

## Supplementary Notes - Talk #4

Reformation Fellowship

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### A. Genesis 1 and the nature of the inspiration of scripture.

1. Assumption: the account is giving us an account of the origin of created reality from the standpoint of God as an eyewitness / participant in the event.
  - a. Assumes a particular view of biblical inspiration where the human authors are passive conduits to God's understanding.
    - (i) Revealed truth does not lie in the inspired understanding of the human authors; it lies in the understanding of God as that is transmitted through more-or-less passive human mouthpieces.
2. Assumption: the account is relating to us how the human author of the account has come to understand God's relationship to created reality, and that author's understanding—because it is inspired by God himself—is absolutely true and flawless.
  - a. Assumes a particular view of biblical inspiration where the revealed truth lies in the inspired understanding of the human author of a biblical account.
    - (i) God inspires the understanding of some human being, that human beings transmits his understanding through a text that he authors, and that text is incorporated into what we accept as authoritative scripture.

### B. Evaluation of approaches to Genesis 1.

1. Assumption #1: the account is written by an individual who had an understanding of reality that was generally congruent with that of his cultural peers; he was proposing an allegiance to his god as over against an allegiance to any other god.
  - a. The account is a window into the thoughts and beliefs of ancient men; it is not a revelation of objective truth from God.
    - (i) This view fails to take Scripture seriously as revelation from God.
  - b. The account is an objective truth from God. The objective truth it reveals is the narrow fact that God exists and needs to be worshipped. It does not inform us in any way with regard to the objective truth about how reality came into existence.
    - (i) The human author of the account does not know anything about how reality came into existence. Whatever he might seem to be saying about how reality came into existence is just his own invention. We cannot assume that he knew what he was talking about.
      - (a) *The narrow truth that is revealed in the Genesis 1 account* comes about because of what God intended to convey through the account. It has little or nothing to do with what the human author intended.
        1. This view is inconsistent with the nature of what divine inspiration is.
          1. What is assumed in this view is NOT true—namely, that divine truth is revealed in scripture by God's truth somehow poking through the very flawed and errant human perspectives that are conveyed by the text

and that it makes itself known in spite of what the text asserts, not through what the text asserts. [e.g., Karl Barth]

1. However, if I don't see the revealed truth in what the author states, then where do I see it? How do I know that I have arrived at what God wants me to see rather than what I want to see? It is easy to **say** that the revealed truth makes itself known through the flawed and fallible assertions of the human author, but how is that possible?
    1. If it is in the author's understanding, then we know that we have arrived at revealed truth once we have grasped the author's understanding. And, we know how to grasp another human being's understanding through language. That is a skill that we have as human beings.
    2. Scripture is the articulation of a worldview and message by human beings to whom God has granted an entirely true and accurate grasp of the objective truth about reality.
      1. I discover God's understanding of truth by understanding the author's understanding of truth.
  2. Assumption #2: the account is written by an individual who had an understanding of reality that was radically different from his cultural peers; he was proposing a revolutionary, perception-altering view of God and his relationship to reality.
    - a. Assumption #2A: In order to take the account seriously as a valid revelation of objective truth from God, one must understand the account to be a literal description of what transpired.
      - (i) If one takes it literally, then one assumes that the account is an actual historical account of what actually occurred.
        - (a) How can the author of the account have any knowledge of that?
    - b. Assumption #2B: One need not understand the account as literal in order to take the account seriously as a valid revelation of objective truth from God. Once all the data is taken into account, it makes much more sense **not** to take the Genesis 1 account as a literal description of what transpired..
      - (i) If one does not take it literally, then one assumes that the account is **not a historical account** of what actually occurred.
        - (a) Rather, using some kind of literary invention, the author is conveying, in general terms, what he knows to be objectively true about God's creation of created reality.
- C. Why are so many Christians attracted to the Assumption #1 above, and not Assumption #2?
1. Like the Sadducees of Jesus's time, they lust after respectability among their cultural peers.
    - a. The lust for respectability is a very powerful lust.
      - (i) It is likely one of the "youthful lusts" that Paul tells Timothy to flee.

- (ii) When I was in college, the lust for respectability was so thick you could cut it with a knife.
  - (a) Back then, cultural respectability came in the form of *intellectual* respectability.
    - 1. Taking Genesis 1 seriously as any sort of straightforward teaching about the origins of the universe was seen as laughable.
      - 1. So Christians moved as far as they possibly could in the direction of not taking Genesis at face value.
  - (b) These days, cultural respectability comes in the form of *moral* respectability.
    - 1. Taking seriously the fundamental moral values taught by the Bible is seen as obsolete and even evil.
      - 1. So Christians today are tempted to go as far as they possibly can in the direction of adapting their personal moral values to bring them in line, more and more, with the moral values of secular progressive culture.
        - 1. Particularly in the area of sexual ethics.
        - 2. But also in the area of “social justice.”
- 2. A related problem is that—for exactly the same reason (namely, the lust for respectability)—Christians who otherwise insist that they embrace biblical authority unreservedly are attracted to approaches to the text that make sense in the context of the Assumption #1 above (and are “AT HOME” in the context of that assumption), but that are in tension with Assumption #2. However, because it is so *easy* to embrace those approaches (since, being culturally acceptable, they bring respect rather than disdain), these Christians do not allow themselves to even notice the tension that exists between those approaches and their claim to accept biblical authority.
- 3. Cultural respectability is a HUGE problem within the academic culture.
  - a. Therefore, one must take great care when reading any academically respectable work on the Bible. You are *not* getting the objective analysis and unbiased reading of the Bible that you might think you are getting. In all probability, you are getting an analysis and reading that is tailor-made to find approval within the academic community.
    - (i) It is completely corrupted by the author’s lust for respectability.
      - (a) Why did Nicodemus go to Jesus at night !!! Was it not because he knew he would lose respect in the eyes of his peers?
  - b. EXHORTATION
    - (i) When you use “academic” works regarding the Bible, THINK FOR YOURSELF!
      - (a) Trust your commonsense intelligence; do not adapt your sense of what is intellectually compelling to that of the academic—just so you can be classed among the enlightened intellectuals.
      - (b) Do not assume that the academic’s credentials guarantee an unbiased perspective on the text.
      - (c) Do not be lulled by their credentials into giving deference to their perspective.

1. Insist that their conclusions actually make sense! If they do not make sense, do not assume that it is because you are intellectually lacking. It is reasonable to suspect that it is their thinking and conclusions that are lacking, not your intellect.