

The Lost World of Genesis One: Ancient Cosmology and the Origins Debate

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(Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2009. Paperback, 192 pages)

Began: February, 2014 | Finished: March, 2015

Introduction

- Language assumes a culture - knowing the Hebrew language demands that we know the Hebrew cultural milieu behind the words.
- Israel lived and functioned within a specific Ancient Near Eastern (ANE) culture.
- There's nothing wrong with comparing the OT creation account with those of other ANE cultures and similarities need not alarm us.
- To say that the ancient Israelites held concepts and perspectives in common with other ANE cultures isn't to say that the OT accounts were copied or borrowed from ANE culture.
- There was a "common conceptual worldview that existed in ancient times. We should therefore not speak of Israel being influenced by that world—they were part of that world." [12]
- We must not be concerned that the Bible be understood as another ancient myth, even though the literature of other ANE peoples is.

I. Proposition One: Genesis 1 Is Ancient Cosmology

A. The Israelites Did Not View the Cosmos the Way We Do

The Israelites looked at the world of the cosmos much in the same way as anyone else in the ANE world. "And God did not think it important to revise their thinking." [14]

To read the creation account with our cosmology in mind is to make the text say something it never intended to say.

B. The Problem of "Concordism" (giving a modern scientific explanation for the details of the biblical account)

1. Science is in a constant state of flux - God's Word is not

"If we were to say that God's revelation corresponded to 'true science' we adopt an idea contrary to the very nature of science." [15]

"Concordism tries to figure out how there could be have been waters above the sky (Gen. 1:7), whereas the view proposed here maintains that this terminology is simply describing cosmic geography in Israelite terms to make a totally different point." [16]

2. No dichotomy between natural and supernatural science in the ANE

Nothing happened independent of the gods (or God).

3. We must not impose our modern cosmology upon the Bible

"Through the entire Bible, there is not a single instance in which God revealed to Israel a science beyond their own culture." [17]

Walton, in footnote #2, rejects the contention that Isa 40:22 teaches a spherical earth: "This cannot be sustained because its terminology only indicates a disk, not a sphere." [173]

II. Proposition Two: Ancient Cosmology Is Function Oriented

A. Question of "Existence" - What Does it Mean for Something "To Exist?"

1. Ontological existence

A company's existence vs. the existence of a chair. Creating a chair differs significantly from creating a business. How does one define each? Material vs. function.

2. As to origins: we need to focus on the ontology of the cosmos - what does it mean for it to "exist?"

"Is it possible to have a cosmic ontology that is function oriented and see creation (bringing something into existence) in those terms?" [23]

- a. Note how we use the word "create" in divers ways (create a house vs. create a musical arrangement)

B. If We are Going to Understand an Ancient Creation Account We Must Understand What "Creation" Meant to Them

1. Walton's Thesis:

"In this book I propose that people in the ancient world believed that something existed not by virtue of its material properties, *but by virtue of its having a function in an ordered system*. . . . In this sort of functional ontology, the sun does not exist by virtue of its material properties, or even by its function as a burning ball of gas. Rather it exists by virtue of the order that it has in *its* sphere of existence, particularly in the way that it functions for humankind and human society." [24]

As a result, something could (from this perspective) NOT exist if it wasn't functional - even if it existed materially.

"Consequently, the actual creative act is to assign something its functioning role in the ordered system." [25]

- a. Function was most significant to the ancient world - not material status

"In the ancient world, what was most crucial and significant to their understanding of existence was the way that the parts of the cosmos functioned, not their material status." [26]

How do we know this? By comparing other ANE creation texts (Eg. Sumerians / Babylonians / Egyptians) with the biblical narrative.

b. Full-fledged creation texts (taken from page 26)

(1) Egyptian:

- Memphite Theology (featuring Ptah)
- Papyrus Leiden I 350 (Hermopolis, featuring Amun)
- Pyramid Texts, Coffin Texts and the Book of the Dead (especially from Heliopolis, featuring Atum)

(2) Babylonians

- Atrahasis
- *Enuma Elish*

c. Other ancient texts which provide a measure of information about their view of creation

(1) Sumerian

- A narrative from Nippur (early sacred center in Mesopotamia) which gives the god Enlil a prominent role
- Texts from Eridu (whom the Sumerians believed to be the first city in history) favor the god Enki
- Disputation texts

(2) Egyptian

- The Instruction of Merikare
- Seti I (centograph)

c. Summary of ancient views on creation

(1) Shape of the cosmos - based on observation

If water comes down, there must be a storehouse in the sky for it (cosmic waters). If it doesn't come down, something must be holding it back (a solid firmament). Waters coming up from the ground must have a source from beneath.

(2) Role of the deity

In the Egyptian accounts, all cosmic structures (firmament, sun, moon, earth) are depicted as gods.

(3) Origins of the cosmos and deity

The origins of the gods - where they came from (theogony) is connected to the origins of the cosmic elements (cosmology). "This coinciding of origins indicates that those origins are functional in nature." [28]

(4) Divine conflict

Theomachy = battles among the gods (particularly in the Babylonian *Enuma Elish*). Creation is accomplished in the aftermath of a battle among the gods for control of the cosmos.

(5) Features

- Nonfunctional. Things existed, but nothing had been separated out (made to function).
- Primeval waters. Creation often begins with what emerges from the waters, whether deity of land. The waters are termed "the father of the gods." [29]
- Naming. Names were associated with identity, role, and function.
- Separating. The most common creative activity in Egyptian texts. Heavens and earth separated; waters from land.
- Creatures. Living creatures are almost never included in the creation accounts. Only exception: Akkadian Disputation of Two Insects.
- Human beings. Many accounts speak of humans - made from clay, the blood of a deity, the breath of a deity - but not in a chemical sense.

d. Other significant texts:

(1) The Egyptian Papyrus Insinger from the Ptolemaic Period (2d - 3d c. BC)

(a) Walton cites this text on pages 30-31 and notes the functional orientation of it

(2) Babylonian creation epic: *Enuma Elish* (Marduk defeats the rebellious gods and then does his work of "creation")

- Lines 1-24: Marduk organizes the celestial sphere - function of seasons
- Lines 25-45: Day and night cycles - the function of time
- Lines 47-52: Creation of clouds, wind, rain, fog - the function of weather
- Lines 53-58: harnessing the waters - functioning of agriculture
- Lines 59-68: transition to the enthronement of Marduk and the building of his temple and the city of Babylon

(3) The Debate Between Winter and Summer

C. Conclusion

ANE creation texts generally do not feature material creation / nothing is actually made.

"Scholars who have assumed that true acts of creation must by definition involve production of material objects are apparently baffled that all of these so-called creation texts have nothing of what these scholars would consider to be creation activities. I propose that the solution is to modify what we consider creation activities based on what we find in the literature." [33]

Creation in the ANE is not thought of in terms of making material things—instead it is function oriented - bringing order to the cosmos from an originally nonfunctional condition (*a functional ontology*).

"Consequently, to create something (cause it to exist) in the ancient world means to give it a function, not material properties. We need to note the contrast: we tend to think of the cosmos as a machine and argue whether someone is running the machine or not. The ancient world viewed the cosmos more like a company or a kingdom.

Would they have believed that their gods also manufactured the material? Absolutely, for nothing can be thought to stand apart from the gods. But they show little interest in material origins." [33-34]

The ancient worldview looked at existence differently than we do: they thought of existence as being "defined by having a function in an ordered system." [34]

III. Proposition Three: Create (Hebrew Bārā') Concerns Functions

A. The Word Bārā' in verse 1 Can be Used of Functional Creation ("function-giving activity")

B. The Concept and Challenge of Literal Interpretation

1. Words are determined by usage and context, historically and contextually

"The English reader must face a difficult fact: one cannot comprehend the literal meaning of a word in the Old Testament without knowing Hebrew or having access to the analysis by someone who does. It does us no good to know what 'create' literally means—we have to know what bārā' literally means." [37]

a. Subjects

bārā' occurs about 50x in the OT. Deity is always either the subject or implied subject of the verb in passive constructions. The creation activity in this case is never one that humans can perform.

b. Objects

The most important part of our analysis is the objects. What constitutes creative activity (material vs. functional)?

(1) The grammatical objects of the verb summarized categorically (Walton gives a comprehensive list in a table on pages 40-41)

- Cosmos (10, including new cosmos)
- People in general (10)
- Specific groups of people (6)
- Specific individuals or types of individuals (5)
- Creatures (2)
- Phenomena (e.g., darkness) (10)
- Components of cosmic geography (3)
- Condition (1, pure heart)

The list shows that the objects are not easily identifiable in material terms. Therefore,

"If the Israelites understood the word bārā' to convey creation in functional terms, then that is the most 'literal' understanding that we can achieve." [41]

Walton concludes that since it has been long observed that in the context of bārā' no materials for the creative act are ever (?) mentioned, we ought not simply assume creation *ex nihilo*. Rather, the

absence ought to lead us to think in terms of creation as function. [However, how does Hebrews 11:3 not imply this?]

Walton gives the caveat that he does believe that God is responsible for the material origin of the universe and that this did involve creation out of nothing. But he sees this as a theological question, not a textual question. The textual question is: "What sort of origin account do we find in Genesis 1? Is this a material account or a functional one?"

2. Beginning

"In Hebrew usage the word typically introduces a period of time rather than a point in time." [43]

". . . the 'beginning' is a way of talking about a seven-day *period* rather than a *point* in time prior to the seven days." [43]

3. The Role of Verse 1 - "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth"

The beginning refers to the seven day period, rather than to a point in time before the seven day period. It's not a separate act of creation, but an introduction to the creation account in the rest of the chapter.

Walton concludes:

"The proposals of this chapter can be summarized by the following expanded interpretive translation of verse 1: 'In the initial period, God created by assigning functions throughout the heavens and the earth, and this is how he did it.' The chapter *does* involve creative activities, but all in relation to the way that the ancient world thought about creation and existence: by naming, separating and assigning functions and roles in an ordered system. This was accomplished in the seven-day period that the text calls 'the beginning.'" [44-45]

IV. Proposition Four: The Beginning State in Genesis 1 Is Nonfunctional

A. Functional vs. Non-Functional

If the creation account was largely material, we would expect the before state of creation to focus on the lack of material, if functional, then the fact that it was non-functional.

B. Verse 2 begins with a world that was *tohu* and *bohu* (formless and void)

1. David Tsumura's semantic analysis

Hebrew *tohu* describes something "unproductive" over against something without physical form or shape. The word *bohu* is only used three times and always in connection with *tohu*.

2. See the Table 2 on page 47 -

Walton comments:

"Studying this list, one can see nothing in these contexts that would leads us to believe that *tohu* has anything to do with material form. The contexts in which they occur and the words and phrases used in parallel suggest rather that the word describes that which is nonfunctional, having no purpose and generally unproductive in human terms." [48]

Why has the word been so often translated as a reference to the absence of material form?

"One can only surmise that the translation tradition has been driven by the predominant material focus of the culture that produced the translation." [48]

C. In Verse 2 at the Beginning of Creation There Is Already Material in Existence

"The creation account in Genesis 1 can then be seen to begin with no functions rather than no material." [49]

D. The Phrase "It Was Good" = "It Was Functioning Properly"

For something not to be good meant it was not complete. As to Genesis 2:18 ("not good for man to be alone"):

"This verse has nothing to do with moral perfection or quality of workmanship—it is a comment concerning function. The human condition is not functionally complete without the woman." [50]

1. Comparing other ANE creation accounts (Walton gives an example from the Sumerian text NBC) - See the text and corresponding footnotes on page 51

"Earth was in darkness, the lower world was [invi]sible;
The waters did not flow through the opening (in the earth),
Nothing was produced, on the vast earth the furrow had not been made.
The high priest of Enlil did not exist,
The rites of purification were not carried out.
The h[ierodul]e(?) of heaven was not adorned, she did not proclaim [the praises?]
Heaven and earth were not joined to each other (forming) a unit, they were not [married]." [51]

"The 'before' picture here is composed both of what *is* present—darkness, water and the nondiscrete heaven and earth—and what is *not*: the absence of productivity, of the gods and of the operation of the cult. Creative activities then alter this landscape. All of this indicates that cosmic creation in the ancient world was not viewed primarily as a process by which matter was brought into being, but as a process by which functions, roles, order, jurisdiction, organization and stability were established. This defines creation in the ancient world and in turn demonstrates that ontology was focused on something's functional status rather than its material status." [52]

V. Proposition Five: Days One to Three in Genesis 1 Establish Functions

A. Day One

1. Why didn't God simply call light "light?" (He called the light "day" and the darkness "night")
 - a. Light is never treated as a material object in the ANE - it is treated as a condition

God calls the light "day" but that's not what light really is. Walton contends that this subtle nuance indicates that it's not the light itself that is in reference here, but the period of light. It is thus a metonymy for time. God called the period of light "day" and the period of darkness "night."

2. God separated the light from the darkness (this would not make sense if they were material)

They cannot be logically separated because they cannot exist together in any meaningful way.

"For since what is called into existence is a period of light that is distinguished from a period of darkness and that is named 'day,' we must inevitably consider day one as describing the creation of time. . . . This is a creative act, but it is creation in a *functional* sense, not a *material* one."

"This interpretation solves the long-standing conundrum of why evening is named before morning."

"A second conundrum that this resolves is the detail that many have found baffling over the ages as they ask, How could there be light on day one when the sun is not created until day four?" [54-55]

B. Day Two

1. In antiquity people thought the sky was solid

If the Hebrew term in v. 6 is taken normally, it would indicate that God made a solid dome to hold up waters above the earth. Walton contends that the translation "sky" or "firmament" was a compromise to modern scientific thinking.

"We may find some escape from the problem, however, as we continue to think about creation as ultimately concerned with the functional rather than the material. If this is not an account of material origins, then Genesis 1 is affirming nothing about the material world. Whether or not there actually are cosmic waters being held back by a solid dome does not matter. That material cosmic geography is simply what was familiar to them and was used to communicate something that is functional in nature. Instead of objectifying this water barrier, we should focus on the important twofold cosmic function it played. Its first role was to create the space in which people

could live. The second and more significant function was to serve as a mechanism by which precipitation was controlled—the means by which weather operated." [56]

C. Day Three

1. God does not make anything on this day - this is only a problem if the account isn't focused on material origins

- a. We are to ask what functions were set up on this day rather than what was (or wasn't) created

- (1) Day three differentiates terrestrial space - the act of separating is prominent

"Day three reflects the wonder of the ancient world at the whole idea that plants grew, dropped seed, and that more of the same plant came from that tiny seed." [58]

2. The three major functions of the first three days:

Day One - God creates the basis for time / Day Two - the Basis for weather / Day Three - the basis for food. These same three are prominent in other ANE texts (Walton cites examples from the Papyrus Insinger and the Enuma Elish on pages 58-59).

God's Creator promise in Genesis 8:22 parallels these three ("As long as the earth endures, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night, will never cease") - food, weather, and time will not cease.

D. What About "Truth"?

"We should not worry about the question of 'truth' with regard to the Bible's use of Old World science. As we mentioned before, some scientific framework needs to be adopted, and all scientific frameworks are dynamic and subject to change. Adoption of the framework of the target audience is most logical. The Old World science found in the Bible would not be considered 'wrong' or 'false' as much as it would just offer a perspective from a different vantage point. Even today we can consider it true that the sky is blue, that the sun sets and the moon shines. . . . The Old World science in the Bible offers the perspective of the earthbound observer." [61]

God did not give Israel a revised cosmic geography—he revealed his Creator role through the cosmic geography that they had, because the shape of the material world did not matter. His creation work focused on functions, and therefore he communicated that he was the one who set up the functions and who keeps the operation going, regardless of how we envision the material shape." [61-62]

VI. Proposition Six: Days Four to Six in Genesis 1 Install Functionaries

A. Day Four

1. Days 4 - 6 shift in focus (God installs functionaries)

a. These days are parallel to days 1-3

b. What we see are human-oriented functions - signs, seasons, days, years - pertinent to man

(1) "Seasons" = festival celebrations related to sowing, harvesting, etc.

2. Key word: "made" (‘*ās’ā*) = "making" *and* "doing"

a. Cf. Exodus 20:9-11 where the same word is used

9 “Six days you shall labor and *do* all your work, 10 but the seventh day is a sabbath of the LORD your God; in it you shall not *do* any work, you or your son or your daughter, your male or your female servant or your cattle or your sojourner who stays with you. 11 “For in six days the LORD *made (or did)* the heavens and the earth, the sea and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day; therefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day and made it holy.

"If creation is his work, and creation is function oriented, then doing his work was accomplished by establishing functions." [64]

B. Day Five

1. The functionaries carry out their own functions in their space (they "teem," "fly," etc.)

2. God gives them a function: to be fruitful and multiply

3. The great creatures of the sea (v. 1)

Moses returns to the word *bārā’* which hasn't been used since verse 1 (and only used again in v. 27 of this chapter).

In the ANE the sea creatures were threats to order. This is why the author singles them out for comment. In YHWH's economy they are part of the created order under His control.

C. Day Six

Verse 24 - "let the land produce living creatures" - Walton warns against reading scientific concepts into this statement:

"The closest statement to this one in Genesis comes from a work entitled The Exploits of Ninurta:

'Let its meadows produce herbs for you. Let its slopes produce honey and wine for you. Let its hillsides grow cedars, cypress, juniper and box for you. Let it make abundant for you ripe fruits, as a garden. Let the mountain supply you richly with divine perfumes. . . . Let the mountains make wild animals teem for you. Let the mountain increase the fecundity of quadrupeds for you.'

The role of the land or the mountain in producing animals does not give us material information as if this were some sort of spontaneous regeneration or a subtle indication of an evolutionary process. Rather the land and mountain are locations of origin. This is where animal life *comes from*, not what it is *produced from*. It is similar to a child today asking where babies come from. Rather than needing a description of sperm and egg in fertilization and conception, the child only needs to be told that babies come from hospitals or from their mothers." [66-67]

D. Humanity

1. The image of God is the focus of 1:26-30

The creation in the Bible is set up to benefit man, not the gods as in the rest of the ANE. Rather than theocentric, the creation is anthropocentric. Humanity is the climax of creation.

E. Materials for Humanity

This is a significant section so I will include much of it here:

"Ancient Near Eastern texts contain numerous references to humans being created out of a variety of materials, and we find a great deal of continuity between those reports and the biblical text. This again tells us that Genesis is working within the normal conceptual framework of the ancient Near East rather than forging new scientific trails.

The materials or ingredients that are attested in the ancient Near East are tears of a god (Egypt), blood of a god (Atrahasis), and the most common, clay (both Egypt and Mesopotamia). These ingredients are offered as common to all of humanity since the ancient Near Eastern texts only deal with the mass of humanity being created rather than an individual or a couple as in Genesis. This is an important difference as Adam and Eve are treated as individuals in chapters 4 and 5. This individual identity, however, does not change the significance of the reference to the materials in Genesis 2. The fact that the ancient Near East uses the same, sorts of materials to describe all of humanity indicates that the materials have archetypal significance. . . . So when the ancient Near Eastern texts speak of people being created from clay or the blood of a slain deity, they are not talking about just one individual, but are addressing the nature of all humanity.

This archetypal understanding applies also to Genesis 2. An individual named Adam is not the only human being made of the dust of the earth, for as Genesis 3:19 indicates, 'Dust you are and to dust

you will return.' This is true of all humans, men and women. It is an archetypal feature that describes us all. It is not a statement of chemical composition nor is it describing a material process by which each and every human being is made. The dust is an archetypal feature and therefore cannot be viewed as a material ingredient. It is indicative of human destiny and mortality, and therefore is a functional comment, not a material one.

The situation is no different with the creation of woman. Being drawn from the side of man has an archetypal significance, not an anatomical one. This is the very aspect that the text draws out when it identifies the significance of the detail: 'For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh' (Gen 2:24). This is true of all mankind and all womankind. Womankind is archetypally made from the side of mankind. Again we can see that this is a functional discussion, not a material one. After chapter five of Genesis, Adam and Eve are never again mentioned in the Old Testament except in the opening genealogy in Chronicles. In the New Testament, the authors regularly treat Adam and Eve in archetypal terms. [68-70]

F. SUMMARY

"In days four to six the functionaries of the cosmos are installed in their appropriate positions and given their appropriate roles. Using the company analogy, they are assigned their offices (cubicles), told to whom they will report, and thus given an idea of their place in the company. Their workday is determined by the clock, and they are expected to be productive. Foremen have been put in place, and the plant is now ready for operation. But before the company is ready to operate, the owner is going to arrive and move into his office." [70]

VII. Proposition Seven: Divine Rest Is in a Temple

A. Day 7 is Puzzling for a Traditional View of Genesis 1

1. Deity rests in a temple in ANE literature

"In contrast [to the traditional view of Gen. 1] a reader from the ancient world would know immediately what was going on and recognize the role of day seven. Without hesitation the ancient reader would conclude that this is a temple text and that day seven is the most important of the seven." [71]

B. Divine rest in the ancient world - a crisis resolved or stability achieved

1. Genesis 2:2 and the word *šābat* (rest)

- a. Our term "Sabbath" is taken from this Hebrew word and has the idea of ceasing (cf. Josh. 5:12; Job 32:1)

(1) God transitions from activity in creation to stability

(2) The only other place where *šābat* is used with God as the subject is in Exodus 31:17

C. The Verb *nûha* and the Noun *měnûhâ*

"This cessation leads into a new state which is described by another set of words, the verb *nûha* and its associated noun, *měnûhâ*. The verb involves entering a position of safety, security or stability and the noun refers to the place where that is found. The verb *šābat* describes a transition into the activity or inactivity of *nûha*. We know that when God rests (ceases, *šābat*) on the seven day in Genesis 2, he also transitions into the condition of stability (*nûha*) because that is the terminology used in Exodus 20:11." [72]

D. Psalm 132:7-8, 13-14 draw it all together:

Let us go into His dwelling place;
Let us worship at His footstool.
Arise, O LORD, to Thy resting place;
Thou and the ark of Thy strength.

For the LORD has chosen Zion;
He has desired it for His habitation.
"This is My resting place forever;
Here I will dwell, for I have desired it.

1. "Dwelling place" is a term that describes the tabernacle and temple where God's footstool (the ark) is located

"In verse 8 the 'footstool' is paralleled by the ark, and the temple ('dwelling place') is paralleled with 'resting place' (*měnúhâ*). This demonstrates that the temple is the place where he rests. In verse 13 the text again refers to his dwelling in Zion, thus referring to the temple. Then verse 14 uses 'resting place' (*měnúhâ*) again identifying it as a place where he is enthroned. Thus this Psalm pulls together the ideas of divine rest, temple, and enthronement. . . . After creation, God takes up his rest and rules from his residence. This is not new theology for the ancient world—it is what all peoples understood about their gods and their temples." [73]

E. Parallel to OT Passages Where God Speaks of Giving Israel "Rest" in the Land (Deut. 12:10)

When you cross the Jordan and live in the land which the LORD your God is giving you to inherit, and He gives you rest from all your enemies around you so that you live in security,

F. Parallels

1. The American White House

The President "takes up residence" in the White House, not to rest, but to begin the work of running the country.

2. The *Enuma Elish*

The work of creation by Marduk is followed by building a temple for him.

3. Setting up a Computer

"God's resting in Genesis 1 does not specifically describe his engagement of the controls, but it describe the opportunity to do so. He can disengage from the set-up tasks and begin regular operations. It would be similar to getting new computer and spending focused time setting it up . . . After all these tasks were done, you would disengage from that process, mostly so you could now eng

age in the new tasks of actually using the computer." [75]

VIII. Proposition Eight: The Cosmos Is a Temple

A. In Some ANE Texts a Temple Is Built as a Conclusion to Creation

1. Sumerian text - Cylinder B suggests that the temple separates heaven and earth

Walton reiterates that he is not suggesting that the Jews borrowed from ANE literature, but that the ANE literature illustrates how people thought and we ought to assume the Israelites thought in similar ways.

2. Egyptian temples served as models of the cosmos in which the floor represented the earth and the ceiling represented the sky

"Ian Assmann, presenting this imagery, concludes that the temple 'was the world that the omnipresent god filled to its limits.' Indeed, the temple is, for all intents and purposes, the cosmos. This interrelationship makes it possible for the temple to be the center from which order in the cosmos is maintained." [80]

Jewish historian Josephus says of the tabernacle: "every one of these objects is intended to recall and represent the universe." [80]

B. The Garden of Eden

"Scholars have also recognized that the temple and tabernacle contain a lot of imagery from the Garden of Eden. They note that gardens commonly adjoined sacred space in the ancient world. Furthermore the imagery of fertile waters flowing from the presence of the deity to bring abundance to the earth is a well-known image." [80]

Walton then cites Gordon J. Wenham (source recorded at footnote 13):

"The garden of Eden is not viewed by the author of Genesis simply as a piece of Mesopotamian farmland, but as an archetypal sanctuary, that is a place where God dwells and where man should worship him. Many of the features of the garden may also be found in later sanctuaries particularly the tabernacle or Jerusalem temple. These parallels suggest that the garden itself is understood as a sort of sanctuary." [80]

The waters flowing through the garden in Genesis 2 are paralleled by the waters from Ezekiel's Temple in Ezek. 47.

C. The Cosmos Could be Seen as a Temple

Isaiah 66:1–2 1 THUS says the LORD, "Heaven is My throne, and the earth is My footstool. Where then is a house you could build for Me? And where is a place that I may rest? 2 "For My

hand made all these things, Thus all these things came into being,” declares the LORD. “But to this one I will look, To him who is humble and contrite of spirit, and who trembles at My word.

1 Kings 8:27 “But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold, heaven and the highest heaven cannot contain Thee, how much less this house which I have built!

D. Chapter Summary:

1. In the Bible and the ancient Near East the temple is viewed as a microcosm.
2. The temple is designed with the imagery of the cosmos.
3. The temple is related to the functions of the cosmos.
4. The creation of the temple is parallel to the creation of the cosmos.
5. In the Bible the cosmos can be viewed as a temple.

"When this information is combined with the discoveries of the last chapter—that deity rests in a temple, and that therefore Genesis 1 would be viewed as a temple text—we gain a different perspective on the nature of the Genesis creation account. Genesis 1 can now be seen as a creation account focusing on the cosmos as a temple. It is describing the creation of the cosmic temple with all of its functions and with God dwelling in its midst. This is what makes day seven so significant, because without God taking up his dwelling in its midst, the (cosmic) temple does not exist." [83]

IX. Proposition Nine: The Seven Days of Genesis 1 Relate to the Cosmic Temple Inauguration

A. The Seven Days Relate to Aspects of Temple Inauguration

1. The Cosmic Temple is made functional at the inauguration
2. It is not a "temple" until it is inaugurated and made fully functional
3. Exodus 40 describes the inauguration of the tabernacle (its creation)
"The chapter reports everything being put in its place, anointed and consecrated (Ex 40:9-16). When all of this is done, the inauguration is completed by the glory of the Lord filling the tabernacle (Ex 40:34)." [88]

In the construction of Solomon's Temple the inauguration included a 7 day dedication to which was added a 7 day feast - Solomon's dedication prayer proclaimed the functions of the Temple (1 Kings 8).

B. Genesis 1 Is Describing Seven 24 Hour Days

"In this view of Genesis 1, it is evident that the nature of the days takes on a much less significant role than has normally been the case in views that focus on material creation, in that they no longer have any connection to the material age of the earth. These are seven twenty-four-hour days This has always been the best reading of the Hebrew text. Those who have tried to alleviate the tension for the age of the earth commonly suggested that the days should be understood as long eras (the day-age view). This has never been convincing. The evidence used by the proponents of the day-age view is that the word translated "day" (*yom*) is often a longer period of time, and they chose that meaning for the word in Genesis 1. The first problem with this approach is that the examples generally used of *yom* referring to an extended period of time are examples in which the word is being used idiomatically: "in that day." This is a problem because words often take on specialized meaning in idiomatic expressions. So in Hebrew, the phrase "in that day" is simply a way for Hebrew to say "when." The word *yom* cannot be removed from that expression and still carry the meaning that it has in the expression. Second, if it could be established that the word *yom* could refer to a longer period of time, the interpreter would still have the responsibility for determining which meaning the author intended in the passage. Word meanings cannot be chosen as if we were in a cafeteria taking whatever we like. Third, the attempt to read long periods of time is clearly a concordist resort, which will be discussed in chapter eleven." [90-91]

C. Summary

"In summary, we have suggested that the seven days are not given as the period of time over which the material cosmos came into existence, but the period of time devoted to the inauguration of the functions of the cosmic temple, and perhaps also its annual reenactment. It is not the material

phase of temple construction that represents the creation of the temple; it is the inauguration of the functions and the entrance of the presence of God to take up his rest that creates the temple. Genesis 1 focuses on the creation of the (cosmic) temple, not the material phase of preparation. In the next chapter we will track the implications of the idea that the seven days are not related to the material phase of creation." [91]

X. Proposition Ten: The Seven Days of Genesis 1 Do Not Concern Material Origins

A. Why Can't Genesis 1 Be Both Functional and Material?

1. This has to be proven from the text itself
2. Of the 7 days - three have no material component
 - a. Days 4 and 6 have material components but are dealt with on the functional level

B. If the 7 Days Relate to the 7 Days of Cosmic Temple Inauguration then the Text Has Nothing to

Say about the Age of the Earth

"We need not defend the reigning paradigm in science about the age of the earth if we have scientific reservations, but we are under no compulsion to stand against a scientific view of an old earth because of what the Bible teaches." [95]

C. Affirming that God Was the Agent in Material Creation

"The theological point is that whatever exists, be it material or functional, God made it. But from there our task as interpreters to evaluate individual texts to see what aspect of God's creation they discuss." [96]

D. The New Testament

1. By NT times there was an increasing interest in material origins

Passages such as Col 1:16-17; Heb 1:2, 11:3 may be understood both materially and functionally.

E. What Actually Happened in the Seven Days?

"The functional view understands the functions to be decreed by God to serve the purposes of humanity, who has been made in his image. The main elements lacking in the "before" picture are therefore humanity in God's image and God's presence in his cosmic temple. Without those two ingredients the cosmos would be considered nonfunctional and therefore nonexistent. The material phase nonetheless could have been under development for long eras and could in that case correspond with the descriptions of the prehistoric ages as science has uncovered them for us. There would be no reason to think that the sun had not been shining, plants had not been growing, or animals had not been present.⁴ These were like the rehearsals leading up to a performance of a play. The rehearsals are preparatory and necessary, but they are not the play. They find their meaning only when the audience is present. It is then that the play exists, and it is for them that the play exists.

In the "after" picture the cosmos is now not only the handiwork of God (since he was responsible for the material phase all along, whenever it took place), but it also becomes God's residence—the place he has chosen and prepared for his presence to rest. People have been granted the image of God and now serve him as vice regents in the world that has been made for them. Again it is instructive to invoke the analogy of the temple before and after its inauguration. After priests have been installed and God has entered, it is finally a fully functioning temple—it exists only by virtue of those aspects.

What would a college be without students? Without administration and faculty? Without courses? We could talk about the origins of the college when it first opened its doors, enrolled students for the first time, hired faculty, designed courses and offered them and so on. In another sense this process is reenacted year by year as students return (or are newly enrolled), faculty again inhabit their offices, courses are offered. Anyone in academics knows the difference between the empty feel of campus during the summer compared to the energy of a new semester beginning.

Before the college existed, there would have been a material "construction" phase. What a mess! Partially built buildings, construction equipment, torn up ground and so forth. This is all part of a campus taking shape—but it is only preliminary to a college existing, because a college is more than a campus.

What would the observer have seen in these seven days of Genesis 1? At one level this could simply be dismissed as the wrong question. It continues to focus on the eyewitness account of material acts. But perhaps we can indulge our imagination for a moment as we return to the analogy of the college.

The main thing that happens is that students arrive. But even that would not necessarily mean much if faculty did not begin offering courses. In the light of those two events, however, everything else that was there all along takes on energy and meaning. The course schedule brings order to time. Time had been there all along, but the course schedule gives time a meaning to the college and the students. Even the course schedule had been there a long time (designed months earlier with students registering), but it has no existence until the semester begins. Dorms had existed filled with furniture. But now students inhabit the dorms and the furniture begins to serve its function.

The observer in Genesis 1 would see day by day that everything was ready to do for people what it had been designed to do. It would be like taking a campus tour just before students were ready to arrive to see all the preparations that had been made and how everything had been designed, organized and constructed to serve students. If Genesis 1 served as a liturgy to reenact (annually?) the inauguration of the cosmic temple, we also find a parallel in the college analogy as year by year students arrive and courses begin to bring life and meaning to the campus. [96-98]

F. Death

1. Walton affirms certain kinds of death existed before the fall

"Some might object that if the material phase had been carried out for long ages prior to the seven days of Genesis, there would be a problem about death. Romans 5:12 states unequivocally, 'Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned.' Interpreters have inferred from this verse that there was no death at any level prior to the Fall, the entrance of sin. But we should notice that the verse does not say that. Paul is talking about how death came to people—why all of humanity is subject to death. Just because death came to us because of sin, does not mean that death did not exist at any level prior to the Fall.

Not only does the verse not make a claim for death in general, everything we know logically repudiates the absence of death at any level prior to the Fall. Day three describes the process by which plants grow. The cycle of sprouting leaves, flowers, fruit and seeds is one that involves death at every stage. This system only functions with death as part of it. Likewise with animals: we need not even broach the topic of predatory meat eaters to see that the food chain involves death. A caterpillar eating a leaf brings death. A bird eating the caterpillar brings death. Fish eating insects brings death. If animals and insects did not die, they would overwhelm their environment and the ecology would suffer. Furthermore, if we move to the cellular level death is inevitable. Human skin has an outer layer of epidermis—dead cells—and we know that Adam had skin (Gen 2:23).

All of this indicates clearly that death did exist in the pre-Fall world—even though humans were not subject to it. But there is more. Human resistance to death was not the result of immortal bodies. The text indicates that we are formed from the dust of the earth, a statement of our mortality (for dust we are and to dust we shall return, cf. Gen 3:19). No, the reason we were not subject to death was because an antidote had been provided to our natural mortality through the mechanism of the tree of life in the garden. When God specified the punishment for disobedience, he said that when they ate, they would be doomed to death (the meaning of the Hebrew phrase in Gen 2:17). That punishment was carried out by banishing them from the garden and blocking access to the tree of life (Gen 3:23-24). Without access to the tree of life, humans were doomed to the natural mortality of their bodies and were therefore doomed to die. And so it was that death came through sin." [98-100]

XI. Proposition Eleven: "Functional Cosmic Temple" Offers Face-Value Exegesis

A. Various Other Approaches

1. Some interpret Genesis 1 theologically; poetically; "literally"

B. Cosmic-Temple Interpretation

Walton contends that a face-value interpretation of Genesis 1 will read it as the ancient author intended to have it read and as the ancient audience would have understood it.

"If the Israelites, along with the rest of the ancient Near East, thought of existence and therefore creation in functional terms, and they saw a close relationship between cosmos and temple, then those are part of the face value of the text and we must include them in our interpretation." [103]

C. Problems with Concordist Approaches

These approaches attempt to read and integrate modern scientific thinking (material origins) back into the ancient text.

XII. Proposition Twelve: Other Theories of Genesis 1 Either Go Too Far or Not Far Enough

A. Young Earth Creationism

Walton contends that YEC goes too far in its understanding of what we need to do to defend the biblical text. He agrees with their reading of the word "day" as a 24 hour period of time, but believes YEC is too narrow in their understanding of the words "create" (*bārā*) and "made" (*‘āś’â*).

B. Old Earth Creationism

Walton believes that if OEC (such as Hugh Ross) would consider the merits of the functional view, they would not have to give up their proposed scientific correlations.

C. Framework Hypothesis

1. A literary - theological approach

a. Literary

The account of the 7 days is structured with the first 3 days defining realms of habitation and the second 3 days filling the realms with inhabitants. Days 1/4, 2/5, 3/6 are parallel. In this view, the order of events and length of time are not part of the author's intent.

b. Theological

Theologically significant points are highlighted, such as God as Creator, His sovereignty, His attributes, the goodness of creation, the image of God in men, etc.

Those who hold to this view would not have to abandon it in light of Walton's thesis. The functional view would add greater depth to the understanding of the literary and theological tenets.

D. Other Theories

1. Gap or Ruin-Reconstruction theory

2. Evolutionary views

Walton (rightly) sees significant theological problems with any view that purports to see God creating a primitive hominid species followed by later homo sapiens.

XIII. Proposition Thirteen: The Difference Between Origin Accounts in Science and Scripture is Metaphysical in Nature

A. Pie Versus Cake

One way of looking at origins and God is to look at each aspect of science as a slice of a pie. The question has been asked through history "Did God do this?" As science progressed, naturalistic explanations attributed more slices of the pie to chance/evolution and less to God. (God of the gaps.)

Walton proposes that a better way to look at the issue is by using a layer cake. The lower layers represent the realm of science / causation / naturalism. Recognizing that God is the ultimate cause who uses secondary causation, the top layer represents God in His work. Science cannot, by definition, explore the top layer. The top layer represents ultimate causation and also purpose (teleology).

B. Teleology Versus Dysteleology

Dysteleology = no purpose. Science cannot determine ultimate purposes. Walton claims that naturalism isn't a threat to the Christian worldview, materialism (and its dysteleology) is.

XIV. Proposition Fourteen: God's Roles as Creator and Sustainer are Less Different Than We Have Thought

A. Two Extremes to be Avoided

1. That God's Creation Work is Finished (potential for Deism)
 - a. This is the most popular view among Christians today
2. That God's Creation Work Eternally Repeats (potential for micromanagement)

"In the position of this book, the idea that Genesis 1 deals with functional origins opens up a new possibility for seeing both continuity and a dynamic aspect in God's work as Creator, because he continues to sustain the functions moment by moment . . . Creation language is used more in the Bible for God's sustaining work (i.e., his ongoing work as Creator) than it is for his originating work." [120]

"I contend that there is a line between the seven days of Genesis 1 and the rest of history making Genesis 1 a distinct beginning that is located in the past. If we see this as an account of functional origins, the line between is dotted rather than solid, as the narrative of Genesis 1 puts God in place to perpetuate the functions after they are established in the six days. In this way, day seven, God taking up his rest in the center of operations of the cosmos, positions him to run it. This continuing activity is not the same as the activity of the six days, but it is the reason why the six days took place." [121]

XV. Proposition Fifteen: Current Debate About Intelligent Design Ultimately Concerns Purpose

A. The Intelligent Design (ID) Movement

Primary evidence given by the ID movement = "irreducible complexity" (structures that require multiple parts that all need to function at once for the structure to exist and function).

ID is reactionary, critiquing Darwinism. ID itself offers no theory of origins.

1. Walton contends that ID itself is out of the realm of scientific endeavor

Teleology is not the realm of science.

2. Walton contends that ID falls prey to the "God of the Gaps"

3. ID falls prey to the universal negative fallacy (i.e. science cannot account for x therefore the only explanation is y - but all of the evidence for x has not been exhausted)

B. Neo-Darwinism (ND) is a No More Attractive Position

ND assumes that there must have been unknown components that came together to produce what now appears to be irreducibly complex. ND operates inside the sphere of a closed universe with no teleological aspects.

C. Meta-Darwinism

D. Distinction Between the Scientific and the Metaphysical

1. Category distinctions are artificial because no one has a worldview comprised of only one

"In conclusion, this chapter has introduced ID as both a critique of N-D, in which sense it alleges to be scientific, but also as offering an understanding of the world that is ultimately teleological—purposeful—in which sense it departs from the realm of scientific investigation and theorization.

The view of Genesis offered in this book is also teleological but accepts that all of creation is the result of God's handiwork, whether naturalistic mechanisms are identifiable or not, and whether evolutionary processes took place or not. God has designed all that there is and may have brought some of his designs into existence instantaneously, whereas others he may have chosen to bring into existence though long, complicated processes. Neither procedure would be any less an act of God." [130]

XVI. Scientific Explanations of Origins Can Be Viewed in Light of Purpose and If So, Are Unobjectionable

A. Walton Contends that the Bible Provides a Functional not Material Account of Origins - Thus Whatever Explanation Scientists Adopt Could Theoretically be Adopted as Evidence of God's Work

1. Objection: an evolutionary system is difficult to reconcile with God's character

2. Walton's answers (pp. 132-33)

TAB: It's at this point in the book that Walton appears to defend the concept of evolution as a viable explanation for origins . . .

B. Walton Defends a "Hands-Off" Approach to Expectations that God as Creator be at the Forefront of Science in the Marketplace

God knits each person together in the womb (Psa 139) but we don't get upset when embryologists talk in terms of natural cause and effect.

God is control of history, but we do not object when historians talk about natural cause and effect processes.

God controls the weather, but we do not get upset with meteorologists who predict the weather based on natural processes.

Walton asks at this point: "Why should our response to evolution be any different?" [135]

"This does not mean that all aspects of evolutionary theory should be accepted uncritically or even that evolution provides the best model. Meteorology and embryology are being constantly modified, and biological evolution is no different. I am not suggesting a wholesale adoption of evolution, merely suggesting that neither Genesis 1 specifically nor biblical theology in general give us any reason to reject it as a model as long as we see God as involved at every level and remain aware of our theological convictions." [136]

C. Three Major Reasons Why People Who Take the Bible Seriously Have Trouble with Evolution

1. Theology (evolution is used to refute God's existence)

a. This is a problem with those who use evolution in dysteleological ways

2. Genesis 1 (7 day young-earth creation model)

a. This is a problem only if Genesis 1 is understood to be an account of material rather than functional origins

b. Some of God's decrees involve processes

3. Genesis 2 and Romans 5

a. What about the historicity of Adam and Eve?

(1) Walton offers as options:

(a) God creates man in his image subsequent to the evolutionary development of pre-human hominids

i. Some suggest this happened to a single pair of humans (Adam and Eve)

ii. Some suggest this happened with a group of persons with "Adam and Eve" understood corporately as the first humans

(b) Walton finds such views "problematic"

(2) The historicity of Adam and Eve and the theological ramifications (sin, the fall, etc) must not be compromised

D. If Genesis 1 Does Not Concern Material Origins Christians Are Free to Believe Whatever Scientific Model that Makes Sense So Long as God is Recognized as Having Full Control Over all the Mechanisms

XVII. Resulting Theology in This View of Genesis 1 is Stronger Not Weaker

A. What God Does Or How He Does It Is His Prerogative - God Can Create Any Way He Sees Fit

B. God's Role in Everything

Our scientific world has worked God out of the equation. Even for those who believe in God, this may result in a practical deism. However, God is not any less active. We must integrate His continued work of creation into our worldview.

B. Creator Role Ongoing

C. God's Control of Functions

"Although we are acutely aware of the physical world around us, we live in a world of functions. Materialism sees the function of our world as the consequence of structures, that is, that objects or phenomena in our world function the way that they do because of their physical structures. In the biblical way of thinking, the objects and phenomena in the world function the way they do because of God's creative purposes. This gets back to the issue of teleology that we have discussed in previous chapters." [143]

"The Bible considers it much more important to say that God has made everything *work*, rather than being content to say that God made the physical stuff." [143]

"To think about the contrast between the material and the functional, and the illusionary nature of the material world, consider the following statements of one of the characters in Orson Scott Card's novel *Prentice Alvin*:

'Everything's mostly empty. That anvil, it looks solid, don't it? But I tell you it's mostly empty. Just little bits of ironstuff, hanging a certain distance from each other, all patterned there. But most of the anvil is the empty space between. Don't you see? Those bits are acting just like the atoms I'm talking about. So let's say the anvil is like a mountain, only when you get real close you see it's made of gravel. And then when you pick up the gravel, it crumbles in your hand, and you see it's made of dust. And if you could pick up a single fleck of dust you'd see that it was just like the mountain, made of even tinier gravel all over again.'

'You're saying that what we see as solid objects are really nothing but illusion. Little nothings making tiny spheres that are put together to make your bits, and pieces made from bits, and the anvil made from pieces—'

'Everything is made out of living atoms, all obeying the commands that God gave them. And just following those commands, why, some of them get turned into light and heat, and some of them

become iron, and some water, and some air, and some of them our own skin and bones. All those things are real—and so those atoms are real.' [cited on page 144]

D. Sacred Space

"Once we turn our thinking away from "natural world" to "cosmic temple" our perspective about the world us is revolutionized." [144]

"At the same time we recognize that the most important feature of sacred space is found in what it is by definition: the place of God's presence. The comic-temple idea recognizes that God is here and that all of this is his." [144]

E. Sabbath

F. Order

"The theological commitment we draw from Genesis 1 is that God is the author of order." [147]

G. Human Role

1. God has given us a privileged role in his cosmic temple

This is contrary to the ANE where their 'gods' created men to be their slaves. The God of the Bible has no needs. His cosmic temple has been created for people with whom he stands in relation.

H. Theological Implications of "It Was Good"

I. Summary

What affirmations are expected of us given Walton's 'cosmic temple' interpretation?

1. The world operates by Yahweh's design and under his supervision to accomplish his purposes.
2. The cosmos is his temple.
3. Everything in the cosmos was given its role and function by God.
4. Everything in the cosmos functions on behalf of people who are in his image. [150]

XVIII. Public Science Education Should be Neutral Regarding Purpose

In this chapter, Walton contends that the sphere of empirical science and the sphere of metaphysics and teleology should be kept separate. Purely speaking, empirical science should not encroach upon teleology and should not be dysteleological. He also asserts that Genesis, not being about material origins, ought not be pressed into the realm of empirical science as Genesis is about teleology. The intelligent design movement ought to be considered, but treads too far into the realm of purpose.

Walton doesn't believe that evolution, which he calls the current scientific model, is at odds with the biblical account. This I find problematic at a theological level. I find his vision of scientific inquiry into origins being taught as theory without any metaphysical ramifications practically impossible given the depravity of the human heart and the innate questions that men ask regarding origins and purpose. Walton admits this, at least in part, in his footnote on page 188 (fn. 16).

His summary includes:

- Genesis is about functional ontology and is not neutral regarding purpose.
- Genesis is not empirical science and should not be taught as such.
- Empirical science is about material ontology and should be limited to that domain.
- Empirical science should remain neutral on issues regarding purpose (or lack thereof).
- Empirical science, if limited to its own domain, does not do violence to the biblical record.
- Public education should develop courses related to metaphysical issues and teleology.
- Religionists and secularists should both cease attempting to impose their teleology on public science education.
- Those who honor the Bible should recognize that God's creation is about a functional cosmology and resist pressing it into service in public education as a source of material origins.

XIX. Summary and Conclusions

Walton reviews his "Temple Inauguration View." The key features he gives are:

1. The Hebrew word for create concerns assigning functions.
2. The account begins in v. 2 with no functions (rather than no material).
3. The first 3 days pertain to the 3 major functions of life: time, weather, food.
4. Days 4-6 pertain to functionaries in the cosmos being assigned their roles and spheres.
5. The comment "it is good" refers to functionality (relative to men).
6. The temple aspect is evident in the climax of day 7 when God rests—an activity in a temple.

Walton states that if Genesis 1 is not about material origins, we may "safely look to science to consider what it suggests for such mechanisms." [162]

TAB: Walton claims that he's not pushing evolution, but it becomes evident that he is more than neutral regarding it.

Walton claims as advantages:

1. We don't need to fear the science question when discussing the faith with skeptics.
2. We don't need to fear losing prospective students to the either / or choice of science vs. faith.
3. Our concerns regarding public education can be refocused to metaphysical neutrality.

XX. FAQs

Summary of Walton's FAQ section which concludes the book (TAB: the questions are exact, the answers are my summary):

Q: When did God create the material world.

A: The Bible doesn't tell us so we are free to inquire via scientific means.

Q: Where to dinosaurs and fossil "homo" specimens fit in?

A: They are part of the prefunctional cosmos—part of the long stage of development included in the material phase of creation. This precedes the 7 days of Genesis and are part of the obscure past. Any anthropological specimens would not be humans made in God's image and were subject to death.

Q: Isn't this just really a dodge to accommodate evolution?

A: The interpretation is based on a desire to understand the text. Evolution, the current scientific consensus, is a separate matter.

Q: Why don't you want to just read the text literally?

A: This is a literal reading if you understand the Hebrew language and the ancient culture.

Q: What would people have seen if they were there as eyewitnesses (i.e. what "really happened") on these days?

A: The Bible is concerned more with what God did rather than the perspective of eyewitnesses. The perspective of eyewitnesses would be too limited to capture the big picture of a temple inauguration ceremony.

Q: Why can't Genesis 1 be both functional and material?

A: It could be both. But we can't demand that must be material. There is little in the text that implies it is giving a material perspective.

Q: If this is the "right" reading, why didn't we know about it until now?

A: The worldview of antiquity was lost to us until more recent archeological discoveries.

Q: Why would God make it so difficult for me to understand his Word?

A: God had to choose one culture and language to use. This means that other cultures and languages must do their homework.

Q: How can this view of Genesis be taught to children in Sunday school and Christian elementary schools?

A: Emphasize that God was involved in every level and that He set up the world so that it works. Emphasize functions, not material origins. Don't unduly criticize evolution so as to create a dichotomy.

TAB: I would have hoped that Walton would have included a question as to what evidence there is in ancient Jewish sources that they held to this interpretation. I presume there is none.