creator but to the Lamb 'looking as if it had been slain', and rejoices in the shed blood with which he 'purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation' (Rev 5:9).

## References

- 1 This passage creates problems for the progressive or 'long day' creationists because of the implicit anthropic principle. Creation hangs on man. As in restoration so surely at the Fall – death came upon all things, not just on man, with the sin of Adam. It does not fit easily with this man-centredness to suggest that there could have been animal death for (?) millions of years before the Fall.
- 2 Unattributed, cited in H Bavinck, *The Last Things*, Baker 1996, p135.
- 3 Moreover, it is difficult to see that all that the New Testament teaches about the restoration through Christ of what was lost in Adam, can have meaning if Adam were not a real person as he is presented in the Genesis account. There is no indication that either the Lord or the apostles treated the Genesis account as anything but history.
- 4 *Collected Writings of John Murray*, Banner of Truth 1976, vol 1, pp325-29.
- 5 *Ibid.* p328.
- 6 Reymond, R. *A New Systematic Theology of the Christian Faith*, Nelson, 1998, p398.
- 7 A A Hoekema, *The Bible and the Future*, Eerdmans 1994 ed. p33.



## Sierra Leone

*A report from Mike Webb*

*Stop press: Mike and Vi were evacuated from Sierra Leone in May*

We left on 19th March bound for an area of villages called 'Rutile' – named after a mining company with operations in that area (now ceased due to rebel activity). The journey was 174 miles and took 7 hours; we passed through 32 checkpoints, 26 of which were manned by UN/govt. troops, the others by Civil Defence Force and rebels. We passed burnt out cars and houses – all signs of rebel activity. Little signs of rebuilding as yet. The drive was long and dusty. We stayed with a pastor, Rev Peter Kainwo, and held a 3-day seminar with pastors in a village called Moribatown (pop 2000). One pastor walked 11 miles to attend, another cycled 14 miles. We only expected about 20 pastors so we were encouraged by the presence of 33 for the last two days. We were humbled by the stories of difficulties

many had faced and were facing. We could give thanks for the way our Lord and theirs had kept them. Many told stories of the way the rebels had treated them, tying them up, threatening them. Three girls were abducted from one house and only one has returned. A pastor's sister was shot before his eyes because she refused to hand over her few possessions.

We visited a couple of larger villages – Matru Jong and Gbanbentok – like all the other places we passed bearing signs of destruction with burnt out houses and shops, wrecked utility supplies etc. We also took part in the 'Community Trauma Healing and Peace Building' Workshop at which Mike spoke on forgiveness but was also pitch-forked, with no preparation, into heading a couple of other sessions. We didn't enjoy that as much as the seminar.

The physical amenities were difficult – washing facilities were primitive

and drinking water difficult to obtain. We thank the Lord for the trip and for your prayers. Pray that funds would come in to repeat these seminars in other parts of Sierra Leone. They are really appreciated by pastors especially as they seek to rebuild their people after the spiritual and physical devastation of this evil war.

Please pray for the safe arrival of the boxes we sent. They were meant to be delivered to our house on March 21st or 22nd and are still not here. Reports indicate they arrived in Freetown on 8th or 9th and so should have arrived here as promised but no sign of them as yet and we can't find anyone to tell us where they are.

Mike is the main speaker at the Scripture Union Easter Retreat on 21st, 22nd, 23rd April. This is a Retreat that many people look forward to all year; we pray that it will be a real blessing and encouragement to the people. Vi has Bible studies each week and has also been asked to teach an English course at the Presbyterian Bible College.

Thank you so much for your prayerful interest in the Lord's work here in this war-torn land.

## Indonesia

*A report by Eric Michael, formerly with OMF in Jakarta, now serving Indonesian churches in the USA*

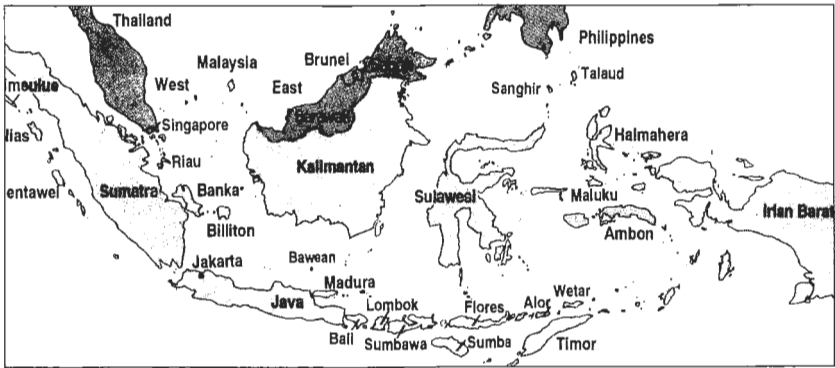
*Tropical Southeast Asia.* The equator runs through this largest archipelago

in the world consisting of over 13,000 islands, of which about 6,000 are inhabited. It is the fourth largest nation in the world, with a population of 210 million representing over 350 ethnic groups. The five main islands are Sumatra, Kalimantan, Java, Sulawesi and Irian Jaya. The spice-rich eastern islands were what Christopher Columbus was heading for when he discovered America.

Bahasa Indonesia is the official language and is spoken by the majority of people but local languages are still important in many areas.

Indonesia has the largest concentration of Muslims in the world with some 190 million adherents. Although it is not an Islamic state, Muslims hold considerable political clout. Through the constitution citizens may choose to follow Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism or Christianity. To avoid religious conflict, however, proselytizing has been banned, and criticism of other religions is prohibited.

Christianity has experienced tremendous growth in the last few decades. Christians now account for about 12 percent of the population, with Protestants outnumbering Catholics almost three to one. *Operation World* suggests about 4.4% of the population are evangelical. Baptists are largely concentrated in Java and West Kalimantan, the largest groups being affiliated with the Southern Baptists and Conservative Baptists of the USA. There are also a number of Chinese Baptist churches having connections with Baptists in



other Asian nations. (Main source of above information is from International Students, Inc. *Indonesia: A Country Profile*).

*The current situation, based largely on a report from the OMF Office in Indonesia:* After the Timorese chose to be independent at the end of August 1999, Aceh (province in northern Sumatra) asked for a referendum on independence. Irian Jaya, Riau and the city of Makassar in Sulawesi also have the same objectives. Many people desire federal status for Indonesia, or at least having autonomous provinces. However in this case the rich areas would become more prosperous, but what about areas with huge populations but few natural resources, such as Java?

Pray that the government, led by President Wahid, will wisely give attention to the Acehnese demand for a referendum. Many non-Acehnese and non-Muslims are evacuating Aceh under pressure from those who are starting to implement the Muslim Shariah laws there.

It is believed by many that certain elements in Indonesia are using religious issues for political ends. Also numbers of extremists are looking for every opportunity to force their beliefs on others. In the Moluccas islands hundreds of people have died in on-going violence between Muslims and Christians. Numbers of churches have been destroyed there and in other parts of Indonesia. The *Indonesia Operation Mobilization Centre and Bible School* in the capital, Jakarta was attacked and burned late last year. People expect little or no protection from the police or military during these incidents.

The political and economic situation continues unstable, although there is evidence of slow recovery in recent months.

Pray for Christians who are active in outreach and church-planting, crisis relief and other caring ministries during these volatile days in the history of this nation.



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## Book Reviews

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There are a number of new titles worthy of attention - two studies of wealth and materialism, a new commentary on Exodus, devotional help from Don Carson, and a survey of sectarian groups.

**Neither Poverty nor Riches -**  
*a Biblical Theology of Material Possessions*

*Craig L. Blomberg, Apollos, 1999, 300pp*

**How to Get Really Rich -**  
*a sharp look at the religion of greed*  
*Brian Rosner, IVP, 1999, 156 pp*

None of us will need to be persuaded that the subject of material wealth is a vital concern of the church today. We look out on a greedy and unashamedly idolatrous world. But closer to home, our congregations are often safe havens for the same attitudes, albeit more carefully hidden. These two books will certainly help us both think through and then challenge our powerful idols.

Blomberg's book aims at being a 'biblical theology of material possessions', and is a close study of all of the key passages on wealth and related issues, from Genesis to Revelation in canonical order,

including inter-testamental attitudes. Thick with details, the book's real weakness is that there is insufficient biblical theology, with too little processing of the material studied, either in the course of or at the end of the survey. Instead, the reader feels a little stupefied by the facts and references. Where conclusions are drawn, they tend to be fairly unremarkable. I was very disappointed by a lack of Scripture index, which reduces the book's usefulness after the first read.

Those points made, there are some excellent studies on particular parts of the Bible, the giving passages in 2 Corinthians, and the overall treatment of James being particular highlights. Also, Blomberg does us a great service by showing us again both the blessing of possessions, and the great responsibility of using them for Kingdom purposes. He very modestly puts forward some practical suggestions for how to treat our incomes and assess our lifestyles, coming in part out of his own experiences of graded tithing. A scholarly book, written with a passion to see the Lord honoured.

Far more accessible and more immediately useful for the preacher is Brian Rosner's exciting book, 'How

to Get Really Rich.' Fairly fast moving and punchy, the book puts a huge amount of mature thought into a remarkably short space. Contemporary and historical illustrations keep the issues in clear focus, as do a number of poems by Richard Firmin. Throughout the analysis is firmly biblical, and the book progresses from identifying and analysing the problem to offering suggestions for a way forward: the last three chapters are titled 'Learning Contentment', 'Sharing Possessions', and 'True Riches'.

Brian Rosner was until last year lecturing in NT at Aberdeen University, and this is a great contribution to the Church of scholarship and careful thinking made relevant and accessible. It is a distillation which many preachers will have much to thank him for. Definitely one for the church bookstall, but only after you've plundered it for your sermons!

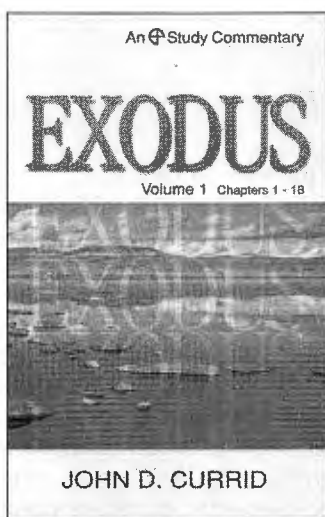
*Lewis Allen.*

(Lewis is pastor of Gunnersbury Baptist Church, London).

## **Exodus**

*John Currid, Evangelical Press, 415pp, hc.*

Those who attended the Carey Ministers' Conference in January 1999 have been waiting in eager anticipation for Dr John Currid's commentary on Exodus to appear.



Now at last we have volume one covering chapters 1-18. There is so little available to the preacher on Exodus that any new evangelical commentary is to be welcomed. But it is especially good to have a work written from a conservative, reformed theological standpoint. This is no dry academic text; it is intended to be spiritually edifying and a tool for the preacher. The book is broken up into very short chapters, each covering a few verses and concluding with a section of application and references to the New Testament. And while Dr Currid is a scholar working from the Hebrew text, opening up the meaning as he goes, this book does not put off the preacher who is less learned. References to Hebrew are carefully explained, and footnotes are relegated to the end of the volume.

We now wait eagerly for volume 2, and for further additions to this new

'Study Commentary' series from Evangelical Press.

*Bill James.*

### **For the Love of God -**

*A Daily Companion for Discovering the Riches of God's Word*

*D.A. Carson, Crossway Books, 1998-9, 2 vols, hc.*

These devotional helps are warmly recommended for three reasons. *First*, the books help us to read the Bible widely and systematically, following the M'Cheyne reading plan. *Secondly*, the Bible passages are presented in the context of the whole of Scripture. Dr Carson provides a page of teaching each day relating to two of the four prescribed passages. For example, our two readings for 11 January were Genesis 12 and Matthew 11. After stating that Genesis 12 is a turning point in God's unfolding plan, Carson goes on to show how the promise of blessing to all peoples is worked out and concludes by stating that: 'Christ receives the unrestrained praise of heaven, because with his blood he purchased people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation' (Rev 5:9). *Thirdly* they are devotional. The one-page commentaries each day are both warm and challenging and lead helpfully to a time of prayer.

Highly commended!

*Richard and Corinne Hagan.*

(Richard Hagan ministers as a student and youth worker with the Titus

Trust; his wife Corinne is training to be a doctor at the John Radcliffe Hospital, Oxford).

### **Sectarian Religion in Contemporary Britain -**

*Nigel Scotland, Paternoster, 314pp, pb.*

Would you understand or be able to help someone with a background in the Exclusive Brethren, or the Jesus army? Nigel Scotland has produced a valuable book providing an insight into nine religious groups, including these sects and the Christadelphians, Rastafarianism, and the International Church of Christ. The author seeks to be fair-minded and objective, rather than adopt a "cult-bashing" approach. He has used primary sources and had discussions with the members of each group. He has attended their meetings where possible. There is also a discussion of the nature and diversity of sectarian religion.

### **The Dissenters: Volume 1 From the Reformation to the French Revolution**

*Michael Watts. Oxford University Press, 1978, reprinted 1999. pb. £17.50. 542 pp.*

Michael Watts's second volume on the Dissenters (1791-1859) was reviewed in *RT 156*. The first volume has now been reprinted, and is strongly recommended. It draws on primary sources to provide a superb overview with a satisfying amount of detail.

*Bill James.*

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## Does God believe in Atheists?

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John Blanchard has provided the Christian Church with an excellent resource of outstanding relevance in this volume on atheism (clothbound, 656 pages, Evangelical Press, UK, £19.95). This is a major contribution which I commend for the following reasons:

1. *It is comprehensive.* To take on atheism with a broad sweep, its history, its presuppositions, its present philosophy and its disastrous outcome, is ambitious indeed. The author traces out the origin and progress of atheistic thinking. He goes right back to the Greek philosophers, Socrates, Plato and Aristotle and traces humanistic thinking through the centuries. Interest is sustained by the use of biography. René Descartes and de Spinoza are described as well as the architects of modern atheism, Immanuel Kant, Friedrich Schleiermacher, Hegel and Nietzsche. The role played by Karl Marx, Lenin and Mao Tse-tung are described. The book is packed full of relevant, well-informed, carefully researched knowledge. As no other contemporary book I know, this treatise deals in a lively manner with the world around us as it really is and explains why it is as it is.

2. *It is expository in style.* The character of God is declared as unique, personal, plural, spiritual, eternally self-existent, transcendent, immanent,

omniscient, immutable, holy, loving, the Creator of the entire universe and the Judge of all mankind. Atheists say they do not believe in God but when you get them talking they enlarge on their complaints about God such as, 'If there were an omnipotent and wholly good God, evil and suffering would have no place in the world.' The common objections hurled against God are faithfully answered by the Word of God (chapter 23).

3. *It is earnest.* We are not on an afternoon stroll but called to grapple seriously with the way atheists think and the appalling consequences of atheistic philosophy. The author points to Hitler's holocaust, describes Stalin's Gulag, the calamity of the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia, the atrocities of Mao Tse-tung and worst of all the atheistic communism of Joseph Stalin of whom Alexander Solzhenitsyn wrote, 'If I were asked today the main cause of the ruinous Revolution that has swallowed up some sixty million of our people, I could not put it more accurately than to repeat: "Men have forgotten God; that's why all this has happened."'

4. *It is eminently readable.* Blanchard employs sanctified sarcasm and humour. For instance in dealing with the atheistic trend to place humans and animals on the same level, he quotes one writer as saying that

'chimpanzees, delightful though they are, are not normally to be seen on our streets collecting money for impoverished chimpanzees they will never meet'. He tells of the Total Dog, Inc., in Los Angeles where pets are offered physical therapy, swimming, homeo-pathy, electro-acupuncture and Chinese herbs!

5. *It demolishes macro-evolution.* The book deals effectively with the mythology of macro-evolution. Pages 78 - 125 are devoted to Charles Darwin, Darwinism and evolutionary thinking. Is this important? According to Julian Huxley, 'Evolution is the most powerful and most comprehensive idea that has ever arisen on earth'! We have to reckon with the fact that perhaps 90 percent of people today are blinded by evolutionary humanism. Using the criteria of eminent scientists, Blanchard, in a style easy to grasp for laymen, shows the utter fallacy of biological evolution. He shows too the amazing balance of laws upon which the universe depends to illustrate the reality of intelligent design by an omnipotent all-wise God.

6. *It is apologetically sound.* The foundations of atheism are shown throughout to be specious. Atheism is shown to be a religion in which God is hated. Atheism is attributed to original sin. Romans chapter one is opened up and attention given to the text:

'In their thinking they became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened.

Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools and changed the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like mortal man and birds and animals and reptiles — They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshipped and served created things rather than the Creator — who is for ever praised' (page 488ff).

7. *It is informative.* For instance did you know that Voltaire (1694 -1778) predicted that the Bible would be extinct by 1850 and David Hume (1711-1776), the philosopher best known for his attack on miracles, believed the Bible would soon be looked on as a discredited relic? How many would be willing to give a dollar for the works of these philosophers today? The Bible is still the best-selling book and its popularity is continuing to rise. It is almost impossible to keep up with the demand for the Bible in developing countries. The total for Bibles and New Testaments and selected portions of the Bible was 580 million in 1997. A major study published in 1998 revealed that in 1998 more nations received some part of Scripture in their own language in the last 45 years than in the previous 2,500.

8. *It is compelling and evangelistic.* We are called to believe. We must believe. The most common excuses are removed. Faith in Christ is imperative. Without it sinners face the consequences of their sins and will be punished with the fallen angels in the fires of hell forever.

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