

**1. The Old Testament does communicate to us and it was written for us, and for all humankind. But it was not written to us.**

- Written to Israel
- Secondly to everyone else because through Israel God is restoring the world
- Therefore it is in a language most of us do not understand, and it requires translation.

**2. It requires translation**

- Language is not the only aspect that needs translating
- language assumes a culture, operates in a culture, serves a culture, and is designed to communicate into the framework of a culture

**3. Therefore, when we read a text in another language addressed to another culture, we must translate the culture as well as the language if we hope to understand the text fully.**

**\*this is the importance of historical study in exegesis**

**4. We must set aside our english categories, and our cultural ideas, and try our best (as limited as it may be) to understand the material in question in its cultural context without translating it into our own.** (this is similar to learning a language. When learning Hebrew, you want to learn Hebrew words and concepts as Hebrew, not as a thing that has a corresponding word in English.)

**5. What are the cultural ideas behind Genesis 1?**

- Genesis 1 is ancient cosmology-it is not trying to describe cosmology in modern terms or address modern questions.

- The Israelites received no revelation to update or modify their scientific understanding of the cosmos. Ex: They did not know that the stars were suns, they did not know that the earth was spherical and moving through space, they did not know that the sun was much further away than the moon, or even further than the birds flying in the air. The believed the sky was material not vaporous, solid enough to support the residence of deity as well as to hold back waters. (See 2 Peter 3:5) God clearly did not think it important to revise their understanding of science.

**6. Some Christians approach the text as if it has modern science imbedded in it, or dictates how modern science should look. This is called "concordism".**

- Cannot translate their cosmology to our own.
- Assumes the text should be understood in reference to our current scientific consensus. Which means that it would neither correspond to the last century's specific scientific consensus, or that which may develop in the next century.

**7. It makes perfect sense that because of the changing nature of science, God communicated his revelation to his immediate audience in terms they understood.**

- God does not revise the ancient understanding of the shape of the earth, the nature of the sky, the locations of the sun, moon and stars. Concordism tries to figure out how there could have been waters above the sky (Gen 1:7), whereas the view I suggest maintains that this terminology is simply describing cosmic geography in Israelite terms to make a point not related to modern science debates.

**8. It makes sense that cosmic geography would be culturally descriptive rather than**

**revealed truth, just like many other biblical examples of culturally relative notions.**

- Ancients believed in the seat of intelligence, emotion and personhood as in the internal organs, particularly the heart, but also the liver, kidneys, and intestines. Many bible translations use “mind” when the Hebrew refers to entrails. Today we refer to the heart metaphorically as the seat of emotions, but to the ancients, it was physiology. Yet, when God wanted to talk to Israel about their intellect, emotions, and will, he did not revise their physiology and feel compelled to reveal the function of the brain. Instead he adopted their language and their already existing cultural ideas--he spoke to them in their own terms so they could understand. A serious concordist would have to come up with a modern physiology that explains how people think with their entrails in order to save the Bible’s reputation. Concordism believe the Bible must agree--be in concord with--all the findings of contemporary science.

**9. There is not a single instance in which God reveals to Israel a science beyond their own culture. No passage offers a scientific perspective that was not already common to the Old World science of antiquity.**

**10. Deity pervaded the ancient world, and there was no separation of natural and supernatural.**

- they would never dream of addressing how things might have come into being without God of what “natural” process he might have used. The text itself merges these perspectives when Genesis 1:24 says, “Let the earth bring forth living creatures” but then follows up with the conclusion, “So God made the animals.” All of these issues are modern issues imposed on the text, and we can’t expect the text to address them when they were of no matter to the ancients audience or author.

**11. The Bible’s message transcends the culture in which it originated, but the form in which the message was embedded was fully permeated by the ancient culture.**

This is God’s design, and we ignore it at our peril.

**12. What does it mean for something to exist?**

- the question of existence introduces a concept philosopher’s call “ontology.” The ontology of X is what it means for X to exist.

- 2 examples: A chair and a company. What is the ontology of a chair--or what does it mean for a chair to exist? A chair exists because it is material. We can detect it with our senses of sight and touch. But what do we mean when we say a company exists? It would not be the same as a chair. Does it exist when all the right papers are filed? When it has a building, or a website? Many would prefer to say that a business exists when it begins to do business. Here is the point: the chair has a material ontology-it exists because it is there in material form. A business has a functional ontology, it exists when it begins to perform its given function.

- What does it mean for the cosmos to exist? Does the world have a material or a functional ontology? In modern times, when we speak of cosmic ontology it can be seen that our culture views existence, and therefore meaning, in material terms. Our material view of ontology in turn determines how we think about creation. If ontology defines the terms of existence, and creation means to bring something into existence, the one’s ontology sets the parameters by which one thinks about creation. Creation of a chair would be a very different process than the creation of a company. In our culture we believe existence is material, we

consequently believe that to create something means to bring it into material existence. Thus our discussion tends to focus on material origins.

-To many people this sounds silly. Of course something exists because it has material properties! So of course creation means to give something material properties! Many would ask in a frustrated voice, "what else could it be?" The example of the company has already alerted us there could be another possibility. Is it possible to have a cosmic ontology that is function oriented and see creation(bringing into existence) in those terms?

- We do not always use the verb create the same way in english. When we create a committee or a curriculum, or a masterpiece, we are not involved in a material manufacturing process. Though a curriculum, for example, does eventually take material form, the creation of the curriculum is more about organizing ideas and goals. To understand what it means to create a curriculum, we have to understand what it means for a curriculum to exist--its ontology. The examples of answers that would be put forward suggest there are alternate ways of thinking about creative activity, even in our culture. If a curriculum's ontology is functional, like the company not the chair, then creating that curriculum involves function giving activities. With this in mind, I propose:

**13. People in the ancient world believe that something existed not by virtue of its material properties, but by virtue of its having a function in an ordered system. Not ordered in scientific terms, because we have seen the ancients were not interested in that, but rather in human terms--in relation to society and culture.**

- In this sort of functional ontology, as example, 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 by virtue the role that it has in its sphere of existence, particularly the way it functions for humankind and human society. When God creates the sun and light, why does he not call it light? He calls it day. Hence it works to say that Genesis 1 involves a creation process that is a function giving activity.

- In theory this way of thinking could result in something being in the existent category in a material way, but still considered in the non existent category in the functional way. Consequently something manufactured physically may still not exist if it has not become functional.

\*This is a summary of Walton's work through chapters 1 and 2 of the Lost World of Genesis One which lays the framework to launch the rest. There are 16 chapters remaining.\*