The Scientific Compatibility and Uniqueness of Hebrew Cosmology
Distinct from Ancient Near Eastern Literature

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By
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Faculty
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Master of Arts in Science and Religion Thesis Acceptance

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DEDICATION

To my beloved wife and three strong sons, thank you for your love and support.

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A special thanks to all those who took the time to read and provide meaningful feedback on this work. I want to especially recognize Dr. Roy Hayden for sharing your time and expertise in ancient Near East civilizations. You are a shining example of what I aspire to be: a godly scholar, faithful husband, and inspirational guide to my students. Dr. John Oswalt, thank you for your scholarship, guidance and taking time to share with me your ineffable wisdom which continues to inspire me to think more deeply about the cosmology of Genesis. Finally, to Dr. Jeremiah Mutie, thank you so much dear brother for your scholarship, collegial insight and editorial diligence in making this thesis possible.
ABSTRACT

In the study of literature from the ancient Near East (ANE), a significant number of scholars over the past 60 years, both secular and religious, have argued that the creation story of Genesis is mythology akin to, and shaped by, the milieu of the ancient world (herein referred to as the Unified Worldview Paradigm (UWP)). Scholars holding to the UWP contend that the essential properties of Hebrew cosmology are the product of the shared cognitive environment of the ANE which used symbolism as the primary hermeneutic to convey important religious realities over physical realities. As such, it aligns with what has been termed the Independence Model of science and religion. In contrast to the hermeneutical assumption of the UWP, this paper offers arguments in favor for what the author calls a Divergent Worldview Paradigm (DWP) which contends that the essential properties of Hebrew cosmology are distinct from ANE mythologies and similar only in its accidental properties. As such, the DWP aligns well with the Dialogue Model of science and religion.

Both the UWP and DWP hinge on four significant points of contention: (1) the *sui generis* of the Hebrew worldview, (2) the basic meaning of Divine-revelation, (3) the definition of the term myth and how it relates to the book of Genesis, and (4) the consequent implications for the hermeneutical relationship between science and Scripture. In support of the DWP, this paper presents a comparative study of Hebrew cosmology and ANE literature demonstrating a fundamental difference in worldview.
These differences consist of: (1) biblical creation is ex nihilo in contrast to the creation ex materia of other ANE religions: (2) biblical creation is cosmological contingency and not theogony, and (3) biblical creation is transcendent personal monotheism, not theomachy. Hebrew cosmology then, while written in an ancient language for ancient peoples, is a manifestation of the unique Hebrew worldview which gives insight into both the physical beginning and spiritual purpose of creation. As such, the paper demonstrates that the DWP model provides a unique framework for epistemological inquiry—determining what counts as knowledge and how it will shape cultural expression for ethical priorities, moral decision making and scientific inquiry.
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# ABBREVIATIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ANE</td>
<td>ancient Near East(ern)</td>
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<tr>
<td>ANEC</td>
<td>ancient Near East civilization(s)</td>
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<td>ANEL</td>
<td>ancient Near East literature</td>
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<td>ANET</td>
<td>ancient Near East text(s)</td>
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<tr>
<td>DWP</td>
<td>Divergent Worldview Paradigm</td>
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<tr>
<td>SCE</td>
<td>Shared Cognitive Environment</td>
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<td>UWP</td>
<td>Unified Worldview Paradigm</td>
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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

With horse and chariots rankt in loose array;
So wide they stood, and like a Furnace mouth
Cast forth redounding smoak and ruddy flame.
Before thir eyes in sudden view appear
The secrets of the hoarie deep, a dark
Illimitable Ocean, without bound,
Without dimension: where length, breadth, and highth,
And time and place are lost; where eldest Night
And Chaos, Ancestors of Nature, hold
Eternal Anarchie, amidst the noise
Of endless warrs, and by confusion stand.

—Milton, Paradise Lost, (2.887–97).¹

History of the Problem

In the study of literature from the ancient Near East (hereafter referred to as ANE), significant numbers of scholars over the past 60 years, both secular and religious, have argued that the creation story of Genesis is mythology akin to, and shaped by, the milieu of the ancient world.² The mythology of Genesis, they argue, represents the theory

¹ Milton represents the brilliance of the 17th century philosopher-poet who tried to engage the theology, magic and science of the day into a vibrant cosmology whose personification of Chaos and Night along with Sin and Death reads like the literature of the ANE mixed with a poetic view of Hebrew cosmology. Milton rejected the arguments for eratia ex nihilo and proposed the world was created out of "matter uniform’d and void" by an omnipresent God who withdrew himself in order to create the universe (Milton, 222). For further study see Malabika Sarkar, Cosmos and Character in Paradise Lost (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 3 cf.

of creation as the Hebrews saw it, but which readers today see as incompatible with modern scientific exploration. The term science is understood in the modern sense to denote the human pursuit of knowledge about the workings of the natural world that is justified by empirically falsifiable/verifiable theory construction, sense experience and the collective judgement of peer-reviewed researchers. As mythology, the argument continues, the creation account of Genesis has no revelatory insight or authority with respect to scientific inquiry into the origins of the universe. This inquiry is called cosmology, or cosmogony, and defined as a system of thought that attempts to explain the origins of the universe in scientific, philosophical, and/or theological terms.

Respected scholar John Walton represents one such group of theologians who believe Hebrew cosmology is a product of the shared cognitive environment (SCE) within the ANE and, as such, the evolution of the Tanak (or Christian Old Testament) is conjoined with the evolution of religion in the wider ancient world. Therefore, Walton asserts that in order to properly interpret Genesis, one must recognize that it “pertains to functional origins rather than material origins and that temple ideology underlies the Genesis cosmology.”

Myth then, for Walton, is not a value judgement on the revelatory

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4 This study is focused on the cosmology of Genesis within the context of the Hebrew Bible which covers תּוֹרָה (Tôrâ, Law), נְבֵiִים (Nêbî’im, Prophets), and כתובים (Kêtôḇîm, Writings). When referencing the entire collection of Hebrew Scripture, the acronym Tanak will be used in as a synonym for the term Old Testament which is the familiar Christian designation. Tanak is the most common terms used in the Talmud and Midrash, and possibly modern Judaism and its use in this thesis helps draw a clear distinction when referencing the Hebrew Scripture from the Christian Scripture which includes both the Tanak and the New Testament. When the term Scripture is used herein without qualification, it will be assumed to refer to both the Christian Old and New Testaments. For a history of Hebrew canon and the use of Tanak, see James A. Sanders, “Canon: Hebrew Bible,” in The Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary, ed. David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 839.

5 John H. Walton, *Genesis 1 as Ancient Cosmology* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2011), 198–199. Wyatt’s book on ANE mythology is commensurate with Walton’s concept of shared cognitive environment. However, the assertion that ancient cosmologies had no concern for material creation is
nature of the narrative, but rather a philosophical term that establishes symbolism as the primary hermeneutic for the conveyance of important religious realities over physical realities. Whereas the Christian New Testament does define myth as a false story (2 Tim 4:4; Titus 1:14; 2 Pet 1:16), vain speculation (1 Tim 1:4), and foolish talk (1 Tim 4:7), this is not the meaning adopted by modern scholars like Walton in discussions of Genesis 1. At issue, for Walton, is not the authorship or inspiration of Genesis, but rather, what portions of the account were added to foster the Hebrew cultus. Walton accepts by tradition that Moses is the inspired editor/compiler of Genesis, but sees no absolute and authoritative biblical statement anywhere in the Christian Scripture that affirms this tradition. Given this understanding, the two fundamental hermeneutical arguments advanced by Walton that are most relevant to this study are: (1) The essential properties of Genesis are conditioned by ANE culture (An essential property is defined in the formal study of analytic metaphysics such that if a thing loses it, then that thing will cease to exist.), and (2) Genesis is functionally unscientific mythology. These two ideas are inextricably connected in the reasoning of Walton:

Since God did not deem it necessary to communicate a different way of imagining the world to Israel but was content for them to retain the native ancient cosmic geography, we can conclude that it was not God’s purpose

rejected as Wyatt’s book assumes these various mythologies were inextricably linked to beliefs about the material universe—specifically, their understanding of space and time. Wyatt writes, “The organization of space at all these levels was also vital to the smooth running of a community on any scale. In practical terms this might be called secular, but it was never entirely separated from the sacred in the ancient world, and ritual was the means by which both space and time were organized and harnessed to a community’s use (Wyatt, Space and Time, 55.)” This does not mean the myths are compatible with modern science, but it does undermine Walton’s premise that cosmogenic myth had no relation to the material genesis of the universe.

to reveal the details of cosmic geography (defined as the way one thinks about the shape of the cosmos). The shape of the earth, the nature of the sky, the locations of sun, moon and stars, are simply not of significance, and God could communicate what he desired regardless of one’s cosmic geography.\footnote{Walton, \textit{The Lost World of Genesis One}, 16. Alternatively, Hugh Ross suggests in his book that the language of Genesis is phenomenological (written from the perspective of an “observer on the planet’s surface” and in line with science. While not discussed at length in this study, his work is a good subject for continued research. See Hugh Ross, \textit{The Genesis Question: Scientific Advances and the Accuracy of Genesis}, 2nd ed. (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2001), 31.}

In contrast to Walton’s approach, this thesis argues that both of the aforementioned hermeneutical assumptions are insufficient for understanding the Hebrew cosmology of Genesis 1 and will offer an alternative hermeneutical approach for each point. Specifically, this thesis argues (1) The essential properties of Genesis are a product of Divine revelation and only its accidental properties were shaped by ANE culture (an accidental property is defined in the formal study of analytic metaphysics such that if a thing loses that property, then that thing will maintain its existence)\footnote{For the reader unfamiliar with the formal study of analytic metaphysics, the terms “accidental” and “essential” are used in a modal sense. “A thing’s essential properties are those such that if the thing in question loses them, it ceases to exist. A thing’s essential properties answer the most fundamental question, what sort of thing is this?... An accidental property is one such that a thing can lose it and still exist.” James Porter Moreland and William Lane Craig, \textit{Philosophical Foundations for a Christian Worldview} (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 147, Kindle. See also, Teresa Robertson and Philip Atkins, “Essential vs. Accidental Properties,” \textit{The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy}, last modified April 18, 2016, Summer 2016, accessed January 31, 2018. https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2016/entries/essential-accidental.} and (2) Genesis gives insight into both the material and metaphysical origins of the universe and is therefore a valuable dialogic starting point for scientific exploration. Restated, this thesis argues that the differences between the worldview undergirding the cosmology of Genesis 1 and the worldview undergirding the ANE origin accounts are not accidental, but essential. A worldview is defined as the penultimate manifestation of philosophical inquiry which provides an overarching lens through which one incorporates all
metaphysical suppositions about reality, determines the paradigm for epistemological inquiry, and guides the cultural expression for ethical priorities and moral decision making. Here also, it is understood that a paradigm functions inside one’s worldview providing a field-specific framework for epistemological inquiry—determining what counts as knowledge and how it should be applied to other fields of inquiry. Hebrew cosmology then, while written in an ancient language for ancient peoples, is a manifestation of the unique Hebrew worldview which gives insight to modern readers into both the physical beginning and spiritual purpose of creation and is therefore uniquely positioned to provide a dialogic-paradigm for scientific exploration.

Points of Contention

In developing the argument for this thesis, there are four significant points of contention that must be addressed: (1) the uniqueness of the Hebrew worldview, (2) the basic meaning of Divine-revelation, (3) a clear definition of the term myth and how it relates to the book of Genesis, and (4) the consequent implications for the hermeneutical relationship between science and Genesis. Each of these points is addressed briefly below.

Hebrew Worldview Versus ANE Worldview

The first major point of contention between scholars is the different perception of the Hebrew worldview grounded in the cosmology of Genesis 1 and the degree of influence from the surrounding ANE cultures. The question here is, how much of biblical cosmology was shaped by the culture and how much was shaped by divine influence? Most scholars who advance what this thesis defines as either the Unified Worldview
Paradigm (UWP) or Divergent Worldview Paradigm (DWP) also recognize that the Hebrew writings were influenced by the religion, culture, and politics of the ANE. Numerous references to foreign kings, gods, and cultic practices make clear the necessity of understanding Hebrew cosmology within both its literary and historical context. However, the fundamental difference between scholars is what they deem essential versus what they deem tertiary to the Hebrew worldview. Consequently, this thesis will provide an assessment of the Hebrew’s use of common naturalistic terms also used by other ANEC including the Canaanite, Hittite, and Egyptian religions to describe YHWH and his creation along with an assessment of the implications for understanding the cosmology of Genesis. The postulate of this work is that for the Tanak reveals YHWH as the sole creator. This idea was an essential quality of Hebrew cosmology—foundational for understanding historical progress—that set their worldview apart from their neighbors who held a panentheistic worldview.\(^9\) However, a full understanding of Hebrew worldview, expressed in their cosmology, can only be considered inclusive of this next point of contention—the meaning of Divine revelation, both special and general.

*The Meaning of Revelation (Special and General)*

A second point of contention critical to understanding this thesis is the different interpretative approaches scholars take with respect to the Hebrew belief about Divine revelation. Does God reveal himself in nature (general revelation)? Is the doctrine of

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\(^9\) Panentheism, as defined by Geisler, is the best description of the finite-godism of the various ANE religions whose gods were limited in power and existed simultaneously both in an “actual temporal pole” and in a “potential eternal pole.” See Norman L. Geisler, *Christian Apologetics* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1976), 173, 193. Stated in metaphysical terms, in panentheism the existence of any one god is not essential to the existence of the cosmos. This theology is distinct from absolute pantheism which identifies the cosmos and god as mutually essential qualities.
special revelation recorded in the Tanak, as Schnittjer contends in his textbook, nothing more than a theological term used to spiritualize the cosmogenic evolution of religion common to all ancient Near East civilizations (ANEC)?\textsuperscript{10} If one assumes that God revealed himself directly to the Hebrews and inspired the writing of Genesis, what are the reasonable implications for the modern understanding of scientific cosmology? While a thorough survey of divergent views on revelation is beyond the scope of this work, it is necessary to note a few key philosophical underpinnings as they influence one’s understanding of the relationship between Hebrew worldview and the cosmology of Genesis.

In the 1800’s, Edward A. Washburn outlined the influence of three unique theologies of revelation advanced in response to the scientific revolution. First, he observed a Christian dogmatism rooted in deism that trusted in the authority of history and church councils over a reasoned faith. Washburn saw this as a reaction against naturalism that rejected revelation and concluded:

It is seen in the prevalent jealousies of natural philosophy, as if there were really doubt that Revelation could find its reconcilement; and so we must decree in synod that there has not been any creation anterior to the present system, must put down astronomy with its nebular theories, as that sage Aristotelian, who refused to look through a telescope for fear of shaking his settled opinions.\textsuperscript{11}

In other words, theologians who could not otherwise reconcile natural theology with the concept of revelation were forced to reject reason and rely on church tradition

\textsuperscript{10} Gary Edward Schnittjer, \textit{The Torah Story: An Apprenticeship on the Pentateuch} (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2006), 59. Schnittjer uses the term “progressive revelation” in his textbook, but the context of his usage applies directly to the use of special revelation in this thesis.

\textsuperscript{11} Edward A. Washburn, “Parallel Between the Philosophical Relations of Early and Modern Christianity,” \textit{Bibliotheca Sacra} 8, no. 29 (1851): 45.
and councils for their cosmological conclusions. A second movement that Washburn observed was empiric neology—rooted in a Kantian philosophy—which detached theology from cosmology and petitioned for the independence of the supernatural from the natural.\(^{12}\) The philosophical presumptions of empiric neology are embraced by process theologians and ultimately undermine their theology of Divine revelation.\(^{13}\)

A third viewpoint growing in influence in the 19th century was described by Washburn as natural-supernaturalism which sought to rise above Kantian subjectivity and the harsh distinction of the noumena and phenomena by arguing for a Divine self-revelation through the progress of humanity. Of this system, he observed:

> Such a system, then, as applied to revelation, must lead to different views from those of naturalism. Instead of excluding the divine, it includes it in a more comprehensive whole; instead of reasoning away the facts of supernaturalism, it affirms them as instances of the perpetual outflow of a higher power into nature; instead of denying a manifested God, it views Him as ever revealing Himself to the race.\(^{14}\)

Washburn expands on these views and sees them as battling for the very foundations of revealed truth. It is the challenge then of the modern mind to determine the meaning of revelation and how it impacts the theology of creation given in Genesis.

Of the two contrasting views considered in this thesis, each one accepts the possibility of a special Divine revelation but differs on the impact of that revelation on human knowledge of material origins. Each viewpoint explored herein accepts, at a

\(^{12}\) The term neology came into use in the late 1800’s as a disparaging term towards Christians who denounced Enlightenment thinking and favored both an antideistic theology and moral philosophy. While neologists did not directly deny the possibility of Divine revelation, they favored reason and natural theology as foundational for faith and morality. For a simple definition of this term see Walter Sparn, “Neology,” in The Encyclopedia of Christianity, ed. and trans. Geoffrey William Bromiley (Grand Rapids, MI; Leiden, Netherlands: Wm. B. Eerdmans; Brill, 1999–2003), 718-719.


\(^{14}\) Washburn, “Parallel,” 47.
minimum, that the Hebrews believed Genesis was given to Moses by God—enabling him to speak above the din of cultural influence and provide Israel a higher purpose and meaning. Moving beyond this basic assertion is the challenge outlined well by Harry Lee Poe on understanding how special revelation in the Bible and general revelation in nature can work together. Poe writes:

At this point we arrive at the real issue at stake for evangelicals in the science and religion dialogue. During the period of the Enlightenment, Protestant theologians began to make a place for “general revelation” alongside “specific revelation.” This development was encouraged by the Boyle Lectures in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, the Bridgewater Treatises in the early nineteenth century, and the Gifford Lectures in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. This tradition succeeded in making a place for general revelation in the Protestant community, but it did so at the expense of losing an objective understanding of specific revelation.\footnote{Poe, “Evangelism,” 584.}

As the 20\textsuperscript{th} century turned into the 21\textsuperscript{st}, the seeds of the scientific revolution germinated into a view that rejected as anti-scientific and anti-scholarly any view of special revelation which overlaps into the domain of science or general revelation. Special revelation is understood by many contemporary scholars to apply only then to the spiritual or metaphysical realm. The scholar who accepts this modern distinction between special and general revelation concludes that the special revelation of Genesis has little to say about the material origins of the natural world. In contrast, scholars who accept the older Enlightenment view that special revelation, alongside general revelation, has epistemic value for both the supernatural and natural arrive at a very different set of conclusions about Hebrew cosmology and its value for scientific exploration.
In the framework of this study, it is argued that the historic preservation of the Tanak was an essential distinctive of the Hebrew worldview rooted in their acceptance of the text as a special revelation from YHWH. There was no epistemological distinction between the material and immaterial worlds in their cosmology and consequently they perceived Genesis as both a special revelation concerning the material origin of the cosmos and a revelation of God’s spiritual purpose for humanity. General Revelation then is defined as the evidence of God’s existence, power and moral qualities available to all mankind in every generation from observation of the natural world. Special Revelation is defined as the record of God’s relationship with His creation recorded in the Bible, given by God through direction inspiration of human writers, which gives both evidence that advances human knowledge about general revelation and unique insight into His purposes. In arguing for the place of special revelation as a starting point for dialogue with science, the question of Genesis as history or myth becomes significant.

*Genesis as Myth or History*

Abraham, argues Peter Enns, was a man whose worldview was shaped by the Mesopotamian culture and therefore cannot speak to the modern scientific conceptions of cosmology. Like Walton, Enns argues that, “The reason the opening chapters of Genesis look so much like the literature of ancient Mesopotamia is that the worldview categories of the ancient Near East were ubiquitous and normative at the time.”\(^{16}\) When God then chose Abraham to be the progenitor of Israel, he also chose to adopt “the mythic

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categories within which Abraham—and everyone else—thought.”

Therefore, he concludes, the cosmology of Genesis has the same essential qualities of other ANE mythologies but was used by God to teach a more important metaphysical reality. If this definition is accepted, it is concluded that Genesis 1 has no connection to history or material origins but serves only as a literary vehicle for conveying spiritual origins. Important to this conclusion is how one defines myth.

The term myth is uniquely defined by different scholars with a range of meanings across a philosophical and phenomenological spectrum. Many define myth using broad sweeping categories in an effort to classify all ancient cosmologies within this category. Two representative examples illustrate the problem. Gaster writes, “Myth is a story of the gods in which results of natural causes are accounted for supernaturally.”

Joseph Fentenrose, quoted by Oden, defines myth as “the traditional tales of the deeds of daïmones: gods, spirits, and all sorts of supernatural or superhuman beings.” White’s simple criticism of Fentenrose also applies to Gaster when he writes, “The simple labeling of a story as a myth in this sense, though helping genre identification, does not necessarily advance our understanding of it.”

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17 Enns, Inspiration and Incarnation. 53.


In addition, these definitions above make the \textit{a priori} assumption that any non-material explanation invalidates the historical reliability of the story.\textsuperscript{21} These overly-broad definitions ultimately fail because they make no attempt to justify the bias against the supernatural and make no valid distinction between essential and non-essential features that advances our understanding of each unique story. Turning back to Enns, he avoids some of these problems by defining myth as, “an ancient, premodern, prescientific way of addressing questions of ultimate origins and meaning in the form of stories: Who are we? Where do we come from?”\textsuperscript{22} This definition, while on the surface appearing to eliminate the bias against the supernatural, simply replaces it with a bias against pre-scientific history and begs the question of the purpose of Genesis 1 along with its consequent scientific value. This thesis, in an effort to overcome the limitations of the definitions above, accepts the underlying principles established by John Oswalt who, on the basis of an examination of the phenomena of those pieces of literature commonly called “myth,” defined it as “a form of expression, whether literary or oral, whereby the continuities among the human, natural, and divine realms are expressed and actualized.

\textsuperscript{21} The hermeneutic that seeks to find the deeper meaning behind the mythology and apply it to the modern world is not restricted to scholars of the Tanak. Rudolf Bultmann argued that to understand the meaning of the words of Jesus in the Christian New Testament, one must “de-mythologize” the text. Like Gaster and Fentenrose in their effort to find the meaning of Genesis, Bultman defines myth in relation to the ancient cognitive environment and the supernatural. He writes, “It is often said that mythology is a primitive science, the intention of which is to explain phenomena and incidents which are strange, curious, surprising, or frightening, by attributing them to supernatural causes, to gods or to demons. . . It may be said that myths give to the transcendent reality an imminent, this-worldly objectivity.” Rudolf Bultmann, \textit{Jesus Christ and Mythology} (New York: Scribner, 1958), 18–19. He goes on to conclude, in words that are reminiscent of the hermeneutic utilized by scholars within the UWP, “To de-mythologize is to reject not the Scripture or the Christian message as a whole, but the world-view of the past epoch, which all too often is retained in Christian dogmatics and in the preaching of the church. . . To de-mythologize is to deny that the message of Scripture and of the Church is bound to an ancient world-view which is obsolete... For the worldview of the scripture is mythological and is therefore unacceptable to modern man whose thinking has been shaped by science and is therefore no longer mythological.” Ibid., 35–36.

\textsuperscript{22} Enns, \textit{Inspiration and Incarnation}, 50.
By reinforcing these continuities, it seeks to ensure the orderly functioning of both nature and human society.”  

A myth then is a story used by a culture to answer the questions of being where events and people become accidental properties used to advance essential symbolic ideology and rooted in the epistemological presupposition that human experience is the analog for the metaphysical. On the basis of this definition, “whatever the Bible is, it is not myth.”  

It is the contention, therefore, of this thesis that while the accidental properties of Genesis were partially shaped by ANE culture, the essential properties of the creation story of Genesis were not mythological in nature and consequently did not function as mythology in shaping the Hebrew worldview. For the Hebrews, God is separate from creation, fashioning the material universe from force of His spoken word, which leads to a set of worship practices and ethical mandates that separate Israel from the surrounding nations.

As the argument of this thesis unfolds, it will be important to observe that the validity of any definition that cannot philosophically distinguish between essential and accidental qualities within a story must be questioned. Myth, therefore, must be defined

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24 Ibid., 14.
by its common characteristics that shaped the practices and ethos of each culture. Using the term myth to include accidental elements in fantastic tales does not mandate equanimity or vitiate the essential differences between cosmological narratives. As Oswalt concludes, “Ultimately, the unique worldview of the Old Testament undergirds its claims of historical reliability.” That is to say, the cosmology of Genesis 1, within the Hebrew worldview, did not function as a fictional or cultic myth, but a historical-teleology that connected the actions of God in both space and time with his purposes for creation. History, as defined within this thesis, is a story used to record chronological progress where events and people are essential properties used to advance accidental symbolic ideology and is rooted in the epistemological presupposition that human experience is understood primarily through the metaphysical and secondarily through the natural. If then, as it is argued in this thesis, Genesis was viewed by the Hebrews as the historical revelation of God’s creation, which entailed both the teleological and the material origins of the cosmos, then the value of Genesis 1 for scientific study must also be explored.

*Genesis and the Scientific Study of Origins*

The role of Tanak in scientific exploration has been a debated issue since the beginning of the Scientific Revolution. With the continued rise of naturalism since the 18th century, Genesis has been seen as less and less valuable in the search for scientific knowledge. Poe reflects the view of many scholars who believe that Christians must be leery of basing their theology on any scientific theory. From his own study of history,

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27 Oswalt, *The Bible Among the Myths*, 17.
Poe concludes that, “Whenever Christians have based their theology on science they have been embarrassed because scientific understanding is constantly changing. In the same way, however, whenever Christians have based their interpretation of Scripture on tradition, they have been equally embarrassed.” This conclusion then leads Poe to a hermeneutical approach that rejects what he characterizes as a “literal” understanding of Genesis that connects it to material origins:

By assuming a literal meaning to the opening chapters of Genesis, conservative theologians imposed a theory of science necessary to salvation. As we move into a new century, perhaps we can learn an old lesson from Augustine. If our message is tied too closely to any particular theory of science, then when new scientific theories come, our message will be discarded with the old science. On the other hand, if our message cannot transcend the shifts in science from a flat earth sitting on four pillars, to the earth-centered world of Ptolemy, to the sun-centered solar system of Copernicus, to the mechanical universe of Newton, to the relative universe of Einstein, then perhaps we have misunderstood the message of the Bible.

While Poe’s representation of a literal hermeneutic is overly-broad and his use of “conservative” is more pejorative then descriptive, his larger concern remains valid. Most scholars, even those of a “conservative” bent, would agree that Genesis was not given by God as a scientific guidebook, yet this does not mean it should be immediately dismissed as a valid starting point for scientific inquiry. As Orr noted in the early 1900s, scholars like Poe make a fundamental mistake by fixating on these past errors. “Mistakes are often made on both sides,” Orr warns, “on the side of science in affirming contrariety of the Bible with scientific results where none really exists; on the side of believers in demanding that the Bible be taken as a text-book of the newest scientific discoveries, and

29 Ibid., 587.
trying by forced methods to read these into them.”30 Unlike other ANE civilizations, the Hebrews struck a balance between these two extremes and trusted that the special revelation from God in Genesis gave them insight into the natural world; a unique creation distinct from the God they worshipped. The unique standing of Genesis above all other ANE mythology affords the modern scholar the latitude to use the Tanak as a beginning point of study without fear of losing intellectual credibility.

It is the premise of this thesis that a solid biblical hermeneutic of Genesis will allow for the possibility that scientific exploration can refine the understanding of Tanak without fear of diminishing the authority or meaning of God’s revelation. Using Hebrew cosmology as a starting point for scientific study is not a guarantee of harmony but allows for the possibility of ongoing dialogue that can advance both the understanding of Genesis and science. When there is discontinuity, it is also argued, there should not be an immediate assumption that the Bible is in error and the science is infallible. In short, this thesis rejects the independence model, which assumes science and religion cover distinct domains using understandably idiosyncratic methodologies which focus on distinctive objects—such that the truth of one must exclude the truth of the other—and assumes a dialogue model, which holds that science and Genesis 1 cover overlapping domains sharing common ground in their presuppositions, methods, and concepts.31


31 A complete study of the dialogue model is beyond the scope of this thesis, yet foundational for understanding the author’s approach. For further investigation, see each of the following books and their unique contribution to the study of science and religion in dialogue, J. C. Polkinghorne, Belief in God in an Age of Science, Belief in God (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998); J. C. Polkinghorne, Science and Theology: An Introduction (London: SPCK, 1998); Thomas F. Torrance, The Ground and Grammar of Theology: Consonance Between Theology and Science, 2nd ed., Ground and Grammar (Edinburgh:
Problem Formulation

In the past century, the primary assumption of religious scholarship has shifted from treating the Genesis account of creation as a unique Hebrew story grounded in a direct revelation from YHWH, to the accepted idea that it evolved alongside, and largely in accord with, the other myths from the ANE. In describing this continually evolving interconnected web of all ANE religions, Nicolas Wyatt writes:

While local histories can be written, they should not really be treated in isolation from one another, since economic and political forces linked them from early times, and as will become evident, the ideas, beliefs, practices and social structures we encounter are not a random set of disconnected elements, but local developments of shared experience, and a complex network of interlocking symbols and values, often influenced in one area by political pressures from another.\footnote{Wyatt, \textit{Space and Time}, 26.}

The root of this modern approach to Hebrew cosmology is summarized well by John Oswalt who observes that up until the late 1940’s the shift toward the evolutionary paradigm was entrenched in the philosophy of idealism embedded in Old Testament Higher Criticism. In the midst of this shift toward an evolutionary hermeneutic, some scholars sought to provide an alternative approach. “That rethinking,” Oswalt writes, was led by William F. Albright and his students, among them G. Ernest Wright of the Harvard Divinity School. Speaking for much of the scholarly community of the time, Wright argued that the differences between the Israelite way of thinking about reality and the way in which Israel’s neighbors approached that topic were so significant that no evolutionary explanations could account for them.\footnote{Oswalt, \textit{The Bible Among the Myths}, 11. For a look at some of the early interactions of Albright with ANEL see W. F. Albright, “The Babylonian Temple-Tower and the Altar of Burnt-Offering,” \textit{Journal of Biblical Literature} 39, no. 3/4 (1920); W. F. Albright, “The Supposed Babylonian Derivation of the Logos,” \textit{Journal of Biblical Literature} 39, no. 3/4 (1920).}
Despite the influence of these scholars, the dominant view today is that the “Israelite religion is simply one more of the complex of West Semitic religions, and that its characteristic features can be fully explained on the basis of evolutionary change.”

The hermeneutical approach which interprets Hebrew cosmology through the naturalistic lens of modern science has come to dominance, not from any new discoveries within the ancient Near East literature (ANEL), but from the *a priori* assumption of scholars that the commonalities between Tanak and ANE myth are the primary factors and the differences are only secondary. This was a wholesale departure from scholars, such as Albright and Wright, who had access to this same information but considered the primary factors to be the differences and the commonalities of secondary concern. This should not be construed to mean that comparative studies between these ancient stories has been fruitless. On the contrary, the study of Hebrew creation in the context of ANE mythology has been invaluable and given scholars great insight into the ancient world. However, what is needed is a shift away from the view that conflates the accidental properties of Hebrew cosmology with the essential properties. Once again, Oswalt provides keen insight:

The studies of Israel and the ancient Near East in the last 150 years have been immensely valuable in that regard. But I am asking that we not overplay those similarities so that they obscure the much more significant differences that affect every interpretation of the similarities. What I am calling for in the end is that the evidence supporting the Bible’s claims to have been revealed be given the attention that it deserves, and that arguments growing from a fundamental disbelief in that possibility not be given a privileged place in the discussion.  

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34 Oswalt, *The Bible Among the Myths*, 11.
The Hebrew belief that their cosmology was a direct revelation from the creator God, distinct from his world, is a fundamentally distinct quality of their faith which sets them apart from other ANE cultures. To reduce this claim to an accidental property by modern scholars who reject the possibility of Divine revelation, is to impose a modern value system on the Hebrew worldview that distorts the uniqueness of their creation account. The Hebrew belief that humanity needed external revelation to know God became distasteful to scholars over the past half-century and thus the view that all ANEC shared a common worldview became the only acceptable position. Scholars who reject revelation must focus on the similarities rather than the distinctions. Here again Oswalt frames well the distinction between primary and secondary considerations:

The fact that the Hebrews may have shared with the Babylonians the idea that there were windows in the heavens through which, when they were opened, the rain poured, does not thereby mean that their report of Noah’s involvement in the flood was necessarily fictional. The veracity of a narrative cannot be prejudged on the basis of whether supernatural causation or prescientific worldviews are involved.36

Given the distinctive qualities outlined by Oswalt, the research presented here is rooted in a philosophical and theological presupposition that it is the differences in the Hebrew worldview from those of the ANE that define the essential qualities of the biblical understanding of creation. The corollary to that assumption is that the similarities of the Hebrew Scripture with other ANEL are nonessential and therefore do not impact the fundamental meaning the Tanak which must be understood through the uniquely essential qualities that distinguish it from myth.

36 Oswalt, The Bible Among the Myths, 34.
Nature, Extent, and Limitations of this Study

While consulting sources from the late 19th and early 20th century to provide a solid historical perspective, this study will focus on the most recent scholarship and scientific exploration of ANE and Hebrew cosmologies. The study will also focus on the understanding of Genesis 1 through the lens of other passages relevant to cosmology. While no analysis of Hebrew creation can fully exclude consideration of Genesis 2 and 3, space precludes a full treatment of these texts within the context of their corresponding ANE myths. Given the limitations of this thesis, the question of Adam and Eve’s historicity will be excluded from this study to focus on the Genesis 1 creation story itself. This study will rely on primary source documents that retell the ancient mythos of Israel’s surrounding nations to help determine what elements comprise essential and nonessential qualities of ANE cosmologies. Finally, while the Christian New Testament offers valuable insight into the overall view of biblical cosmology, a study of these passages will also be excluded from this thesis.

Given these limitations, to advance the thesis chapter 2 will review two of the primary paradigms for understanding Hebrew cosmology and posit the best approach. These two paradigms, it must be acknowledged, are certainly not exhaustive of every possible paradigm. Karl Barth, one of the most influenceal theologians of the 20th century, holds a view that does not fit easily within either the Unified or Divergent Worldview Paradigms (see, Appendix E: Definitions). There are certainly parts of Barth’s writings that appear to support Walton’s concept of a shared cognitive environment yet other parts that seem to a strong argument against it (see Appendix D for a fuller analysis). A study of Barth’s theology serves to illustrate the importance of not forcing all scholars into the paradigms advanced in this thesis: the Unified Worldview Paradigm and the Divergent
Worldview Paradigm. Each of these two paradigms, however, do offer a different approach to the four significant points of contention addressed in this chapter.

Finally, with regards to the limits of this thesis, only scholars who accept the possibility of special revelation will be considered insofar as they differ on the impact of that revelation on human knowledge as it relates to both material origins and general revelation. Chapter 3 will provide the foundation for affirming the overall thesis of this project using primary ANE sources as the key analytical component and chapter 4 will provide concluding remarks along with suggestions for further study.
CHAPTER 2: TWO PARADIGMS IN CONTRAST

Whether of open Warr or covert guile,
We now debate. Who can advise, may speak.
He ceas’d; and next him Moloc, Scepter’d King,
Stood up, the strongest and the fiercest Spirit
That fought in Heav’n, now fiercer by despair.
His trust was with th’ Eternal to be deem’d
Equal in strength, and rather than be less
Car’d not to be at all; with that care lost
Went all his fear: of God, or Hell, or worse,
He reck’d not, and these words thereafter spake.
My sentence is for open Warr. Of Wiles,
More unexpert, I boast not: them let those
Contrive who need, or when they need; not now.

—Milton, Paradise Lost, (2.41–53).

Since the publication of Origine de tous les cultes, ou religion universelle in 1794 by Charles Frangois Dupuis, religious scholars have made efforts to understand the various influences that connect all ancient cosmologies, especially as they seek to harmonize the Hebrew account in Genesis 1 with other ANEL.\(^1\) In 1902, Crawford H. Toy summarized Depuis’ thesis in two key points: first, all religions emanated from a single Babylonian source and second, all religious cosmologies were derived from observations of nature.\(^2\) By 1920, the idea of a common cosmology among ancient religions had advanced such that Julian Morgenstern concluded almost all scholars

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2 Ibid., 47–48.
accepted the dependence of the Genesis creation cosmology on the Babylonian creation myth, but there still lacked any significant expansion of this thesis. Over the past century, various new theories have surfaced which seek to understand and harmonize all ancient religions from the ANE. Within contemporary Christian scholarship, there are at least two distinct paradigms that reinterpret this classic search which are explored in this thesis. For the sake of brevity, this thesis will utilize the nomenclature Unified Worldview Paradigm (UWP) and Divergent Worldview Paradigm (DWP) to help distinguish between these two idiosyncratic approaches to Hebrew cosmology which differ in their conclusion about the relevance of Genesis 1 for scientific exploration.

The Unified Worldview Paradigm

The first paradigm covered in this work is reflected in the recent writings of John H. Walton and Kyle Greenwood. While each scholar offers some unique insight, their overall approach can be categorized as the Unified Worldview Paradigm (UWP). The foundational proposition of this paradigm is that the essential properties of Hebrew cosmology are the product of the shared cognitive environment (SCE) within the ANE which used symbolism as the primary hermeneutic to convey important religious realities over physical realities. Walton defines SCE simply as how the people perceived

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themselves and the world. As it relates to the interaction of science and religion, this paradigm entails the philosophy of Immanuel Kant and later writings of Stephen J. Gould’s Independence Model which holds that science and religion cover distinct domains using understandably idiosyncratic methodologies or by focusing on distinctive objects, such that the truth of one must exclude the truth of the other. The following review of literature will establish the most significant elements of this definition.

John Walton, in his book, *The Lost World of Genesis One*, argues that the Old Testament is a revelation of God to the modern reader, but not written for the modern reader. This distinction is foundational to Walton’s hermeneutical contention that the modern reader cannot understand the cosmological purpose of Genesis outside the context of ancient Near East literature. Genesis, he argues, was written in another language and in another culture that the reader must rightly understand lest they distort the purpose and meaning of Hebrew cosmology. The only way the modern mind can properly immerse itself in the culture of the Hebrews, is to understand the competing ANE cosmologies that shaped the Hebrew worldview. Walton concludes:

As a result, we are not looking at ancient literature to try to decide whether Israel borrowed from some of the literature that was known to them. It is to be expected that the Israelites held many concepts and perspectives in common with the rest of the ancient world. This is far different from suggesting literature was borrowed or copied. This is not even a case of Israel being influenced by the peoples around them. Rather we simply recognize the common conceptual worldview that existed in ancient times.

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5 Walton, *Genesis 1*, 2.


We should therefore not speak of Israel being influenced by that world—they were part of that world.\(^8\)

Walton, then, does not see the need to look for a common Babylonian, Hittite or Egyptian source document but concludes that the fundamental worldview (shared cognitive environment) of the Hebrews is the same: therefore, their basic cosmology is the same. Based on the premise that Hebrew cosmology is ANE cosmology, Walton goes on to offer 18 propositions for understanding the ancient mythology of Genesis within the framework of our modern scientific “mythology” where the term mythology is broadly defined as how any given culture views both the origins and operations of the universe.

In summary, these propositions can be divided into several groups. Proposition 1: Genesis 1 Is Ancient Cosmology, is the seminal thought that affirms Walton’s view that Hebrew cosmology is ANE cosmology which cannot be understood through modern terms and concepts of scientific origins. Any attempt at what he terms concordism—the effort to give scientific value to the text—diminishes the meaning and authority of the text.

Propositions 2 through 6 are: Ancient Cosmology Is Function Oriented, “Create” (Hebrew בָּרָא) Concerns Functions, The Beginning State in Genesis 1 Is Nonfunctional, Days One to Three in Genesis 1 Establish Functions, and Days Four to Six in Genesis 1 Install Functionaries. These five propositions define Walton’s view that Hebrew cosmology is nowhere concerned with material origins, but only with functional origins. Ontological being, for the Hebrew, was only concerned with how the universe was

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\(^8\) Walton, *The Lost World of Genesis One*, 11–12.
ordered from an ANE perspective and made no attempt to understand the material, or
scientific, being of the cosmos.  

Propositions 7 through 11 are: Divine Rest Is in a Temple, The Cosmos Is a
Temple, The Seven Days of Genesis 1 Relate to the Cosmic Temple Inauguration, The
Seven Days of Genesis 1 Do Not Concern Material Origins, and “Functional Cosmic
Temple” Offers Face-Value Exegesis. These five propositions define Walton’s concept of
creation as a way to explain the Hebrew cultus of Temple worship. Day 7 of creation
only made sense, Walton argues, in the context of their God resting in his temple and
ruling over his creation:

From the idea that the temple was considered a mini cosmos, it is easy to
move to the idea that the cosmos could be viewed as a temple. This is
more difficult to document in the ancient world because of the polytheistic
nature of their religion. If the whole cosmos were viewed as a single
temple, which god would it belong to? Where would temples of the other
gods be? Nevertheless it can still be affirmed that creation texts can and do
follow the model of temple-building texts, in this way at least likening the
cosmos to a temple.  

This concept of a structural parallelism between the Jewish temple and Hebrew
cosmology are explored in depth by Barker who concludes, “the mythology and
symbolism of the ancient temple are the key to understanding of this symbolism, for
when the meaning of these symbols is lost, the meaning of Christianity will also be
lost.” McLeish, citing Barker’s work, argues this thesis may not be sustainable, but
accepts the underlying point that Genesis 1 is written to connect cosmology and worship.
McLeish writes:

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9 Walton, The Lost World of Genesis One, 24.
10 Ibid., 82. See also, Walton, Genesis 1, 190.
11 Margaret Barker, The Gate of Heaven: The History and Symbolism of the Temple in Jerusalem
(Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2008), 181.
Brown and independently the Orthodox scholar Margaret Barker both suggest a structural parallelism of the Genesis 1 text with the architecture of the temple, but, whether this suggestion can be sustained or not, what the ‘priestly’ account does is surely to enshrine the purpose and nature of creation within the repeated acts of worship of the community. . . so, in Genesis 1, a context of communal remembrance and worship provides the grounding of the text that the lack of a continuous history fails to.\(^\text{12}\)

While these scholars have differences on the connection between cosmology and temple, they are each driven to some degree by a rejection of a hermeneutic which takes Genesis a literal account of historic events. McLeish speculates, “We must wonder whether much of the deplorable literalism around Genesis 1, still so shrill in many frightened Christian churches today, might have arisen purely as a result of the traditional ordering of biblical books.” For scholars uncomfortable with the scientific implications of traditional literal hermeneutic for a material creation, Walton believes his functional “face value” hermeneutic provides an alternative that divorces the biblical text of any problematic connection to modern science. The Young Earth creationists, he concludes, are too narrow in their literal reading of Genesis 1 and remain ignorant of Walton’s functional view of creation.\(^\text{13}\) Old Earth creationists should be commended for their scientific efforts, but if they were to adopt Walton’s view, they would realize their search for a scientific validation of Genesis 1 is unnecessary. Alternatively, those who hold to the framework hypothesis need not change their hermeneutic as they could easily adopt Walton’s thesis alongside their own. Ultimately, any account which attempts to connect Genesis 1 to material origins falls short, for Walton, and distorts the real meaning of the text.


\(^\text{13}\) Walton, *The Lost World of Genesis One*, 108.
Propositions 12 through 18 are: Other Theories of Genesis 1 Either Go Too Far or Not Far Enough; The Difference Between Origin Accounts in Science and Scripture Is Metaphysical in Nature; God’s Roles as Creator and Sustainer Are Less Different Than We Have Thought; Current Debate About Intelligent Design Ultimately Concerns Purpose; Scientific Explanations of Origins Can Be Viewed in Light of Purpose, and If So, Are Unobjectionable; Resulting Theology in This View of Genesis 1 Is Stronger, Not Weaker; and Public Science Education Should Be Neutral Regarding Purpose. These seven propositions integrate Walton’s basic theory with modern conceptions of evolution and Intelligent Design and lead to his discussion of various implications for public policy and education. Walton concludes that the Bible is concerned with an overall teleology and has no concern for the scientific mechanism of creation. The Bible gives purpose for creation but gives no insight into its operation. Science then cannot speak to what Walton calls the ultimate teleological purpose of creation and can never affirm or deny the revelation of Scripture that God is creator. Building on these concepts, Kyle Greenwood offers some of his own insight toward developing a UWP.

Kyle Greenwood in his book *Scripture and Cosmology* builds on the same basic themes as Walton and argues that the only way to understand the meaning of a text is to learn its ANE context. “Biblical cosmology,” he argues, “is ancient Near Eastern cosmology. Through the biblical authors, God spoke in the language of the common folk.”14 Because the Tanak relies on the language of Divine-accommodation, it is only possible to understand the meaning of Genesis as a product of the cultural, geographical, historical, and literary context.

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14 Greenwood, Scripture and Cosmology, 204.
Greenwood points out that one possible definition of worldview comes from Kant’s use of *Weltanschauung* in his *Critique of Judgment*. In this work, Kant argued that humans observe the phenomena (the natural world) but may not have a right sense of its true noumena (reality). Greenwood modifies Kant’s concept of worldview using Walton’s “cognitive environment” and adopts this premise for his book.

The Israelites received no revelation to update or modify their “scientific” understanding of the cosmos. They did not know that 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. They believed that the sky was material (not vaporous), solid enough to support the residence of deity as well as to hold back waters.\(^\text{15}\)

Quoting Walton, Greenwood asserts that the Hebrew scientific worldview was shaped wholly by the cognitive environment of the ancient Near East whose cosmology formed the basic structure for how they perceived and interpreted the world around them.

Greenwood postulates that just as it was for all ANE cultures, “the ancient Hebrews’ only knowledge of the world around them was limited to what their parents told them, what they had seen for themselves and what they imagined it must be like.”\(^\text{16}\) In short, Hebrew cosmology was grounded in the phenomena with no insight into the noumena. Building on this hermeneutical presupposition, Greenwood’s thesis is divided into three parts: part one examines the cultural context for the Hebrew cosmology and their Scripture, part two looks at cosmology and Tanak in their historical context, and part three takes a summary look at the Tanak and science.

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\(^\text{15}\) Walton, *The Lost World of Genesis One*, 16.

In part one, Greenwood outlines what he perceives to be consistencies between Hebrew, Egyptian, Canaanite, and Mesopotamian cosmologies. Greenwood sees all of these ANE cultures operating from an analogical geocentric three-tiered worldview. The phenomenological language of the ancients defining the sea, sky and land is similar to language used today, but Greenwood concludes their usage reflected their actual perception of reality and did not conceal a deeper scientific understanding. The Hebrews “breathed the same air” as other ANEC and therefore their shared perception of a flat disk earth supported by pillars is not unexpected.\(^\text{17}\) There are some subtle, and secondary, differences unique to Hebrew cosmology which demonstrates their general adoption of ANE cosmology without any effort to correct the scientific perceptions of the day.

In the final section of part one, Greenwood provides his hermeneutical analysis from what he says are the 13 key cosmological passages from the Hebrew Scriptures: Genesis 1, 2; Exodus 20:8–11; Nehemiah 9:6; Job 38:2–38; Psalm 8; 19; 74:12–17; 95:1–7; 104; 136:1–9; Proverbs 8:22–31; and Isaiah 40:12. The Hebrew view of creation was crucial to their worship and belief that God would be faithful in their future as He was in their past. The creation week is viewed as closer, however, to the ancient cosmological structure than a literal seven-day week. Hebrew cosmology depicts God as the sovereign creator of the three-tiered cosmos who, unlike the other ANE gods locked in an epic battle, has subdued the forces of nature and commands them to do his will.

In part two of the book, Greenwood looks at the Tanak in light of both the Aristotelian and Copernican cosmologies. To look at Hebrew cosmology in light of modern conceptions, however, one must “keep in mind that Cosmology is simply another

\(^\text{17}\) Greenwood, Scripture and Cosmology, 101.
aspect of the foreignness of the ancient biblical world. Just as the ancient Hebrews spoke in a forgotten language, so too they thought according to a forgotten worldview.”

Greenwood begins by questioning how a mathematician might try to understand the Genesis 1 description of a firmament above the earth. As astronomy advanced, the flat earth conception of earth from the ANE had to be reconsidered. Beginning in around 400 BC, thoughtful Jews responded to the cosmology of Aristotle and Ptolemy and integrated some of their ideas of a spherical earth as they moved away from the ancient Hebrew cosmology.

Christians in the 17th century were confronted with the Copernican cosmology and many feared the new science would undermine their faith and the need for God. This fear, notes Greenwood, was unfounded as great scientists such as Kepler saw the new science as motivation to discover the greatness of God. Protestants and Roman Catholics alike had differing responses to Copernican theories rooted in their theological assumptions, but both groups responded negatively to the new science. Greenwood makes clear that although Copernican science was incorrect in many of its conclusions, the basics of his theory were correct regarding the nature of science needing constant refinement and clarification from ongoing experimentation.

In the third and final section Greenwood discusses the authority of Scripture and the impact of science. He concludes that Hebrew Scripture contains many unscientific

18 Greenwood, Scripture and Cosmology, 192.

19 Greenwood here seems to adopt the War Model of science and religion made popular during the late 19th Century through authors such as John William Draper (1811–1882) and Andrew Dickson White (1832–1918). In recent decades, the war model has been countered by historians of science who note a much more complex, often supportive, and symbiotic relationship and who see the war model as “at best, an oversimplification and, at worst, a deception.” Colin A. Russell, “The Conflict of Science and Religion,” in Science and Religion: A Historical Introduction, ed. Gary B. Ferngren (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2017), 7–8.
conceptions and is, therefore, incompatible with scientific exploration. This should not be understood to mean that these two things are in conflict. Rather, Greenwood argues, “when we pit Scripture against science, or written revelation against natural revelation, we are defending the faith not from secularism but from sincerity. Sincere Christians with sincere questions are not helped by artful interpretations of Scripture that ignore the realities of the world God created.”20 For Greenwood, the primary purpose of Scripture is to show God’s redemptive purpose for humanity, not teach science. Scientists must remain humble because scientific understanding of the cosmos is incomplete. Therefore, it should be no surprise that God did not reveal himself to the ancient Hebrews in terms of scientific empiricism that would not be understood for thousands of years and a knowledge of the universe that still remains incomplete.

In short, Greenwood sees biblical cosmology is ANE cosmology and Christians should not be fearful of studying these ancient stories as they give greater insight into the meaning of the Tanak. After all, “From God’s perspective, would it not make more sense for him to communicate with the conventions, customs and cultural trappings of his intended audience rather than those of its readers several millennia later?”21 This being the case, science should not be used as a weapon to diminish the importance of Scripture, but neither should Scripture be used to deny the insight of science.

In summary, the writings of both Walton and Greenwood share two critical weaknesses. First, their basic paradigm holds that the essential qualities of Hebrew cosmology are the product of a cognitive environment held in common with all other

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20 Greenwood, Scripture and Cosmology, 220–221.
21 Ibid., 202–203.
ANEC that used symbolism as the primary hermeneutic to convey important religious realities over physical realities. While no source is given by either author, the use of shared cognitive environment (SCE) as an explanatory paradigm has a kinship to the relevance theory espoused by Sperber and Wilson in their book, *Relevance: Communication and Cognition*. In this book, the authors emphasize that while people may share a common physical environment, what is more significant is their common cognitive awareness. Implicit in this theory of a SCE is the limitation that no people groups can fully share all memories, cognitive abilities, facts or assumptions. Tindale, in his assessment of Sperber and Wilson’s work, concludes, “because of such factors as their different memories, they can never share a total cognitive environment. But insofar as their cognitive environments intersect, then that intersection is a cognitive environment. . . Mutual manifestness, then, is weak in the right sense, since a claim that an assumption is mutually manifest will not be a claim about actual states or processes but about cognitive environments”23 This brief assessment of SCE reveals a significant weakness of Walton and Greenwood’s use of this paradigm. Their books fail to meaningfully define the term SCE. Walton does say that the SCE is “how people thought about themselves and their world,” but this definition in light of its more precise use by Sperber, Wilson, and Tindale appears untenably vague.24 In the footnote to his definition, Walton does write that his choice of SCE can be substituted with other terms such as

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24 Walton, *Genesis 1*, 2.
“conceptual world view, philosophical *Sitz im Leben, Zeitgeist,*” but fails to justify why he rejects these more commonly used terms to advance his own idiosyncratic nomenclature. In addition, neither Walton nor Greenwood delineate which concomitant elements of the ANE psyche (if such a singular thing exists) overlap with the Hebrews and which are unique to each people group. Lacking both clarity and any philosophic justification validating the use of a SCE as an explanatory paradigm, it is difficult to sustain its value for interpreting Hebrew cosmology in the context of ANEC.

Second, both Walton and Greenwood posit this three-tiered cosmology has its roots in the experience of the world common to all ANEC which did not have the advantage of advanced scientific insight.25 It is worth noting at this point in the review that one of the significant weaknesses of three-tiered cosmology is that it discounts significant passages with the cosmic epithet “God of heaven and earth” which excludes the cosmic seas.

The unique creation appellative, “God of heaven and the God of earth” (v. 3), describing Abraham’s deity does more than identify his God; its cosmic language adds further solemnity to the task. This divine title appears in a slightly modified form in the benediction of Melchizedek (14:19) and in the mention of Abraham’s oath to God (14:22). In both chaps. 14 and 24, there is an association of the Creator and the election of Abraham, suggesting a cosmic significance for his calling. Also both passages show that Abraham’s deity is not among the Canaanite deities, implying why no suppliant of the local gods can be chosen for Isaac’s wife (v. 3b).26

The viability of this key element to the Walton-Greenwood hypothesis notwithstanding, the four basic conclusions shared by Walton and Greenwood which


support this definition of the Unified Worldview Paradigm used in this thesis are: (1) Hebrew cosmology is ANE cosmology with no revelatory value toward science; (2) Hebrew cosmology is concerned only with functional and never material origins; (3) Hebrew cosmology requires a “face-value” hermeneutic that relies on the language of accommodation and therefore disqualifies all forms of scientific creationism and rejects the validity of a literal hermeneutic; and (4) Hebrew cosmology is teleology with no regard for scientific methodology; therefore, science has no ability to speak to Genesis and Genesis has no ability to speak to science. Now in contradistinction to the Unified Worldview Paradigm, the Divergent Worldview Paradigm (DWP) will be outlined next.

The Divergent Worldview Paradigm

In contrast to the UWP, the second view developed in this thesis is the Divergent Worldview Paradigm (DWP) which contends that the essential properties of Hebrew cosmology are distinct from ANE mythologies and similar only in its accidental properties and aligns with the Dialogue Model of science and religion. This view is reflected in the writing of John N. Oswalt in The Bible among the Myths. Oswalt traces his own thinking to writers such as G. Ernest Wright, Yehezkel Kaufmann, W.F. Albright, and to some extent the early writings of Walton. Although this paradigm

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27 In support of Walton’s view, Greenwood writes, “Based on the analogies of divine speech and the incarnation, biblical commentators have co-opted this notion of divine accommodation [found in Calvin’s theology] to account for pre-enlightened language in Scripture.” Greenwood, Scripture and Cosmology, 197. It is worth noting that Ramm’s overall thesis is consistent with the DWP, yet like Walton he argues his hermentuic aligns with Calvin’s “common sense” interpretation. Ramm, Christian View, 65. Both men then use Calvin as a source for two paradigms that fundmaentally disagree on the interplay between science and religion. Resolving this specific conflict is beyond the scope of this thesis, but moving forward it will be assumed Walton’s interpretation is correct, and an alternative to Calvin’s accommodationist hermeneutic consistent with the DWP will be posited.

appears to find less support among the scholars surveyed for this work, it is a theory that has been advanced for many decades.

In the opening of Oswalt’s book, he outlines the ongoing conflict between competing proposals which seek to explain the origins of Hebrew religion during the Old Testament period. The popular view among modern scholars, observes Oswalt, rejects the notion of external revelation from God as the explanatory agent in Hebrew cosmology and relies upon theories of a common ANE mythology. For this theory to work, scholars must view similarities between ANE creation stories and Genesis as essential and distinctions as accidental. Oswalt’s proposal is that the claims of the Tanak do not support the commonly accepted UWP and argues “the evidence supporting the Bible’s claims to have been revealed [must] be given the attention that it deserves, and that arguments growing from a fundamental disbelief in that possibility not be given a privileged place in the discussion.”

The two fundamental assertions of the book are: first, if myth is defined as stories which share common characteristics, then “the Bible, whatever it is, does not accord with that definition,” and second, “the unique worldview of the Old Testament undergirds its claims of historical reliability.” In making his case, Oswalt divides his book into two sections. Part 1 discusses the thorny issue of the Bible as myth, and in part 2 he tackles the issue of Bible as history.

The strength of Oswalt’s work in Part 1 is his clarity of defining the oft elusive and overly broad term myth. Modern scholarship has tended to broaden the definition of

29 Oswalt, The Bible Among the Myths, 18.
30 Ibid., 14.
31 Ibid., 17.
the term *myth* in order to break down any potential distinction between the Bible and ANE mythologies. His analogy at this point is most helpful:

It is as though we have defined an automobile as “a vehicle having wheels.” As far as it goes the definition is accurate: automobiles are vehicles with wheels. But it is not a helpful definition because it will include a lot of things that are clearly not automobiles, like wheelbarrows. If, however, we were to define automobiles as “self-propelled, gasoline-powered, four-wheeled passenger vehicles,” the definition would be too narrow because there are some automobiles that are powered with diesel fuel, and some that have but three wheels.\(^{32}\)

There are two main categories that encompass these types of definitions. The first type, called historical-philosophical, assumes that myths are stories used by a culture to advance some ideal yet understood not to reflect reality. Myths of this type can be broken down into the etymological, sociological, and literary categories. The second type, called the phenomenological, assumes that myth is believed to be an accurate description of reality by those who accept it. The problem with all of these definitions, concludes Oswalt, is they assume the text is unreliable and utilize an overly broad definition of myth. Oswalt frames the debate with clarity when he concludes that the best way to define mythology is not by the modern value judgment of truth or falsity or by creating functional definitions that may conflate the use of common terms as referring to the same thing.\(^ {33}\) The best definition of mythology, rather, demonstrates a capacity to distinguish essential from accidental properties. Oswalt concludes part 1 by noting the essentials unique to Hebrew cosmology are not shared by other ANE mythology. He outlines the unique qualities of all ANE mythologies as polytheism, continuity of spiritual and material, panentheism, idol worship, eternality of matter, personality as non-essential to

\(^{32}\) Oswalt, *The Bible Among the Myths*, 32.

\(^{33}\) Ibid., 44–45.
reality, a low view of gods, life is the product of conflict, a low view of humanity, no ethical absolute, and a cyclical existence. Critical here to understanding the ANE worldview is that epistemology in mythmaking assumes human experience is the analog to knowing reality.

In stark contrast to the ANE worldview, Oswalt contends the distinctive Hebrew worldview, reflected in their cosmology, were as follows: monotheism, iconoclasm, transcendence, independence, eternality of spirit and not matter, absence of conflict in creation as evil comes only after, and is not a source of, creation, a high view of humanity, reliability of God, God is supra-sexual, the prohibition on magic, ethics as a form of religious worship, and the recognized significance of historical progress. Critical here to the Hebrew worldview is that epistemology in Hebrew cosmology begins with a transcendent God who must reveal himself to make sense of reality. If then these assertions are correct, concludes Oswalt, the best way to account for Israel’s unique cosmology among all other ANE religions is that God truly revealed himself to Moses and the writers of these ancient documents.

Part two of the book shifts the focus from myth into an exploration of the Bible and history. Key to Oswalt’s understanding of Hebrew cosmology as historical is his definition of history itself as “a narrative of a series of events revolving about human beings acting in time and space. Existing for the purpose of human self-knowledge, it purports to be an accurate account of all significant elements in the series and includes an attempt to evaluate the relative importance of these elements for the eventual outcome.”


35 Oswalt, The Bible Among the Myths, 113.
Oswalt goes on to offer a defense of the essential reliability of the Old Testament literature in its basic facts, while allowing for a nuanced understanding of diverse biblical literary styles in how these basic histories are presented. Despite the efforts of theologians Rudolf Bultmann and Alfred North Whitehead, it is not possible to maintain a thoroughly biblical faith, Oswalt concludes, outside the Hebrew assumption that God truly acts in history and revealed himself directly through the writers of Tanak.\(^{36}\)

Oswalt’s work fits well into the Divergent Worldview Paradigm (DWP) which contends that the essential properties of Hebrew cosmology (e.g. transcendent personal monotheism, creation ex nihilo, cosmological contingency, ethics as a form of religious worship, the sacredness of human life, and the recognized significance of historical progress) are distinct from ANE mythologies and similar only in its accidental properties and aligns with the Dialogue Model of science and religion.

**Summary**

In this brief review of the literature relevant to this thesis, the two paradigms that emerge fall under this author’s rubric of the Unified and Divergent Worldview Paradigms. These two paradigms, it must be acknowledged, are certainly not exhaustive of every possible paradigm. Not all scholarship can be fit into the paradigms advanced in this thesis; however, both the UWP and DWP do offer a different approach to the four significant points of contention addressed in chapter one. The following is both a summary and analysis of these two paradigms.

\(^{36}\) Oswalt, *The Bible Among the Myths*, 155.
Hebrew Worldview Versus ANE Worldview

It is important to emphasize that both paradigms discussed in this chapter value the study of ANEL for understanding the context of Hebrew cosmology but differ philosophically in its application. The UWP, reflected in the writings of John H. Walton and Kyle Greenwood, holds that the essential properties of Hebrew cosmology are the product of the SCE of the ANE which used symbolism as the primary hermeneutic to convey important religious realities over physical realities. The DWP is reflected in the writing of John Oswalt and holds that the essential properties of Hebrew cosmology are distinct from other ANE mythologies and similar only in its accidental properties.

The Meaning of Revelation, Both Special and General

In the UWP, revelation applies only to the purpose of creation, but not the physical properties of creation. Therefore, the language of Divine-accommodation provides the only possible way to understand Genesis. Hebrew cosmology is a product of the cultural, geographical, historical, and literary context meant primarily for the nation of Israel and only secondarily through Israel to the rest of the world. It should be no surprise then that God did not reveal himself to the ancient Hebrews in scientific terms that would not be employed for thousands of years. Science, then, is only capable of exploring nature but cannot provide any insight into the metaphysical realm which entails the person of God. Conversely, the Bible is the special revelation of God, but with no authoritative insight into the natural world. Walton, unfortunately, does not provide clear principle for discerning Divine-accommodation from textual elements that should be taken as divine revelation. In contrast to UWP, the DWP accepts both the value of God’s
special revelation through the Bible and general revelation in nature. Both offer the unique capacity to interact and reveal truth about God and creation.

_Genesis as Myth or History?_

The UWP in the writings of Walton rejects the notion of a common source document in ANE mythology that undergirds the Genesis story and even that the Hebrews directly borrowed from the surrounding cultures. However, Hebrew cosmology is still ANE cosmology in that they sought to answer the basic questions of “who are we?” and “why are we here?” from the basic perspective of the ANE worldview. The problem with this hermeneutic is that it serves only to lower the bar and broaden the scope of myth to encompass even modern science such that within the UWP the Genesis story can neither be fully falsified or verified to the modern mind. The UWP leads to the conclusion that any claim that the Tanak is history or that the Israelite religion offers unique historical insight is false.

The DWP argues that history must be distinguished from mythology according to its unique essential properties and epistemological assumptions. The epistemology in ANE mythmaking assumes human experience is the analog to knowing reality; whereas Hebrew epistemology began with a transcendent God who revealed himself in order to make sense of reality. Consequently, Hebrew cosmology differs from all other ANE mythology in the essential qualities of a transcendent monotheism, creation ex nihilo, cosmological contingency, ethics as a form of religious worship, and the recognized

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37 Walton, _Ancient Israelite Literature_, 37.
significance of historical progress. Wright concludes, “The Israelite knowledge of God, therefore, was not founded in the first instance on the numinous awareness of nature, as was the case in polytheism. It was based on historical event.” The following table summarizes the unique essential qualities most significant to this thesis.

Table 1: The Essential Properties of ANE and Hebrew Cosmologies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ANE Cosmology</th>
<th>Hebrew Cosmology</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Panentheistic impersonal theomachy</td>
<td>Transcendent personal monotheism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creation ex materia</td>
<td>Creation ex nihilo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theogony</td>
<td>Cosmological contingency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No ethical absolute</td>
<td>Ethics as a form of religious worship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cyclical existence</td>
<td>Significance of linear progress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The insignificance of human life as a purely material being</td>
<td>The sacredness of human life as both a material and spiritual being</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


As it relates to the interaction of science and religion, the UWP advanced by Walton and Greenwood entails the tradition of Immanuel Kant and Stephen J. Gould’s Independence Model which holds that science and religion cover distinct domains using understandably idiosyncratic methodologies or by focusing on distinctive objects, such that the truth of one must exclude the truth of the other. In advancing this hermeneutic, unfortunately, proponents of the UWP ignore other rational alternatives by creating a

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38 Copan, “Creation Ex Nihilo or Ex Materia?,” 25. In his article, Copan outlines the distinctive theology of creatio ex nihilo from the Orthodox tradition versus creatio ex materia which defines the divergent theology of the Mormon religion.

39 Wright, The Old Testament, 22.

40 Wyatt believes this concept of the linear progress of time is a modern paradigm, wrongly foisted upon the Tanak, foreign to the Hebrew worldview, invalidated by modern scholarship and an “embarrassment” to the serious study of ANEL. See Wyatt, Space and Time, 305–306. In contrast to this view, a study of the A-Theory of time provides a viable integration point for a coherent view of time, modern physics, and biblical theology where time is not cyclical, but linear in the progress of becoming. For a fuller discussion, see William Lane Craig, Time and Eternity: Exploring God's Relationship to Time (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2001).
false dichotomy: either embrace concordism or embrace methodological naturalism.\textsuperscript{41}

The DWP, in contrast, rejects the Independence Model and embraces the Dialogue Model held by scientist-theologians such as Thomas F. Torrance and John Polkinghorne.\textsuperscript{52}

Adapting this model means that the DWP promotes the idea that science and religion cover overlapping domains sharing common ground in their presuppositions, methods, and concepts. This paradigm provides a legitimate third option where Hebrew Scripture provides a foundational starting point for scientific exploration without impinging on the epistemological value of science or religion. To help refine the distinction between these two paradigms, the following table is provided:

\textsuperscript{41} Hugh Ross addresses this specific concern in his online article on Reason to Believe (RTB) where he distinguishes between a hard concordism versus a soft concordism, see Hugh Ross, “Defending Concordism: Response to The Lost World of Genesis One,” Reasons to Believe, Jun. 22, 2012, accessed Sep. 28, 2017. http://www.reasons.org/articles/defending-concordism-response-to-the-lost-world-of-genesis-one. Ross concludes, “RTB’s soft concordism agrees with Walton that a literalistic hermeneutic does not apply to all Bible passages. It also agrees with Walton that we must always guard ourselves from reading anything into the biblical text that the text actually warrants. When we overreach, we set ourselves up for possible embarrassment and the church at large for possible ridicule. Scientific and/or historical research could prove our overreaching interpretation incorrect. On the other hand, to read less into the biblical text than what the text teaches can also be a problem.” For a fuller understanding of the historic use of this term, see the seminal work of the mid-20th century, Ramm, \textit{Christian View}. A shorter summary of Ramm’s hermeneutic is found in Bernard L. Ramm, \textit{Protestant Biblical Interpretation: A Textbook of Hermeneutics}, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1970), 209–214.

\textsuperscript{52} There are certainly a variety of competing models that attempt to construct a unified model of science and religion. Limits of this study preclude a full analysis of each. Tilly concludes that Torrance’s model is internally consistent, but rejects its validity because Torrance argues for a unique revelation from God in the Christian Bible. For a critical analysis of Torrance (whom Tilly characterizes as theologically arrogant and dogmatic) alongside two competing theistic models, see T. W. Tilley, “Philosophy of Science and Religion: Three Approaches,” \textit{Theological Studies} 45, no. 4 (1984): 722–727. For a more genial article to the various approaches of science and religion, see Paul Helm, “Is There a Preferred Philosophy of Science for Christians?,” \textit{Science & Christian Belief} 2, no. 1 (1990): 3–14.
Table 2: The Two Paradigms and Science

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unified Worldview Paradigm</th>
<th>Divergent Worldview Paradigm</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hebrew cosmology is ANE cosmology with no revelatory value toward science.</td>
<td>Hebrew cosmology is revealed by God with revelatory value for scientific exploration.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hebrew cosmology is concerned only with functional and never material origins.</td>
<td>Hebrew cosmology is concerned with both functional and material origins.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hebrew cosmology relies on the language of accommodation and rejects the validity of a literal hermeneutic.</td>
<td>Hebrew cosmology relies on the language of concordism and accepts the validity of a literal hermeneutic.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hebrew cosmology is teleology with no regard for scientific methodology.</td>
<td>Hebrew cosmology is teleology and, in some cases, may speak to scientific methodology.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Despite the areas of disagreement between the Unified and Divergent Worldview Paradigms, both acknowledge that the Bible is not a scientific textbook, both reject monism, and both recognize the epistemological limitations of science.

In summary, it is observed that in the study of literature from the ancient Near East, many scholars, both secular and religious, argue that the creation story of Genesis is mythology akin to, and shaped by, the cultural milieu of the ancient world. The mythology of Genesis, they argue, represents the theory of creation as the Hebrews saw it, but which readers today see as incompatible with a modern worldview. As mythology, it is argued, the creation account of Genesis has no revelatory insight or authority in regard to scientific understanding of the Universe. These two arguments: (1) Genesis is culturally conditioned literature, and (2) it is functionally unscientific mythology, are both addressed in the following chapter in an effort to demonstrate the uniqueness of Hebrew cosmology among ANEL and its compatibility with modern scientific exploration.
To reiterate, this thesis argues: (1) The essential properties of Genesis are a product of Divine revelation and only its accidental properties were shaped by ANE culture, and (2) Genesis gives insight into both the material and metaphysical origins of the universe and is therefore a valuable dialogic starting point for scientific exploration. Stated otherwise, this thesis argues that the essential qualities of Hebrew cosmology given in the book of Genesis were distinct from the accidental qualities shared with other ANEL such that the Hebrew worldview was distinct from all other ANE cultures. Hebrew cosmology, while presented in ancient language for ancient peoples, gives insight into both the physical beginning and the spiritual purpose of creation and is, therefore, uniquely positioned to dialogue with modern scientific exploration.
CHAPTER 3: ADVANCING THE DIVERGENT WORLDVIEW PARADIGM

To the terrestrial Moon be as a Starr,
Enlightening her by Day, as she by Night
This earth? reciprocal, if Land be there,
Fields and Inhabitants: Her spots thou seest
As Clouds, and Clouds may Rain, and rain produce
Fruits in her soft’nd Soile, for some to eate
Allotted there; and other Suns perhaps,
With thir attendant Moons, thou wilt desrie
Communicating Male and Female light,
Which two great Sexes animate the World,
Stor’d in each Orb perhaps with some that live.


As detailed in chapters 1 and 2, this thesis argues that the essential qualities of Hebrew cosmology in Genesis were unique from other ANEL and similar in only accidental qualities. Hebrew cosmology, while presented in ancient language understandable to ancient peoples, gives insight into both the material and temporal beginning of the cosmos alongside the spiritual purpose of creation. Consequently, this chapter will advance the thesis by arguing that Genesis 1 is uniquely positioned to dialogue with modern scientific exploration. Herein, the term science is used in the modern sense to denote the human pursuit of knowledge about the workings of the natural world that is justified by empirically falsifiable/verifiable theory construction,
sense experience and the collective judgement of peer-reviewed researchers.¹ To properly advance the above thesis, the following definitions will set the scope for this chapter.

Myth, as explored in chapter 2, is a contentious term that is often ill defined and overly broad in its application. All too often, definitions are improperly focused on the concept of history as “truth” and myth as “falsehood.”² For this study, myth is defined as a story used by a culture that answers the questions of being, where historical events and people become accidental properties used to advance essential symbolic ideology, and is rooted in the epistemological presupposition that human experience is the analog for the metaphysical. Within the framework of this definition established in the previous chapter, the cosmology of Genesis does not quality as myth since in it the Hebrews rejected human experience as the analog for truth and based their epistemology on a belief in the transcendent God who revealed himself in order to make sense of reality. Falling outside the definition of myth, Hebrew cosmology fits well within the definition of history. Where history is defined as a story used to record the chronological progress where events and people serve as essential properties used to advance accidental symbolic ideology and is rooted in the epistemological presupposition that human experience is

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¹ Scientists have different approaches to what they accept as knowledge. Herein, the author assumes knowledge is best defined as warranted true belief. The concept of warranted true belief is grounded in the writings of Alvin Plantinga. While his work is focused largely on knowledge and Christian belief, his definitions have merit in their application to the reasonableness of scientific realism which connects knowledge to both epistemology and metaphysics. See Alvin Plantinga, Knowledge and Christian Belief (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2015). For a more general overview of his philosophical approach see Moreland and Craig, Philosophical Foundations, 103 cf. For a more detailed analysis, see William P. Alston, “Epistemology and Metaphysics,” in Knowledge and Reality: Essays in Honor of Alvin Plantinga, ed. Thomas M. Crisp et al. (Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Springer, 2006), 81–109. Finally, a complementary viewpoint to Plantinga’s argument for the integration of epistemology and metaphysics to produce scientific knowledge can be found in Max Planck, Where is Science Going?, ed. and trans. James Vincent Murphy (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1932), 64.

² Wyatt, Space and Time, 301. Wyatt points out several significant flaws and pitfalls among scholars trying to define history and myth. However, his proposed definition of myth as “the religious mind set” is overly broad in making history itself matter of viewpoint and a modern form of mythmaking.
understood primarily through the metaphysical and secondarily through the natural. The Hebrews understood their cosmology, recorded in the book of Genesis, to be a product of God’s Divine-revelation of a historical event—the creation of the world. In this thesis, revelation entails both God’s special revelation of himself through the Tanak and God’s general revelation of himself in nature, which together have epistemological virtue for understanding the transcendent reality of God and immanent reality of creation. Taking into consideration these definitions, the following section provides further context for differentiating Hebrew and ANE cosmologies.

The Problem of ANE and Hebrew Cosmologies

The ANE spans the 4th millennia BC through the Bronze and Iron ages into the 4th century BC when Persia fell to Alexander the Great. The ANE covered the land mass occupied by the modern countries of Kuwait, Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Israel, Palestine, Iran, Turkey and Egypt. As one can imagine, over such a long period and across so many cultures there are a variety of mythologies crafted to tell the story of both cosmic and human origins. As surveyed in chapter 2, many scholars believe these stories share a common frame of reference and consequently interpret perceived similarities between ANE religious texts and the Old Testament using a “contextual method” which Greenwood defines as follows:

the biblical authors were not necessarily in direct contact with these sources. Rather than assume a direct borrowing from source A to source B, the contextual method recognizes that ancient Near Eastern texts arrive from a variety of cultural conditions: social, historical, linguistic, geographical and chronological. Nonetheless, the peoples of the ancient

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3 For the reader unfamiliar with ANE mythology, Appendix A and B offer a brief survey of the Akkadian and Egyptian Memphite creation myths. Appendix C offers a comparison between these two stories.
Near East shared many cultural concepts, such as language and superstitions, as well as ideas of family, life, death, kingship, labor and war, to name a few.4

In defense of this methodology, Walton affirms:

Anyone who has read my work in detail knows that I am not the least inclined to see the Israelites borrowing from ANE texts. Instead, I think that it is extremely important for us to realize that the Bible is written for us, but not to us. We therefore need to understand the cognitive environment of the ANE so that, at the very least, we can identify areas where our own modern thinking is intruding on the biblical author’s communication. The challenge is great, but the need in discussions like this one is urgent.5

The underlying assumption in the “contextual method” is that since Israel was a part of the cultural milieu of the ANE, their writing was naturally conditioned by the same influences as these other nations. For Greenwood, “Biblical cosmology is ancient Near Eastern cosmology.”6 This does not mean they copied or borrowed their writing from these other cultures, but that the Hebrews were shaped by similar influences. All ANE writers, Greenwood argues, crafted functional creation myths to propagate their cultus, not to explain the true material existence of the universe.7 These scholars reflect the broader assumption found within the Unified Worldview Paradigm (UWP) which have shaped theological education in the West since the early 1900s. These culturally conditioned assumptions include Darwinian scientific theory, literary criticism that dates the Pentateuch as very late, and comparative religion studies rooted in a uniformitarian

4 Greenwood, Scripture and Cosmology, 37. Note that Greenwood depicts his “contextual method” as a middle ground between those who see all ANE cosmologies borrowing from the same stories and those who reject any possibility that the Bible was influenced by the cultural milieu. This article will primarily address the arguments raised from Greenwood’s contextual methodology.


6 Greenwood, Scripture and Cosmology, 204.

assumption. This tendency to dismiss the internal witness of the Tanak and harmonize its meaning in light of ANE culture can be seen in the following quote in which Walton defines the use of רעה in the Creation story of Genesis 1 with the Babylonian cosmogony ofEnuma Elish. He writes, “all of the other OT uses of רעה ʾêlōhîm are most naturally translated ‘spirit of God’ rather than ‘supernatural wind.’ The motif of the wind in chaos scenes is well-recognized both in the ancient Near East and in the Bible. InEnuma Elish, the sky god Anu creates the four winds that stir up the deep and its goddess, Tiamat.” What one can see in this quote is that instead of allowing the Tanak to define “רעה” though its internal witness, Walton’s hermeneutic assumes a uniformity with other ANE stories and imposes this assumption on his exegesis.

The problem illustrated by Walton is the tendency of scholars to reduce the various ANE cosmologies to a set of common words, phrases and concepts and then argue from oversimplification that the Hebrew cosmology was “just another Near Eastern

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9 Walton, “Creation,” in Dictionary of the Old Testament: Pentateuch, 157. Tsumura addresses the popular theory that the battle against chaos in Enuma Elish is the background for YHWH’s creation in Genesis 1 where he is said to bring order out of the pre-existent watery chaos instead of creation out of nothing. His book provides an etymological study of key Hebrew terms and their cognates in Ugaritic, Akkadian, Eblaite, Phoenician, and Arabic and affirms that when evaluated on its own merits, words such as tohû wabohû and tehôm do not affirm the chaos theory prevalent in the mythic counterparts of the ANE. See David Toshio Tsumura, Creation and Destruction: A Reappraisal of the Chaoskampf Theory in the Old Testament (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2005), 1 cf. His study is affirmed by Watson who concludes, “The prevailing approach, I would suggest, is fundamentally flawed insofar as it entails the imposition of a monolithic concept upon material which is so diverse as to not find any single unifying focus within the Hebrew language. Indeed, the so-called ‘chaos imagery’ is expressed in such a variable terminology, in so many different types of context and genre, and is juxtaposed with such a vast array of motifs drawn from so many areas of life, that the validity of clustering together such material under a single unifying theme must be called into question (Rebecca Sally Watson, Chaos Uncreated: A Reassessment of the Theme of “Chaos” in the Hebrew Bible, Vol. 341, Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft (Berlin; New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2005), 1.)” Walton (citing Tsumura but not Watson) accepts this scholarship, yet rejects creatio ex nihilo as the alternative and instead advances his thesis that Genesis 1 is about assigning function to the cosmos (Walton, The Lost World of Genesis One, 47.).
Greenwood illustrates this same practice when he lays aside clear differences that run counter to his goal of harmonization of ANE cosmology. He writes, “aside from Genesis 1 [and Exodus 20:11] the order of creation is more closely related to the ancient cosmological structure than it is to the structure of a week.” In other words, he argues, aside from the two most significant passages that represent a unique element to the Hebrew cosmology, their view of the cosmos is the same as other ANE cosmologies. Walton dismisses what he terms the concordist approach to Genesis as it “intentionally attempts to read an ancient text in modern terms.” He concludes

The problem with concordist approaches is that while they take the text seriously, they give no respect to the human author. The combination of “scientific truth” and “divine intention” is fragile, volatile and methodologically questionable. We are fully aware that what we call “scientific truth” one day may be different the next day. Divine intention must not be held hostage to the ebb and flow of scientific theory. Scientific theory cannot serve as the basis for determining divine intention.

However, it can on the same grounds be argued that his “face value” approach reflects an overreaction against any legitimate connection between Hebrew cosmology and modern scientific exploration. This approach to Hebrew cosmology systematically dismisses what Carl F.H. Henry observes within the text of Genesis as the self-attested creation of God which offers “no reason to insist that the account is merely mythical and in no way factual.” The approach taken by Walton and Greenwood is summarized by

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11 Greenwood, Scripture and Cosmology, 120.
12 Walton, The Lost World of Genesis One, 103.
13 Ibid., 104.
the Unified Worldview Paradigm (UWP) which assumes the essential properties of
Hebrew cosmology are the product of the SCE of the ANE which used symbolism as the
primary hermeneutic to convey important religious realities over physical realities which
aligns with the Independence Model of science and religion. The Independence Model is
understood to mean that science and religion cover distinct domains using understandably
idiosyncratic methodologies or by focusing on distinctive objects, such that the truth of
one must exclude the truth of the other.

In evaluating the viability of the UWP, Noel K. Weeks observes two significant
hurdles. The first challenge comes when we apply the assumption of a common cultural
context for Hebrew cosmology to other ANE mythologies. Weeks observes:

A corollary of the common culture notion would seem to be that if any one
culture has creation accounts, the others could be expected to have them.
Is the corollary true? I know of nothing that looks like a creation account
in Hittite. Closer to the issue, did Ugarit have creation accounts? The
tattempts to prove that, simply by changing what we understand by
creation, we can classify the Ugaritic Baal stories as creation myths,
illustrates the problem but not a convincing solution.15

His second observation is equally problematic for the UWP:

Even more disconcerting are the differences between different accounts
within the one culture. For example, advocates of Egyptian origin
sometimes create the parallels by taking elements out of different Egyptian
accounts. Are we to imagine the biblical author having access to this
whole range of materials and picking a bit out of this and a bit out of that
myth? That of course assumes that the biblical author read Egyptian. To
obviate that difficulty we might imagine a synthesis of all of these
versions in some oral tradition that might have come into the possession of
a bilingual Egyptian, but do we know if ancient pagan societies practiced

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72, no. 2 (2010): 229.
such ecumenism of myths? Mesopotamia as a postulated source presents similar difficulties.\textsuperscript{16}

Given these problems, Weeks concludes that there are significant challenges in accepting that these non-Hebrew sources could have passed so comprehensively into the biblical form found in Genesis. Assuming the transmission of these myths from one culture to the next did happen, scholars advancing the UWP have failed to provide a valid postulate of how it could have happened at all. Consequently, scholars may still choose to dismiss Genesis as the kind of mythmaking that offers no insight into material origins, but a thorough examination of the evidence makes it difficult to ignore the $\textit{sui generis}$ (Lat., unique or original) of Hebrew cosmology. The assumption that the Hebrews were too primitive to perceive the complexity of the universe is a mischaracterization foisted upon them by contemporary scholars and scientists.\textsuperscript{17} The solution to the problem inherent in the contextual method lies in rethinking the underlying assumptions of uniformity between ANE cosmologies, prioritizing the distinction between essential and accidental properties, and allowing each idiosyncratic culture to tell their own story.

In contrast to the underlying assumptions of the UWP, this thesis argues that the Divergent Worldview Paradigm (DWP) offers a better framework for understanding Hebrew cosmology. The DWP contends that the essential properties of Hebrew cosmology (e.g. transcendent personal monotheism, creation $\textit{ex nihilo}$, cosmological contingency, ethics as a form of religious worship, the sacredness of human life, and the recognized significance of historical progress) are distinct from other ANE mythologies

\textsuperscript{16} Weeks, “\textit{Ambiguity},” 230.

\textsuperscript{17} Mark Harris, \textit{The Nature of Creation: Examining the Bible and Science} (Durham, UK: Acumen Publishing, 2013), 105, Kindle.
and similar only in its accidental properties and aligns with the Dialogue Model of science and religion. The Dialogue Model is understood to promote the idea that science and religion cover overlapping domains sharing common ground in their presuppositions, methods, and concepts. In taking this approach, the following pages will examine elements of ANE mythologies demonstrating the uniqueness and scientific compatibility of the ancient Hebrew cosmology.

The Essential and Accidental Properties of Hebrew Cosmology

A number of excellent scholars recognize the contribution of Walton to ANE scholarship, along with the value of comparative research. Scholars like Richard Averbeck, however, also recognize Walton’s special emphasis that Hebrew Cosmology had no concern for material origins has significant problems dealing with the explicit claims of Genesis 1 that God created the material universe. Averbeck argues that Genesis, along with many other ANE tales, do have a concern for material origins. Yet, the differences between ancient Hebrew cosmology and the process cosmology of their neighbors are more than superficial. Contrary to Walton’s assertion that Genesis is structurally the same as other ANE cosmologies with only literary differences, there are significantly uncommon and textually consistent claims in the Hebrew Scripture that the reader must appreciate. The context of the Old Testament points to an exclusive cosmology distinct from other stories in the ANE with only superficial homogeneity—common only because of mankind’s shared habitation of the Earth. The following is a

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18 Richard E. Averbeck, “The Lost World of Adam and Eve: A Review Essay,” Themelios 40, no. 2 (2015): 227, 234. It must be noted, that in many other areas Averbeck shares significant agreement with Walton and his overall approach to the study of ANE and Hebrew cosmology.

brief analysis of select biblical passages that establish Hebrew cosmology as unique from all other ANE accounts in its essential properties and similar in only accidental properties.

*Biblical Creation is Ex Nihilo, Not Ex Materia*

The cosmogenic myths of the ANE people were not ontological tropes, but a genuine attempt to explain the workings and influence of the natural forces through the existence of the gods. Each culture, in its own unique way, attempted to connect the world of the material with the world of the spiritual. Common to all ANE cosmologies outside of the Hebrew Bible is the idea that matter was the uncreated pre-existing substance, infused with divinity, out of which the gods were born. Cosmology in the ANE was *creatio ex materia* (Lat., creation out of matter). For the peoples of the ANE, the seas were not simple bodies of water but gods physically present. One can see this exampled in the West Semitic storm god Hadad who battled against the cosmic Sea which itself was thought to be another god. In the Akkadian epic *Enuma Elish*, Marduk volunteers, at the prompting of Ea, to serve as the champion of the gods to defeat Tiamat. Ashnar convenes a special council of the gods who, after a feast, transfers authority to

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Marduk who later tears apart the dead carcass of the defeated goddess Tiamat to create the heavens and the waters:

(135) [Marduk] calmed down. Then the Lord was inspecting [Tiamat’s] carcass, That he might divide (?) the monstrous lump and fashion artful things. He split her in two, like a fish for drying, Half of her he set up and made as a cover, heaven. He stretched out the hide and assigned watchmen, (140) And ordered them not to let her waters escape. He crossed heaven and inspected (its) firmament, He made a counterpart to Apsu, the dwelling of Nudimmud. The Lord measured the construction of Apsu, He founded the Great Sanctuary, the likeness of Esharra. (In) the Great Sanctuary, (in) Esharra, which he built, (and in) heaven, He made Ea, Enlil, and Anu dwell in their holy places.21

This same basic theme of divine flesh forming the substance of creation is repeated in the following Akkadian tale which depicts the creation of mankind (Lullu) by the mother goddess Mami (bēlet kala ili, ‘Mistress of all the gods’):22

That which is slight he shall raise to abundance; The work of god man shall bear! The goddess they called to enquire, The midwife of the gods, the wise Mami: Thou art the mother-womb, The one who creates mankind. Create, then, Lullu and let him bear the yoke.23

Enki goes on to describe mankind’s creation out of clay mixed with the flesh and blood of a slain god:

On the first of the month, the seventh and fifteenth days, I will prepare a purification, a bath. Let one god be slain, (20) And let the gods be purified by immersion In his flesh and his blood.

21 Smith and Parker, Ugaritic Narrative Poetry, 398–399.
23 Smith and Parker, Ugaritic Narrative Poetry, 99–100.
Let Nintu mix clay,
God and man,
Let them together be smeared with clay.
Unto eternity let us hear the drum.²⁴

Consistent among all the Egyptian cosmologies are that the gods themselves form the substance of creation which evolved to become the next generation of gods. Johnston observes, “The Egyptian creator was immanent in his creation. Creation in Egyptian cosmogony was not ex nihilo, but was a transformation of the immaterial deity into his material manifestation.”²⁵ Egyptian cosmologies were not an unfolding of history, but an ongoing process of daily recreation where humanity is merely an accident of the creation process. The completion of the creation cycle is the birth of the pharaoh-god who ruled the earthly realm while his counterpart, the sun-god, ruled the celestial realm.²⁶ Because the gods themselves were considered the substance that forms the physical world, these mythologies from the ANE demonstrate an effort to understand the “astronomical activity, chiefly in the service of astrology.”²⁷

These representative examples pose a significant problem for the contextual hermeneutic of the UWP which assumes similar phrases such as the “heavens and the sea” reflect an essential commonality of ANE and Hebrew cosmology.²⁸ However, the


²⁵ Gordon H. Johnston, “Genesis 1 and Ancient Egyptian Creation Myths,” *Bibliothea Sacra* 165 (April–June 2008): 192. Note here that Johnston’s use of the Latin *ex nihilo*, or sometimes written as *creatio ex nihilo*, means creation from nothing. This stands in contrast to the ANE cosmology of *creatio ex materia*, or creation out of matter.

²⁶ Ibid., 182. Appendix B provides the full list of Johnston’s ten facets common to the four distinctive Egyptian creation myths.


²⁸ Greenwood, *Scripture and Cosmology*, 34.
stories above help to illustrate that despite the use of phenomenological terms like "heavens" and "sea" in the Tanak, they are not used in the same way as their ANE neighbors. Hebrew cosmology uses phrases like "the heavens and the sea" as a symbol for YHWH’s power, yet these symbols are neither eternal matter nor the substance of God himself. The metonymy of Genesis reflects a worldview distinct from ANE cosmology. For the Hebrews, their use of nature as symbol reflects a unique quality of creatio ex nihilo distinct from the ANE concept of creatio ex materia.

Without question, the doctrine of creation ex nihilo has received much criticism but has experienced a revival of sorts amongst Christian philosophers and theologians like Claus Westermann, Wolfhart Pannenberg, Colin Gunton and Robert Jenson. Paul Copan and William Lane Craig in their book Creation Out of Nothing: A Biblical, Philosophical, and Scientific Exploration provide a valuable definition assumed in the remainder of this thesis:

So when we describe what creation out of nothing means, we affirm that without God’s initiating creation, only God exists. Upon creation, we have a universe because God willed it into finite, temporal being. Thus, creation out of nothing affirms that the universe is contingent on God, not just in having its existence in being (ontological dependence) but also in having its temporal origination from nothing preexistent, but simply by the will and word of God (ex nihilo).

This definition of creatio ex nihilo, where God created neither from pre-existent chaos nor eternal matter, is a valid description of the Genesis 1 cosmology consistent with the worldview of the ancient Hebrews. YHWH’s self-revelation to the Hebrews

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30 Copan and Craig, Creation Out of Nothing, 15.
made clear that he created everything from nothing such that, “God is neither dependent on the world nor necessarily a part of it. The world, on the other hand, is necessarily dependent on God for its existence.” \(^{31}\) This Hebrew belief is fundamentally distinct from the panentheism of their neighbors illustrated in the previously mentioned Akkadian and Egyptian myths. However, a belief in creatio ex nihilo does not fully explain why the Hebrews would include figurative elements in their cosmology that incorporates thoughts similar to other ANE mythologies.

The lack of cosmic battle scenes in biblical creation does not mean the Hebrews were unaware of the mythologies of their ANE neighbors (Ezr. 1:7; Psa. 86:8). They were warned by YHWH not to embrace false gods from other nations (Deu. 12:4), yet time and again they succumbed to the lure of foreign cultic worship (Num. 25:3; Psa. 106:28; Hos. 9:10). The ancient Hebrews were surrounded, and often consumed, by the religious practices of the surrounding nations and it is because of this influence that various biblical accounts use matching symbolism—as an accidental property—to draw a strong distinction between the essential property of YHWH’s creatio ex nihilo and the panentheistic creatio ex materia of the neighboring peoples. This point can be illustrated in the early history of Apion.

Apion, the anti-Semitic Greek-Egyptian writer in the 1st century AD,\(^ {32}\) argued in his History of Egypt that prior to Moses’ encounter with YHWH and call to free Israel from slavery, he established a temple that was indebted in its design to the Egyptian cosmology:

\(^{31}\) Harris, Nature of Creation, 111–112.

Moses, as I have heard from old people in Egypt, was a native of Heliopolis, who, being pledged to the customs of his country, erected prayer-houses, open to the air, in the various precincts of the city, all facing eastwards; such being the orientation also of Heliopolis. In place of obelisks he set up pillars, beneath which was a model of a boat; and the shadow cast on this basin by the statue described a circle corresponding to the course of the sun in the heavens.\(^{33}\)

Josephus takes offense at this characterization because he knew Moses, “neither placed in [the Tabernacle] himself, nor instructed his successors to make, any graven imagery of this kind.”\(^{34}\) However, in the modern context where scholars accept the UWP and reject the uniqueness of Hebrew cosmology, Apion’s assertion takes on new import. Assuming, for the sake of argument, this ancient writer was correct and Moses was trained in Egyptian creation myth, Apion’s account erodes the foundations of the UWP because it illustrates well that outside of YHWH’s direct intervention in history and self-revelation in Exodus 26, the Hebrew cosmology would have never found cause to break away and create a cosmology which rejected the cultic foundations common to all other ANE mythologies. Rather, Apion’s argument (if true) would support the DWP that the writers of the Tanak were familiar with ANE lore but were able to counter common cultural context through direct revelation from God.

Another illustration comes from Job 26:12–13 which mentions the power of YHWH to destroy Rahab (a.k.a., Leviathan or the serpent. See also, Isa 27:1; Psa. 74:14; Job 3:8; 40:25).\(^{35}\) These allusions to other ANE gods were not written because of a


\(^{34}\) Ibid.

shared worldview of cosmic battle but were rooted in Israel’s experience and need to demonstrate YHWH’s superiority to the false religions which encircled them. Regarding the common attempt to connect these biblical passages with chaos mythology and YHWH’s battle against Rahab, Watson concludes:

However, it is becoming apparent that this interpretive strategy has resulted in a tendency to force the Hebrew material into a “Chaoskampf” straitjacket, and in particular to place disproportionate emphasis on comparisons with Babylonian and Canaanite (especially Ugaritic) mythology (so much so that concepts from these wider ancient near Eastern backgrounds are arguably sometimes “read into” the Old Testament).36

The Hebrews used poetic and prosaic entity metaphor to show YHWH’s creatio ex nihilo, in current events and in the future Kingdom, was superior to all other gods. Hebrew cosmology intentionally adapted the mythical language of competing ANEC as an accidental quality for the purpose of establishing the essential quality of God’s covenant within their unique historical purpose. Day observes that the mythic imagery is avoided in the creation accounts of Genesis and Exodus to keep the emphasis on the historical nature of events. However, a much different approach is taken in the poetic accounts where the Canaanite imagery was utilized for the highest cultural impact to demonstrate YHWH’s superiority over all the false gods. Day concludes, “Although the Hebrews did not borrow the theology of Canaan, they did borrow its imagery—here the imagery of Baal’s enemy, Sea/Dragon/Leviathan.”37 To this point, Waltke writes:

36 Watson, Chaos Uncreated, 2. Watson here rejects the chaos motif and advances the idea that YHWH was presented as the deliverer. The quote, however, should not be extrapolated as direct or implicit support of the argument for creatio ex nihilo.

Having established that Leviathan in the Canaanite mythology is a dragon resisting creation, we must raise the hermeneutical question whether the inspired poets of Israel meant that Yahweh actually had a combat with this hideous creature or whether this Canaanite story served as a helpful metaphor to describe Yahweh’s creative activity. If we assume that the biblical authors were logical—and they were that and far more—then we must opt for the second interpretation of these references. The poets who mention this combat also abhor the pagan idolatry and insist on a strict monotheism.38

Waltke goes on to argue that Israel’s use of Rahab, the serpent was used as a “symbol of Yahweh’s victory over the dragon” and ultimate “victory over Pharaoh (Isa. 30:7).”39 What Waltke provides then is an alternative to the UWP’s contextual method for why these various biblical accounts are retold with details incorporated from other ANE mythologies. Israel used these passages not to establish a city-state or particular king, but as an apologetic for their unique cosmology revealed by YHWH to Moses, and later affirmed through the prophets. Israel, in the midst of the foreign captivity, and confronted with competing stories of creation such as Enuma Elish, were reminded by the inspired writers of Scripture that YHWH did not win a battle or kill the gods to create, but He alone commanded all into existence from nothing.40

In the preceding pages, Hebrew cosmology was defined by the essential quality of creation ex nihilo in contrast to the creation ex materia of other ANE religions. In expanding this argument, the imagery of cosmic battles (theogony) between the ANE


39 Ibid., 35. Tsumura notes that this connection of the Ugaritic mythologies have led some scholars to conclude a Cannoanite background to the conflict between YHWH and the sea dragan (Leviathan). However, the supposition that these stories provide some missing link between Hebrew cosmology and ANE mythology fails on two fronts: (1) the myth of Baal–Yam has nothing to do with cosmic origins and, (2) the missing connection is simply assumed to exist based on passages missing from known texts (Tsumura, Creation and Destruction, 41–42.).

gods was tangentially addressed. The following section will define theogony and demonstrate how this serves as another essential point of distinction between Hebrew and ANE cosmologies.

**Biblical Creation is Cosmological Contingency Not Theogony**

Theogony is an essential property of ANE panentheism depicting the birth of the gods whose being is indistinguishable from the natural elements. Across the ANE, cosmic origin stories were filled with tales of how the gods were born. Horsnell, in his study of the religions of the biblical world, concludes that, “Mesopotamian thought had no concept of a distinction between an inanimate physical realm and a living realm of deities.”

In other words, ANE cosmology pictured the divine as only an extension of the physical world they observed. The following Hittite myth is a theogony composed to show the transition of power from the older to the younger gods, both male and female:

(5) Let there listen [Anus, Ant]us (and) Isharas, the fathers (and) mothers! Let there listen Ellilas, [Ninlilas and] also those who are mighty (and) firmly established gods! . . .—Once in the olden days Alalus was king in heaven. (As long as) Alalus was seated on the throne, the mighty Anus, first among the gods, (10) was standing before him. He would sink at his feet and set the drinking cup in his hand.

The exchange of power between the gods is pictured in purely human terms of lordly power in a palatial setting. Common in all ANE mythologies is the idea of male and female gods, working through disparate means, created the next generation of the gods—most often to establish the political power of a king or importance of a city. This same

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42 Pritchard, ANE Texts, 120.
theme of theogony is repeated in the Babylonian epic *Enûma Elish*; a story written as late as 1100 BC (from the Late Bronze Age). This story tells how Apsu and Tiamat, the two great seas, gave birth to all the other gods:

(1) When on high no name was given to heaven,  
Nor below was the netherworld called by name,  
Primeval Apsu was their progenitor,  
And matrix–Tiamat was she who bore them all,  
(5) They were mingling their waters together,  
No cane brake was intertwined nor thicket matted close.  
When no gods at all had been brought forth,  
None called by names, none destinies ordained,  
Then were the gods formed within the (se two).  
(10) Lahmu and Lāhamu were brought forth, were called by name.43

*Enûma Elish* merges the physical being of the gods with the physical world in an attempt to explain the workings of the cosmos. Like the Babylonian myth, Egyptian theogony merged the divine and physical words in the story of Anum.44 In this tale, Anum started the creation process, but left it for the other “Eight Great Gods” to finish. Anum does not create from “nothing,” but his own body forms the substance of creation.

You began Becoming—  
there was no Being, there was no Void:  
The world was from You, in the Beginning;  
all other gods came after.45

In many ANE cosmologies, the pantheon of the gods is birthed in much more explicit terms of sexual procreation. In the Pyramid texts of Teti, first king of Egypt’s

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44 Johnston notes that “Egyptian religion featured four major versions of the same basic mythic cycle of creation, each represented by rival sanctuaries: Heliopolis, Hermopolis, Memphis, and Thebes.” Johnston, “*Genesis 1,*” 180–181. While a complete study of each of these unique mythologies is beyond the scope of this study, Johnston’s short article provides an excellent starting place for further investigation of the Egyptian literature. Additionally, Appendix B provides a brief summary.

Sixth Dynasty (ca. 2323–2291 BC), the reader encounters the *Spells for entering the womb of Nut.* In this story, the goddess Nut recounts the glory of her son when she says, “Teti is my son, whom I caused to be born and who parted my belly; he is the one I have desired and with whom I have become content.” In addition to sexual intercourse, the birth of the ANE gods was attributed to a variety of bodily emissions from bleeding to masturbation—specifically from the gods Amun, Amenapet, Atumi, and Min—because the Egyptians saw the world as made of divine-beings married to the natural elements. Johnston reinforces this cosmogenic view in his observations of *Coffin Text 714* wherein Nun describes his own creation:

I am Nun, the one with no equal.
I came into being there [i.e., primordial hill]
I came into being on the Great Occasion of the inundation.
I am he who flew, who became *Dbnn* who is in his egg.
I am he who began there in Nun.
See, the chaos-god came forth from me.
See, I am prosperous.
I created my body in my glory;
I am he who made himself;
I formed myself according to my will and according to my heart.

Given this evidence, there is a strong consensus among scholars who promote both the UWP and the DWP that the theogenic cosmology described above is not shared in Hebrew cosmology. Where scholars disagree is how to interpret the significance of this distinction. It is argued here, that the Hebrew’s rejection of theogony is not a later

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48 The Coffin Text is quoted from Johnston, “*Genesis 1,*” 192–193.
evolutionary development in their religion, but a fundamental rejection of the common ANE worldview. Relying upon W. F. Albright’s work, Wright asserts the “central elements of biblical faith which are so unique and *sui generis* that they cannot have developed by any natural evolutionary process from the pagan world in which they appeared.”

In contrast to ANE theogony, the Tanak clearly and consistently expresses a unique theology of nature’s contingency upon YHWH. Broadly speaking, contingency refers to unnecessary thing that could not exist on its own and is reliant on an external thing for its existence. Within the scope of this thesis, contingency is the philosophical corollary of *creatio ex nihilo* and an essential quality of Hebrew cosmology that recognizes YHWH—the eternally necessary non-created being—as the causal force of the material word that could not otherwise exist outside of his creative will. Theogony is an essential quality of ANE mythology rooted in a panentheism worldview where nature and the gods eternally intermingle. Contingency, on the other hand, is an essential quality of Genesis cosmology rooted in a self-existent God who remains distinct from his temporal creation. Theogony and contingency are no mere accidental qualities but mark out an irreconcilable difference between the ANE and Hebrew worldviews imbedded within their cosmologies. The question then that must be answered is this: can contingency, as an essential quality of Genesis, be sustained hermeneutically? A full hermeneutical analysis of the Tanak is beyond the scope of this thesis, but the following will examine the Hebrew word *bārāʾ* which is one of the linguistic keys to understanding Genesis 1.

The Meaning of bārā’ within the UWP

As stated above, contingency refers to an unnecessary thing that could not exist on its own and is reliant on an external thing for its existence. Within the scope of this thesis, contingency is the philosophical corollary of creatio ex nihilo and an essential quality of Hebrew cosmology that recognizes YHWH—the eternally necessary non-created being—as the causal force of the material word that could not otherwise exist outside of his creative will. Scholars such as Copan and Craig argue creatio ex nihilo is latent in the language of Genesis 1 which reads, “In the beginning, God created.” The Hebrew word for “created” is אָרָבּ (bārā’) and in each of its 48 uses, YHWH is always the one who acts to create. Scholars within the UWP, however, reject the idea that contingency is taught in Genesis 1. Walton interprets bārā’ as only concerned with functional ontology that never mentions material origins. He rejects the scholarship of those who disagree, writing:

How interesting it is that these scholars then draw the conclusion that bārā’ implies creation out of nothing (ex nihilo). One can see with a moment of thought that such a conclusion assumes that “create” is a material activity. To expand their reasoning for clarity’s sake here: Since “create” is a material activity (assumed on their part), and since the contexts never mention the materials used (as demonstrated by the evidence), then the material object must have been brought into existence without using other materials (i.e., out of nothing). But one can see that

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50 Walton does argue that creation ex nihilo and contingency can be supported in other Old Testament passages (although he does not give any specific examples). Walton argues that this doctrine is a later development created to argue against Platonic philosophy of the eternal soul. The Church, he argues, eventually decided to reject the eternal soul and then much later decided to apply ex nihilo to material creation. Since this doctrine is a late creation of the church, Walton concludes, it should not be imposed back onto the creation of Genesis 1. He does not reject the importance of ex nihilo or God’s non-contingency, but asserts it is a concept foreign to, and should therefore not be imposed upon the Old Testament. John H. Walton, “Material or Function in Genesis 1? John Walton Responds: Part 1,” BioLogos, last modified April 3, 2015, accessed January 31, 2018. https://biologos.org/blogs/archive/material-or-function-in-genesis-1-john-walton-responds-part-1.

51 Walton, The Lost World of Genesis One, 36.
the whole line of reasoning only works if one can assume that \( bārāʾ \) is a material activity.\(^{52}\)

In coming to this conclusion, Walton presents a false dilemma where \( bārāʾ \) must be understood within the context of ANEL to refer only to functional origins since Genesis never mentions the actual materials God “used” to make the cosmos. Given this \( a\ priori \) assumption, Walton concludes that this literal interpretation is product of scholars accepting a modern scientific worldview with an inordinate concern on material origins. Poe supports this conclusion by suggesting scholars who reject the language of Genesis as figurative are assuming literal language has greater hermeneutical value.\(^{53}\) He goes on to write:

The student who complains about figurative language has reduced valid language to scientific language. He does not realize that he has elevated scientific knowledge above revelation and probably would be surprised to hear me say so. He thinks he is making Genesis true by insisting that it is written in scientific language. Genesis and Revelation deal with eternity. When time meets eternity, from the perspective of God given to us in Genesis and Revelation, scientific language fails.\(^{54}\)

In rebuttal to the view above, four arguments are offered. First, from a lexical standpoint, the ability of scholars advancing the UWP to establish that \( bārāʾ \) does not always mean \( creatio\ ex\ nihilo \), does not logically exclude the possibility it can mean \( creatio\ ex\ nihilo \). Nor does this lexical observation exclude the possibility that \( bārāʾ \) can, and does, refers to material origins. In review of Walton’s work, Brian L. Webster concludes:

The argument that \( אָרַבָּה \) (“create”) is about functions is not convincing from a lexical perspective (Isa. 4:5 and 41:18–20 are particularly problematic, since things are first not there, and then they are). Walton correctly

\(^{52}\) Walton, \textit{The Lost World of Genesis One}, 42.

\(^{53}\) Poe, “\textit{Evangelism},” 578.

\(^{54}\) Ibid.
opposes the idea that אָרָבּ inherently means creation ex nihilo (“out of nothing”), but he does not prove that it refers exclusively or primarily to functions.\textsuperscript{55}

Webster’s basic analysis demonstrates that interpreting the meaning of bārāʾ in Genesis 1 based on its semantic range across the Hebrew Scripture is prohibitively problematic. The meaning of creation out of nothing remains a viable interpretation based on the immediate context that is not driven by a subconscious desire to accommodate scientific language. The context of bārāʾ in Genesis 1 is uniquely defined by the phrase “And God said…” emphasizing the idea that God created all material reality out of nothing more than the non-material power of his own Divine will. In assessing Walton’s argument, philosopher and mathematician John Lennox makes this observation:

The point that is being made in Genesis 1, as we have previously indicated, is that the universe was indeed made ex nihilo by the word of God, which is invisible, indeed immaterial. This looks like powerful biblical evidence that the contextual conjunction of bara with God speaking in Genesis 1 indicates that Genesis 1 has very much to do with material origins—the origin of matter itself.\textsuperscript{56}

Second, the proposition that Genesis describes material creation does not exclude, as proponents of the UWP contend, the hermeneutical value of figurative language used throughout the Tanak. More specifically, scholars who advance the idea that Genesis 1 describes a literal-historical beginning of the cosmos, are not subsequently forced to conclude that the literal use of language is always superior to the figurative use language. James Orr, whose writings shaped the Fundamentalist movement of the early 20th


\textsuperscript{56} John C. Lennox, Seven Days That Divide the World: The Beginning According to Genesis and Science (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011), 134.
century, provides one example. Orr held to both creatio ex nihilo and the potential of a symbolic understanding of סְוִי as non-literal days of creation. Orr argued:

The “six days” may remain as a difficulty to some, but, if this is not part of the symbolic setting of the picture—a great divine “week” of work—one may well ask, as was done by Augustine long before geology was thought of, what kind of “days” these were which rolled their course before the sun, with its twenty-four hours of diurnal measurement, was appointed to that end? There is no violence done to the narrative in substituting in thought “æonic” days—vast cosmic periods—for “days” on our narrower, sun-measured scale. Then the last trace of apparent “conflict” disappears. 57

This example makes clear that the hermeneutical argument for Genesis 1 as an historical event proposed by scholars in the DWP—over and against Poe and Walton’s assertion—is not a qualitative distinction between literal and symbolic language, but an exegetical distinction determined by context. Scholars who interpret Genesis 1 as describing the material origins of the cosmos are not forced to this conclusion because of some slavish accommodation to 21st century science nor because they consider symbolic language inferior to literal language. Consequently, the DWP offers a reliable and consistent hermeneutic that recognizes the proper place for scientific inquiry and properly differentiates the essential qualities of contingency in Genesis 1 from the accidental qualities of symbolism.

Third, the proposition that Genesis 1 deals with the material origins is not what makes Hebrew cosmology distinct from ANE cosmology. In fact, all ANE creation literature attempts to offer some rationale for the existence of the material world. The myth of Anum, while fantastic, still attempts to give a reason for why the material world

57 Orr, Science and Christian Faith, 344. See also, James Lindsay, “Creation,” in The International standard Bible Encyclopaedia, ed. James Orr (Chicago, IL: The Howard-Severance company, 1915), 739.
as the ancients knew it existed. Thus, Anum’s own body was thought to be the substance
of the natural world. Genesis 1 offers a much different explanation, but still, to the
Hebrews, it explained why the natural world exists. The essential distinction is that ANE
assumes the eternity of matter fashioned through the mechanism of theogony whereas
the Hebrews embraced the contingency of matter through the mechanism of God’s
creative word.

Fourth, the assertion from scholars within the UWP that Genesis must be
symbolic because the text nowhere mentions the specific materials used by God is a red
herring and fundamentally begs the question. The text of Genesis need not mention the
materials in order to refer to a material creation if it fundamentally rejects theogony and
assumes *creatio ex nihilo*. By way of analogy, a person could easily describe the job of a
stone mason, without ever describing the physical formation of stone; igneous,
sedimentary or metamorphic, or its composition; silicates or calcium carbonates. For
scholars within the UWP to assume the materials of creation must be scientifically
defined in Genesis 1 for it to be considered a valid description of material origins is itself,
ironically, a modern scientific assumption imposed upon the text. For those who accept
the DWP, the silence of Genesis in not mentioning the materials used in creation is
logically valid since the entire point of the narrative is that there were no materials until
God created them. Having demonstrated these four fundamental shortcomings of the
UWP’s view of *bārāʾ* in Genesis 1, the next section will provide an alternative
hermeneutic that fits within the DWP.
The Meaning of *bārāʾ* within the DWP

Cosmological contingency is the philosophical corollary of *creatio ex nihilo* and an essential quality of Hebrew cosmology that recognizes YHWH—the eternally necessary non-created being—as the causal force of the material word that could not otherwise exist outside of his creative will. The Hebrew cosmology of Genesis 1 presents a God who created (*bārāʾ*) all things, not from his physical body or from sex with other gods, but from his force of will. This is not to suggest that every occurrence of *bārāʾ* implies a cosmic creation *ex nihilo*. A frequent use of this Hebrew verb is in reference to God’s creation of things after the cosmos came into being such as mankind (Gen. 1:27; 5:1–2; 6:7; Deut 4:32; Isa. 43:1, 7; Isa 45:12) the sea creatures (Gen 1:21), and the mountains (Amos 4:13). In several passages *bārāʾ* is used to emphasize not only the God who created by the power of his command (Psa. 148:5; Isa. 40:26), but the God who continues to sustain the cosmos and mankind (Isaiah 42:5) along with the animals (Ps 104:30). In all these cases, there is a consistent emphasis on God alone who creates.

McComiskey points this out in his etymology of אָרָבּ (*bārāʾ*):

The limitation of this word to divine activity indicates that the area of meaning delineated by the root falls outside the sphere of human ability. Since the word never occurs with the object of the material, and since the primary emphasis of the word is on the newness of the created object, the word lends itself well to the concept of creation *ex nihilo* although that concept is not necessarily inherent within the meaning of the word.59

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58 A full justification of this principle is not within the scope of this thesis. For a fuller defense, see Norman L. Geisler, *Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics*, Baker Reference Library (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1999), 120–123.

Thus, although bārāʿ does not always mean creation from nothing, its use in the context of Genesis 1 offers a striking contrast to ANE mythologies of a God who created the material world from the power of His word alone and the first cause, of all creation (Neh. 9:6). Heidel supports Mccomiskey’s conclusion that ex nihilo is not inherent to the meaning of bārāʾ; however, he also asserts that the concept can be rightly drawn from the use of הָיוֹם (bērēʾšīt) in Genesis 1:1.60 Regardless then of his lexical source, Heidel shares in the conclusion, essential to the DWP, “that in the initial verse of Genesis the phrase under discussion designates heaven and earth as first created out of nothing in a rude state but in their essential or basic form.”61 It is only subsequent to this creatio ex nihilo that God created (bārāʾ) mankind to fill the earth (Isa. 45:18) and as the Father to whom mankind owes obeisance (Mal. 2:10).

W. F. Albright in his seminal work, From the Stone Age to Christianity, offers a hermeneutic compatible with the DWP that recognizes the value for a literal hermeneutic which properly distinguishes between the essential and accidental properties of ANE cosmologies. Albright examines the word bārāʾ within its ANE context and concludes that in contrast to the “appellation of the storm-god, Baal, usually given as Alʾiyan” means “‘I prevail’ over the champions whom I meet in the land of battle,” the name of God in Exodus 3:14, הָיוֹם הָיוּם הָיוּם (ʾehēye ʾāšer ʾehēye), should be understood when used in the third person causative to mean “He Causes to be what Comes into

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60 Heidel, Babylonian Genesis, 90. The argument that finite verb אָרָבּ favors the absolute state which is present in הָיוֹם and concludes this combination confirms the teaching that creation in Genesis 1 is ex nihilo. Robert L. Reymond, A New Systematic Theology of the Christian Faith (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1998), 390.

61 Heidel, Babylonian Genesis, 91.
Existence.” If this is the case, then the essential quality of cosmological contingency is embedded in the very name of God. YHWH, in contrast to Baal, did not create the cosmos from the bodies of other gods of the Ugaritic pantheon. Baal’s bodily secretions began the work of creation and left its completion to the next generation of city-gods. In Hebrew cosmology, the evil spirits working against God are accounted for not from an eternal or primordial root but as a consequence of post-creation sin and rebellion against the one God. When one views Hebrew creation in contrast to other ANE mythologies, it becomes clear that Hebrew cosmology was written to create a durable contrast between the revealed quality of contingency against the theogony of her neighbors.

**Biblical Creation is Transcendent Personal Monotheism, Not Theomachy**

The literature of the ancient world commonly depicts creation as theomachy; an essential property of ANE cosmogony portraying a battle between the pantheon of gods used to establish political authority. The Hittite myth, *The Song of Ullikummis*, gives one such example where heaven and earth were created by the blow of a cleaver. The Akkadian epic *Enûma Elish* offers a more graphic example of the cosmic battleground of the ANE in the tale of Tiamat and Marduk,

Tiamat and Marduk, sage of the gods, drew close for battle,
They locked in single combat, joining for the fray...

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63 Kaufmann, *Religion of Israel*, 65.

64 Here it is helpful to note that Walton agrees there is “no place for a theogony and no theogonic element in Israelite cosmogony.” Walton, “Creation,” in *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Pentateuch*, 162.

65 Pritchard, *ANE Texts*, 125.
(105) After the vanguard had slain Tiamat,
He scattered her forces, he dispersed her host.⁶⁶

As was the case with theogony, scholars committed to the UWP generally agree
“there is no cosmic warfare or conquest in Genesis.”⁶⁷ However, the effort to normalize
Genesis as a product of the SCE of the ANE assumes the lack of theomachy is an
accidental property rather than the essential property. Consequently, those within the
UWP tend to implement a hermeneutic that conflates common phrases, anthropomorphic
similarities, and phenomenological language in the Tanak and in ANE thought which, in
turn, minimizes the unique idiomatic, historical, theological, and revelatory context of
Hebrew cosmology.

One example of the above practice is the overemphasis of the similarity between
the phrase “and God said (יְאַבְרֵא לָא וְלָא שָׁמַעְתָּו)” used in Genesis 1 with the Memphite cosmogony
of the United Kingdom of Upper and Lower Egypt where the god Ptah “spoke the
universe into existence.”⁶⁸ Making this connection, Walton argues the following:

This element [creative word] is missing altogether from Mesopotamian
traditions but has often been identified as an important factor in Egyptian
understanding. It is particularly evident in the Memphite Theology. More
recent studies have observed that while the Memphite Theology gives
close attention to divine speech in creation, it goes well beyond
the concept of fiat to something more like the logos idea of John 1.⁶⁹

However, a closer examination of the Memphite story shows that the common use
of the “creative word” is only accidental to the essential difference in these two
cosmogonies. In this late Memphite myth recorded on the Shabaka Stone from the New

⁶⁶ Hallo and Younger, The Context of Scripture, 398.
⁶⁷ Walton, The Lost World of Genesis One, 65.
⁶⁸ Foster and Hollis, Writings from the Ancient World, 6.
Kingdom (ca. 1740–1100 BC), the emphasis on Ptah’s creation was not by “word” alone, as it is in the Hebrew cosmology, but also by “what his heart imagined.”\textsuperscript{70} Johnston makes the case that Ptah’s creation is a “combination of conception in his heart (=thought) and the command of his tongue (=speech).”\textsuperscript{71} This dual aspect to Ptah’s creation is important in Egyptian theology because he is asserted to be the creator of the great god Anum which gave Ptah authority above all other gods. As the theogony unfolds, the reader is told that Ptah created the gods Horus and Thoth: gods commonly associated with the organs of the tongue and the heart.

(53) There came into being as the heart and there came into being as the tongue (something) in the form of Atum. The mighty Great One is Ptah, who transmitted [\textit{life} to all gods], as well as (to) their \textit{ka’s}, through this heart, by which Horus became Ptah, and through this tongue, by which Thoth became Ptah.

(Thus) it happened that the heart and tongue gained control over [every] (other) member of the body, by teaching that he is in every body and in every mouth of all gods, all men, [all] cattle, all creeping things, and (everything) that lives, by thinking and commanding everything that he wishes.\textsuperscript{72}

The heart, in the Egyptian mind, was the source of thought and the tongue is the figure of human speech and power. Ptah’s teeth themselves were gods. It was necessary for Ptah to be established as the ultimate creator of the heart and tongue because all creatures, men and animals alike, have these two organs. Consequently, this myth established Ptah as an ontological reality inside every earthly creature and his ubiquity established Memphis as the central power of Egypt. Livingston affirms this assessment:

What is actually being set forth in this Egyptian “creation” myth is that a “new” god, Ptah, the god that put Pharaoh on the throne, is better than all

\textsuperscript{70} Foster and Hollis, \textit{Writings from the Ancient World}, 109.
\textsuperscript{71} Johnston, “\textit{Genesis 1},” 188.
\textsuperscript{72} Pritchard, \textit{ANE Texts}, 5.
previous gods. The basic purpose of the myth, then, is to vindicate the new Pharaoh’s right to the throne. In reading carefully, what one discovers is that *the new god is patently nothing more than the god-hood of the new king.*

The essential quality of the Egyptian mythology is Ptah’s work which forms the foundation for Memphite political authority—the city which worshiped the most powerful god, who was present in every creature, and therefore had the most power. Thus, aside from the accidental use of a common phrase, the Hebrew cosmology of Genesis 1 shares none of these essential qualities with the Memphite myth. The careful distinction between speaker and word which the Tanak so carefully maintains is, at best, confused by the hermenutic of the UWP and at worst permanently muted.

In the cosmology of Genesis, one finds a vivid contrast to the typical ANE battleground mythology. Creation is depicted as an act of power through the word of God alone. Unlike Ptah, YHWH remains ontologically and materially distinct from His creation. The continued refrain of Genesis 1 is that “God said” and “God called” and by the power of His word alone made everything. This unequivocal focus on the power of speech to create the material world is unique to the ancient Hebrews.

Even Greenwood notes that, “each of the [Old Testament] creation accounts emphasize God’s sovereign power over the cosmos. God is not locked in an epic battle with the forces of nature, but has subdued them and commands them to submit to their assigned purpose.”

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74 While Walton contends that “Genesis 1 is not an account of material origins,” it is clear from the scope of OT literature that the Hebrews were concerned with the physical creation and its ontological implications. See Walton, *The Lost World of Genesis One*, 92.

75 Greenwood, Scripture and Cosmology, 120. Greenwood’s assertion that God “subdued” the forces of nature is consistent with the UWP in assuming the Genesis account depicts God organizing *ex materia* and rejects the idea of *creatio ex nihilo*. This fact notwithstanding, the remainder of the quote does establish his general rejection of theomachy. As an aside, Greenwood’s underlying assumption is that the
cosmogenic belief in a transcendent personal monotheism constitutes a *sui generis* within Hebrew theology that is affirmed by this extra-biblical fragment from the “Hymn to the Creator” found in the Dead Sea Scrolls:

9 Great and Holy are you, YHWH, the Most Holy from generation to generation. In front of him walks glory
10 and behind him the din of many waters. Kindness and truth are around his face, truth,
11 uprightness and justice are the base of his throne. He separated light from darkness, the dawn he established with the knowledge of
12 his heart. Then all his angels saw and sang for he showed them what they had not known.
13 He crowns the mountains with produce Blank perfect nourishment for all the living. Blessed be he who made
14 the earth with his strength, who established the world with his wisdom. With his knowledge he spread out the heavens, and brought out
15 [the wind] from [his] sto[rehouses: lightning flashes] he made [for the rain] and made the fogs go up from the end of

If, as Greenwood claims, Israel’s cosmology was rooted to the ANE milieu, then one must ask: “how did they know to reject the view of the cosmos as a battle of YHWH against nature?” The answer is YHWH’s revelation. The revelatory cosmology of the ancient Hebrews stands alone in its monotheistic vision of creation by Divine fiat. Hugh Ross writes:

Creation myths venture to do more. And while most refer to “the beginning,” they typically pick up after something already exists. In other words, they tell a story that begins after the beginning. None gives the abundance of specific, testable detail about the beginning—detail that

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different creation references disagree with one another and, like typical ANEL, they were written for various political and religious purposes. One literary response to this is the concept of creative imitation outlined in the following, Gary N. Knoppers, “The Synoptic Problem? An Old Testament Perspective,” *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 19, no. 1 (2009): 11–34. This study is beyond the scope of this thesis but worth future analysis in application to Hebrew cosmology.

proves accurate—presented by Bible authors, all writing prior to second
century AD.\textsuperscript{77}

In summary, one can see that the Hebrew cosmological view that God created by
the power of His spoken word is \textit{sui generis} from all other ANE. Even in the Egyptian
Memphite mythology which among ANE cosmogonies comes closest to Genesis 1, the
use of creation by spoken “word” is not conceptually the same. The context of these
stories makes it clear that the creation story of Genesis 1 is not a war between the gods, a
merging of YHWH and nature, or political propaganda. Although some scholars argue
that Israel used their cosmology to gain standing among the nations, the lack of a
theogony and the rejection of any other god in competition with YHWH makes any
political use of Genesis 1 by Israel accidental and removes the story from the fray of
political intent.\textsuperscript{78}

Two key implications of the Hebraic belief in a transcendent personal
monotheism are affirmed by Oswalt: first, ethics became a form of religious worship, and
second, history was viewed as a progression of time from creation to eschatological
fulfillment.\textsuperscript{79} This uniquely Hebrew theology was shaped in the midst of the ANE

\textsuperscript{77} Hugh Ross, \textit{Creation as Science: A Testable Model Approach to End the Creation/Evolution
Wars} (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2006), 74.

\textsuperscript{78} Walton’s work advances the idea that temple-building in Israel was rooted in the cultural milieu
of the ANE. Walton argues that the seven-day creation of Genesis is purely functional and symbolizes
God’s construction of a cosmic temple which provides a space for worship in Walton, “\textit{Creation},” in
cosmic origins and temple building reinforces the idea across the ancient Near East that the temples were
considered primordial and that cosmic origins at times were defined in terms of a temple element” Walton,
\textit{The Lost World of Genesis One}, 78. A full assessment and rebuttal is beyond the scope of this thesis, but
the author concurs with Oswalt’s assessment that “the ancient Near East worshiped their deity (deities) in
temples of similar structure is important, but not essential” Oswalt, \textit{The Bible Among the Myths}, 13. See
also, Lennox, \textit{Seven Days That Divide the World: The Beginning According to Genesis and Science}, 135–
137.

\textsuperscript{79} Oswalt, \textit{The Bible Among the Myths}, 92, 111.
pantheon which was bound to the cyclic process of death and rebirth. In some cases, these ANE cosmologies were connected to the seasons where “Baal’s rule guarantees the annual return of the vegetation; as the god disappears in the underworld and returns in the autumn, so the vegetation dies and resuscitates with him.” In other instances, when one new god is created, “he absorbs other deities as hypostases of his various activities.” Thus, ANE cosmology was eternally bound to a cyclical process of death and rebirth. This tied ANE ethics to a panentheistic phenomenological analogy whereas Hebraic ethics were rooted in the transcendent nature of God who is above the created order.

Wright makes this distinction quite clear:

The worlds of society, nature and the gods interpenetrate in such a way that the status quo is the focus of attention. The aim of the gods is to preserve the established order, and the whole cultic and social life of man is primarily aimed at integration with the sacraments of economy of the world. . . In the Bible, however, a state of tension exists between God and creation. . . But the revealed order and the actual order are never identical except in the eschatological age to which history is moving by the direction and intervention of God.  

Based on this observation, Wright concludes, “In Israel, therefore, the social order was not grounded in nature, nor was the law a natural law. Law and society were brought into being through a special revelation of God in the setting of the covenant.” In demonstrating the distinct qualities of Hebrew cosmology (e.g. creation ex nihilo, cosmological contingency, human sacredness, and transcendent personal monotheism), the question raised by the second hermeneutical assumption of the UWP remains to be answered: how can Genesis be used in dialogue with science?

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81 Wright, The Old Testament, 44-45.
82 Ibid., 59.
Hebrew Cosmology and Science in Dialogue

The argument of this thesis is grounded on two presuppositions: (1) The essential properties of Genesis are a product of Divine revelation and only its accidental properties were shaped by ANE culture, and (2) Genesis gives insight into both the material and metaphysical origins of the universe and is therefore a valuable dialogic starting point for scientific exploration. The argument supporting this first premise was addressed in the previous sections. The final part of the chapter will address the second premise. The following pages support the idea that a literal, grammatical-historical (plain meaning) hermeneutic of Genesis allows for the possibility that scientific exploration can refine the understanding of Tanak without fear of diminishing the authority or meaning of God’s revelation. Using Hebrew cosmology as a starting point for scientific study is not a guarantee of harmony but allows for the possibility of ongoing dialogue that can advance both the understanding of Genesis and science. When there is discontinuity, it is also argued, there should not be an immediate assumption that the Bible is in error and the science is infallible. In short, this thesis will assume a Dialogue Model which holds that science and Hebrew cosmology cover overlapping domains sharing common ground in their presuppositions, methods, and concepts. In making this case, it is important to summarize how the present conflict between science and the Bible took shape.

Since the turn of the 20th century, there has been a shift toward philosophical naturalism leading to an ever-increasing rift between science and theology.83 “The decisive turn against the biblical doctrine of creation,” says Carl F. H. Henry, “took place

before the rise of modern science when modern philosophy projected a revelationless doctrine of God. As a consequence, many Christians have summarily rejected the study of the physical sciences, including astronomy, for fear it will diminish the claims of the Bible. Sadly, these fears have been fulfilled in the work of some Christians who, using science as their primary hermeneutic over the literal, grammatical-historical plain meaning of Scripture, have consequently discounted biblical claims of Divine revelation in favor of more naturalistic processes. As Nancy Pearcey and Charles B. Thaxton have observed, “phrases such as ‘the war between science and religion’ are so familiar many people don’t even challenge them.” Walton provides one example of this “war” relevant to the present discussion of Hebrew cosmology,

The most important result of this study for the interpretation of Genesis is the realization that the Genesis account pertains to functional origins rather than material origins and that temple ideology underlies the Genesis cosmology. These conclusions have significant ramifications for the public discussions and controversies of our time, including those concerning the age of the earth, the relationship between Genesis and science, the interpretation of the biblical text in relation to evolution and Intelligent Design, and the shape of public science education.

Walton makes a direct argument against the veracity of Scripture that because, in his view, Hebrew cosmology is rooted in the pagan ANE cosmology, the modern reader cannot rely upon it to formulate any theory of material creation (which precludes both

84 Henry, God Who Stands and Stays, Part Two, 132.
87 Walton, Genesis 1, 198–199.
88 Greenwood goes into some detail how God condescended to Hebrews by reinforcing their faulty cosmology. He correlates this to the incarnation of Christ which, if taken to its logical conclusion, means that Jesus condescended to humanity by reinforcing the faulty concepts of God. This is not Greenwood’s intent, but it is a flaw in his reasoning that deserves further investigation. See Greenwood, Scripture and Cosmology, 196 c.f.
young and Old Earth theories) nor for the education of children.\textsuperscript{89} Richard E. Averbeck challenges Walton’s logic as, “[d]riving a wedge between material creation as over against giving order to the cosmos by assigning functions or roles is a false dichotomy that cannot bear the weight of the text. And this does not stand up under scrutiny in ANE creation accounts either.”\textsuperscript{90}

An alternative approach, seemingly more open-minded, is presented by Greenwood who argues for a complementary role between science and the Bible when he writes, “[t]he God who created the cosmos and spoke through Scripture is not threatened by their coexistence, but revels in revealing himself through both.”\textsuperscript{91} Taken at face value, this statement appears to give Scripture a higher value alongside science, but the outworking of Walton’s thesis is a rejection of the Divine nature of Scripture in favor of philosophical naturalism and religious uniformitarianism. His conclusion that Genesis is ancient mythology undermines the epistemic value of Hebrew cosmology as a meaningful source for the scientific study of the universe.\textsuperscript{92}

This thesis argues for an alternative to philosophical naturalism that instead interprets the Hebrew cosmological narrative, within the context of Genesis’ historical narrative, as historical revelation.\textsuperscript{93} This does not mean that all biblical statements must


\textsuperscript{90} Averbeck, “Lost World of Adam and Eve,” 235.

\textsuperscript{91} Walton, \textit{Genesis 1}, 221.

\textsuperscript{92} Henry, \textit{God Who Stands and Stays, Part Two}, 136.

\textsuperscript{93} Ibid., 137–138.
be taken literally as some are better understood as symbol more than science. The hermeneutic adopted by the DWP does not negate the value of metaphor in the Scripture. Nor does it assume that the Hebrews took literally phrases such as “windows of heaven” and “foundations of the earth.” The hermeneutic employed by the DWP allows the ancient Hebrews to speak with a voice unique from inside, but distinct from ANEL and comparable with scientific exploration.

To properly define Scripture’s relationship to science, one must first have a basic understanding of the general scientific process. At its core, science is the exploration of the physical world through observation of physical phenomena. Science does not demand the ancient observer understand every detail of modern physics, avoid phenomenological language in describing the cosmos, agree with every proposed astronomical theory, or employ technical jargon to describe their world. This definition is important because it is fundamentally abused by Greenwood who asserts the following:

The heavens, earth and sea of Hebrew cosmology were tiny compared to modern standards. Though the extent of God’s creation was enormous from their point of view, the ancients simply had no way of conceiving of an earth with a circumference of nearly twenty-five thousand miles. Nor could they have ever imagined pLANEs beyond Saturn, let alone stars and galaxies billions of light years away.

His underlying assumption is that because the ancient Hebrews did not know the exact circumference of the earth or distance of the planets, their Scripture must therefore be treated as scientifically unreliable. His argument relies, in part, on creating a series of false dichotomies between phenomenological language and scientific fact. For example, Greenwood writes regarding the beliefs of the typical ancient Hebrew, “[d]id he rely on

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94 Harris, Nature of Creation, 106.
95 Greenwood, Scripture and Cosmology, 154.
divine intervention for each and every raindrop, or did he recognize the chemical reaction of two parts hydrogen and one part oxygen forming the water molecule?"  

The first problem here is the assumption that these two thoughts are mutually exclusive. Building on this false binary, he goes on to challenge, “[i]n short, did the ancient Hebrews think along the same lines as their geographical and cognitive counterparts, or did they think in the same types of terms and categories as modern people?” Again, he assumes that these are the only two possible options which results in a logical oversimplification. Ultimately Greenwood begs the question through an appeal to consensus which immediately discounts all contrary biblical and scientific information. He concludes, “I have made the case that the ancients conceived of the cosmological structure as it appeared to them observationally and analogically. Although their views were not necessarily in full agreement on every point, there was a general consensus that the cosmos consisted of three tiers: heavens, earth and sea.” As demonstrated previously, the use of common terms does not equate to a consensus about the cosmos between the Hebrews and other ANEC. Mark Harris concludes that the assumption that all ANE cultures assumed a three-tiered cosmos is overly-literal, too simplistic and does not allow for a more subtle and complex model. He goes on to offer this analogy: ‘There is a widespread modern urban myth that people in the Middle Ages believed the earth to be

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96 Greenwood, Scripture and Cosmology, 71.
97 Ibid.
98 Greenwood, Scripture and Cosmology.
99 Harris, Nature of Creation, 42, 104.
flat, a myth which is demonstrably false. It is possible that there is something of this urban myth in the scholar’s three-tiered model.”

Contrary to Greenwood’s assertion, the lack of scientific precision compared to 21st century science, does not make ancient Hebrew cosmology unscientific. Nor does the inability to harmonize Hebrew cosmology with every theory make Genesis scientifically inaccurate, because not all theories will prove true as they adapt to new discoveries. Science is the story of adaptation based on observation so, therefore, the only question is, “does what God revealed to Moses, the prophets, and the ancient Hebrews about the creation of the universe contradict in any way to what is scientifically theorized?” To this question, the answer is no. While many scientific theories rooted in philosophical naturalism seek to dispel the Tanak as myth, there are also valid theories that support the Genesis account.

The use of phenomenological language in the Tanak to describe creation does not invalidate the possibility of divine revelation in accordance with scientific exploration. Quite the opposite, the secular scientist Stuart Fox argues that the use of everyday objects such as yarn can help improve one’s understanding of complex scientific ideas like String Theory. He quotes one physics professor as saying, “Crochet, knitting and other crafts allow people to visualize, recontextualize and develop new problems and answers.”

Given this modern approach of using phenomenological language observed in crafts to explain complex science, it should then come as no surprise that YHWH used the common things observed by the ancient Hebrews to reveal a deeper truth of creation.

100 Harris, Nature of Creation, 103.
discoverable through science. Biblical cosmology may employ a geocentric perspective that relies on phenomenological language without violating the revelatory nature and scientific insight of the Scripture. To establish this point, the following pages will outline a few select examples from scholars who use different hermeneutical assumptions, but each is compatible with the DWP.

One example of scientific dialogue with Hebrew cosmology comes from the young-earth creationist Dr. Russell Humphreys. Humphreys, based on the biblical description of the Heavens as a tent stretched out across the sky, developed a scientific model of time dilation to explain the size of the universe being billions of light-years across yet only 6,000 years old. He finds inspiration for his science in passages like Isaiah 40:22 which reads, “Who stretches out the heavens like a tent curtain, and spreads them out like a tent to dwell in” and Psalm 104:2 where God is seen, “Stretching out the heavens like a tent curtain.” Humphreys argues that the Hebraic description of an elastic material that is “stretched out” reveals a unique biblical idea that fits with the modern understanding of the “fabric” of space-time popularized in many science-fiction movies, books, and television. Humphreys writes,

Generally we think of space as a true vacuum, an empty volume which contains some material here and there, such as air or stars. But Scripture speaks of space as a real material. The heavens can be torn (Isaiah 64:1), worn out like a garment (Psalm 102:26), shaken (Hebrews 12:26, Haggai 2:6, Isaiah 13:13), burnt up (2 Peter 3:12), and split apart (Revelation 6:14). These verses make sense if space is indeed a real material. Many of

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these verses compare the material to a fabric, hence the phrase “the fabric of space”. 103

This biblical use of “tent” is a metaphor used to describe the heavens as a dwelling place of God and this usage is not wholly unique among ANEL. One Egyptian text from the late Fifth or early Sixth Dynasty hung over the entrance doorway of the Tomb of Iy at Giza reads, “Anubis, who dwells in the divine tent-shrine.”104 In another Ugaritic poem of the successors to Baal, Anat “enters the tent of the King, the Father of Years.”105 This Hittite myth depicts the gods living in physical tents on the earth, “Baal heard, stood [up], and went to the headwaters of the Euphrates River. He went [to] Elkunirsa, the husband of Ashertu, [and] entered the tent [of] Elkunirsa.”106 This selection of ancient Near East texts (ANET) shows that the term “tent” is used to describe a royal place or shrine where a god dwells and where other gods come to pay homage.107 So while the idiom of tent as a container metaphor for the divine is not uncommon, it is fair to conclude, says Humphreys, that the tent “stretched out” in the Bible is a phenomenological idiom both unique to the Hebrew Scriptures and comparable as a starting point for scientific exploration.

Another example of phenomenological language that informs science is the six days of creation revealed in Genesis which authors like Greenwood prefer to harmonize


105 Smith and Parker, Ugaritic Narrative Poetry, 152–153.


with other ANEL. Greenwood argues, “Genesis 1 should indicate to the reader that the interests of its author lie in the theological message of its contents, not necessarily in scientific precision, especially given that in all of Scripture there is not a single instance in which God revealed to Israel a science beyond their own culture.” As in the previous example, Greenwood’s conclusion which is fundamental to the UWP begs the question and does not take into consideration recent theories that attempt to reconcile the literal six day creation week with science.

Young-earth creationists who hold to a literal six-day creation need to resolve the problem of starlight that has been observed to travel billions of light years to be seen on a 6,000-year-old earth. This, in scientific circles, is known as the Distant Starlight Problem. Jason Lisle’s theory of Anisotropic Synchrony Convention (ASC) is one example of an alternative to the arbitrary synchrony convention selected by Einstein (ESC), which Lisle postulates harmonizes the size of the galaxy with the language of Genesis 1. ASC assumes an infinite speed of light in one direction and, therefore, does not require the observer to know the distance of the object or the speed of light to describe an event. For Lisle, the distant starlight problem is an error of biblical exegesis not physics. Instead of reading Genesis 1 from the perspective of a 20th century scientist,

108 Greenwood, Scripture and Cosmology, 120.
109 Ibid., 106.
110 Walton does agree that young-earth interpretation of the Hebrew yôm does likely refer to a literal 24-hour period, but only in reference to God’s inauguration of the cosmic temple. His hermeneutical point of departure then from the Young Earth creationists is not in the meaning of the Hebrew grammar but in his conclusion that the use of “day” in Genesis 1 has no bearing on the material origins and therefore no value for developing a meaningful scientific theory.
which assumes Einstein’s ESC, one must read it using the ASC, which he argues is scientifically permissible and the most likely perspective used by all ANEC.\footnote{Jason Lisle, “Anisotropic Synchrony Convention–A Solution to the Distant Starlight Problem,” \textit{Answers Research Journal} 3 (2016 2010): 4, http://www.answersingenesis.org/arj/v3/anisotropic_synchrony_convention.pdf. For a brief discussion of Schroeder’s time relativity hypothesis and potential limitations, see Harris, Nature of Creation, 45.}

Tichomir Tenev proposes a very different and potentially more viable scientific theory to account for the six literal days of creation recorded in Genesis 1. Tenev postulates that people are observing the universe in real time as opposed to looking at a picture from billions of years ago. He writes, “The solution proposed here depends only on the well-known result from the Theory of Special Relativity that two spacetime events outside of each other’s light cones are causally independent from each other, and so neither event is objectively taking place before or after the other.”\footnote{Tichomir Tenev, \textit{A Solution to the Distant Starlight Problem Consistent with Young Distant Cosmos} (Unpublished Paper: April 23, 2016), 1.} Using Tenev’s model, all events outside the light cone of another event are independent and assumed to be simultaneous. Therefore, if Tenev is correct, the scientific evidence that the universe is billions of light years across is fully compatible with a literal six-day creation event.

Looking outside of young-earth science, one can also examine the theories of old-earth creationist Hugh Ross who provides an argument that undermines the naturalistic assumptions of the UWP. For Ross, the Genesis creation account does not adopt any one particular scientific view but gives only those details necessary to communicate the truth of God’s creation to all generations regardless of their scientific understanding. Ross argues:

\begin{quote}
For the Bible to adopt the scientific paradigms or language of any age would compromise the ability of the text to speak to earlier or later generations. But, because the Bible does have the capacity to
\end{quote}
communicate to all generations of humanity, many Bible interpreters are
tempted to read into the text far too much of the science of their time.\footnote{Ross, \textit{Genesis Question}, 14.}

In taking this old-earth view that Genesis 1 is not a literal six-day period of
creation, Ross still provides a possible scientific approach that affirms the DWP.\footnote{The focus in this thesis is where all creationists, both young and old theorists, reject the uniformitarian view of ANEL. There are, however, significant hermeneutical differences between young-earth and old-earth creationists. A full treatment of these differences is beyond the scope of this thesis. Mortenson’s article provides a starting point for further exploration of these crucial distinctions. He writes, “The above sixty-one old-earth authors hold on to the idea of millions of years for only one reason, and it is not because millions of years is taught in the Bible (for it is not). It is, as many of these men plainly indicate, because they operate with the assumption that the evolutionary geologists and astronomers have proven scientifically that the creation is billions of years old.” Mortenson, “\textit{Philosophical Naturalism},” 97. Hugh Ross provides his counter-argument in what he describes as “unimaginable and disheartening opposition” to his theories. See Hugh Ross, \textit{A Matter of Days: Resolving a Creation Controversy} (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2004), 11 cf.} Ross concludes from his scientific study that, “[t]he importance of this unique doctrine cannot
be overstated. Not only does it set biblical revelation apart from other so-called
revelation, but it provides evidence for the supernatural accuracy of Genesis.”\footnote{Ross, \textit{Genesis Question}, 18–19.}

The goal at this point in the thesis is not to prove or disprove these different
scientific theories of creation. Only more research and study can determine if these ideas
will prove reliable. These theories are mentioned only to illustrate that the paradigmatic
assumption of the UWP that phenomenological language precludes scientific insight is
unfounded. These theories notwithstanding, even assuming for the sake of argument that
the ancient Hebrews used phenomenological language rooted in an ANE cosmology and
that creation story was written only to serve a theological purpose, it is safe to conclude
that there is nothing within the Genesis account of creation that disqualifies it as
compatible with modern scientific explanation. Although the ancient Hebrews used
anthropomorphic and phenomenological language common to the ANE to describe the
world, this in no way excludes the DWP’s assessment that Hebrew cosmology is a source of both YHWH’s self-revelation and a valid starting point for ongoing scientific study.

The Hebrew Scripture is not a scientific textbook providing the details of quantum theory or atomic structures. As Ramm observes, Genesis 1 is an outline of creation. Its brevity, her argues, must temper its exegesis and attempts to conform it to modern scientific theory. “It is the province of the sciences to fill in the details of what is in outline form in the Bible. Science should not preempt to itself the first principles of the Biblical account, nor should theologians endeavor to dictate to the scientists empirical details about which Genesis 1 is actually silent.” This recognition of fact, however, does not mean God’s written word condescends to humanity by giving false or misleading information about the origins of the cosmos. Following the logic of Aquinas, Greenwood argues that the Scripture misleads us about science, but only because we are already misled by our own ignorance. He writes, “it is not because Scripture misleads its readers, but because its readers are already misled.” He goes on to suggest that as generations gain more knowledge, God adapts his message to accommodate their understanding. Ultimately, Greenwood conflates revelatory omission and deception. While God may omit certain facts in the progress of His revelation, to suggest that he also participates in misleading humanity is radically different theology. This implies that God’s past revelation is insufficient and needs a new revelation for each generation. This is a dangerous line of reasoning, for when the condescension of God becomes deception, the revelation of Scripture ceases to be reliable, not just for science, but for all matters of

116 Ramm, Protestant Biblical Interpretation, 212.

117 Greenwood, Scripture and Cosmology, 199.
faith and practice. The underlying problem with the UWP is that it builds its case on the naturalistic assumption that modern science is fact instead of worldview.\(^\text{118}\) This point is illustrated in the use of Big Bang cosmology as one conceivable explanation for Genesis chapter 1.

Within the framework of the DWP, it is possible to interpret the Big Bang as a viable explanation of creation \textit{ex nihilo}, but not necessarily dependent upon it. In other words, the biblical case for \textit{creatio ex nihilo} can be established without any absolute dependence on Big Bang cosmology. Polkinghorne makes this case in asserting that the ontological origins described in Genesis 1 are not one in the same as the temporal beginning described in the Big Bang:

The doctrine of creation is concerned, not just with what God did, but with what he is doing; its subject is ontological origin, not temporal beginning. Its central assertion is that the physical world, at every instant of its existence, is held in being by the will of God. Two consequences follow. The first is that, if physical cosmology delivers us a dateable moment when the universe as we know it sprang forth from the Big Bang, that is scientifically very interesting but theologically neutral. There never was a theological stake in preferring big bang cosmology to steady state cosmology. Secondly, and conversely, if physical cosmology were to abolish a dateable beginning for the world, no great theological upheaval would follow.\(^\text{119}\)

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\(^{118}\) For a discussion of science as worldview from a nonrealistic perspective, see Thomas S. Kuhn and Ian Hacking, \textit{The Structure of Scientific Revolutions}, 4th ed. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2012), Kindle. For discussion from the perspective of a scientific realist, see Polkinghorne, \textit{Belief in God}.

\(^{119}\) J. C. Polkinghorne, \textit{Reason and Reality: The Relationship Between Science and Theology} (London: SPCK, 2011). Polkinghorne here makes a distinction between ontological and temporal origins as it relates to creation \textit{ex nihilo} and Big Bang cosmology. While rejecting the idea that Genesis 1 addresses temporal origins and is only concerned with ontological origins, there is no sense in which he denies the relationship of Genesis to material origins as argued in the UWP. Polkinghorne’s concern seems to be eliminating any potential conflict between creatio \textit{ex nihilo} (God’s first creation) and creatio continua (God’s ongoing creation). These two concepts are not in necessary conflict. A full discussion is not possible in this thesis, but for a solid analysis of the two concepts see Polkinghorne, \textit{Science and Theology}, 79 cf., J. C. Polkinghorne, \textit{Scientists as Theologians: A Comparison of the Writings of Ian Barbour, Arthur Peacocke & John Polkinghorne} (London: SPCK, 1996), 33 cf. and Harris, \textit{Nature of Creation}, 111 cf.
Polkinghorne’s greatest concern is theologians who emphasize *creatio ex nihilo* to the exclusion of *creatio continua* (a Latin phrase meaning “continuing creation” and referring to a belief in God’s continued work in sustaining His original creation). To that end, Polkinghorne argues, Genesis 1 is concerned primarily with the ontological beginning of the universe, but not directly with the temporal origin. Genesis is concerned with demonstrating God’s will as the sustaining force in both the past and the ongoing creation of the material world. A datable beginning to the universe is, in Polkinghorne’s assessment, theological neutral to the importance of Genesis 1. Gunton assesses Polkinghorne’s argument as follows:

The thought that the Big Bang (or somesuch) might be the first moment of creation rests upon a confusion, that between inaccessibility and nothingness. It may be (here I defer to the authorities) that events prior to the Big Bang are scientifically inaccessible; perhaps presently inaccessible, perhaps always. But if they are this does not confer on the Big Bang the honour of being the act of creation. For the Big Bang was a process; a short, sharp process, but a process nonetheless. For in the Bang pre-existing stuff was involved, however currently inaccessible to scientific articulation that stuff is. The Big Bang was the first imaginable, or first at present imaginable, or first recordable, re-arrangement of preexisting stuff. As such it is not a candidate for the title of ‘act of creation *ex nihilo*’.  

In other words, the Big Bang theory relies on the assumption that there was some kind of matter or material that existed prior to the actual moment of dynamic expansion. Therefore, the cosmology of Genesis 1 is not the cosmology of the Big Bang because as science advances we may find an event prior to the Big Bang. Physicist Ethan Siegal makes this very point in his latest assessment of scientific origins:

The conclusion was inescapable: the hot Big Bang definitely happened, but doesn’t extend to go all the way back to an arbitrarily hot and dense

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state. Instead, the very early Universe underwent a period of time where all of the energy that would go into the matter and radiation present today was instead bound up in the fabric of space itself. That period, known as cosmic inflation, came to an end and gave rise to the hot Big Bang, but never created an arbitrarily hot, dense state, nor did it create a singularity. What happened prior to inflation — or whether inflation was eternal to the past — is still an open question, but one thing is for certain: the Big Bang is not the beginning of the Universe!121

More broadly stated as a hermeneutical principle, “revelation is not interpretation and conversely, interpretation is not revelation... One cannot say, ‘I believe just exactly what Gen. 1 says, and I don’t need any theory of reconciliation with science.’ Such an assertion identifies revelation with interpretation.”122

Ultimately, science and religion are fundamentally similar in kind, but differ only in their “degree of power of empirical interrogation which these various investigations enjoy.”123 A mutual understanding of methodological preferences expressed in semantics; the common “bottomup” language of scientists that begins with the natural world (vis-à-vis, analogia entis) vs. the common “Topdown” language of the theologian that begins with the metaphysical world (vis-à-vis, analogia fidei).124 There is a shared circularity of reason accompanied by the paradox of direct encounter that will never lead to anything more than a partial understanding of an ineffable truth. The image of God in man is the


122 Ramm, Christian View, 31.

123 Polkinghorne, Belief in God, 114.

124 Ibid., 84–85. This difference in approach, however, does not mean the scientist and theologian cannot meet together with a common understanding. Pearcy and Thaxton observe that pre-modern scientists used a Topdown approach in their conception of natural order. Early scientists held an a priori assumption of nature’s order based on God’s revealed nature, “The early scientists did not argue that the world was lawfully ordered, and therefore there must be a rational God. Instead, they argued that there was a rational God, and therefore the world must be lawfully ordered.” Pearcy and Thaxton, Soul of Science, 26–27.
source for our drive for scientific exploration. Therefore, we can have a hope that both science and theology, within their unique yet overlapping domains, can achieve a knowledge that is partial, but reflects an ontological reality that is understandable through reasoned dialogue.

Summary and Conclusion

Value in studying ANE literature.

The argument of this thesis is grounded on two presuppositions: (1) The essential properties of Genesis are the product of Divine revelation and only its accidental properties were shaped by ANE culture and (2) Genesis gives insight into both the material and metaphysical origins of the universe and is therefore a valuable dialogic starting point for scientific exploration. This chapter advanced the thesis by first providing key definitions of myth, science, and history. Specific to these definitions, the cosmology of Genesis does not quality as myth, but as a genuine history rooted in YHWH’s revelation to the Hebrews. As revealed history: both God’s special revelation of himself through the Tanak and God’s general revelation of himself in nature, Genesis 1 has epistemological virtue for understanding the transcendent reality of God and immanent reality of creation.

This chapter demonstrated the flaws of the UWP which mistakenly looks to studies in comparative religion to find common essential qualities between ANE and Hebrew cosmology and is rooted in a uniformitarian assumption. This tendency to dismiss the internal witness of the Tanak and harmonize its meaning in light of ANE
passages is difficult to sustain given the *sui generis* of Hebrew cosmology as it relates to its essential properties and which is similar in only accidental properties.

This chapter demonstrated three clear distinctives of the DWP: (1) Hebrew cosmology was defined by the essential quality of creation *ex nihilo* in contrast to the creation *ex materia* of other ANE religions, (2) the Tanak clearly and consistently expresses an essential theology of nature’s contingency upon the self-existent YHWH who remains distinct from his temporal and material creation, and (3) biblical creation is transcendent personal monotheism, not theomachy.

Recognizing these unique essential qualities of Hebrew cosmology demonstrated above should not diminish, however, the value for comparative studies between Hebrew and ANE religions. The study of ANEL within the DWP is an invaluable tool for understanding both the historic influence of Hebrew cosmology and the broader context of the Tanak. Two examples will illustrate the myriad of potential insights that comparative studies unveil. First, the study of ANEL helps distinguish the essential from accidental qualities of Hebrew cosmology. Walton’s early writings offer several astute observations that affirm these unique qualities:

In summary then, it is difficult to discuss comparisons between Israelite and Mesopotamian literature concerning creation of the cosmos because of the disparity is so marked. Differences include basic elemental issues such as theogony and cosmogony, polytheism versus monotheism, and emphasis on organization versus emphasis on creative act.125

The long-term value of comparative studies is lost when the merit of essential and accidental properties is confused. Second, the study of ANE can affirm the tradition of Mosaic authorship. As D.W. Baker observes, the variety of divine names for the same

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god in various ANE mythologies, such as Enuma Elish, do not suggest multiple authorship and therefore the various use of YHWH and Elohom “cannot be assumed to be the sign of multiple or composite authorship.”

*Framework for Scientific Exploration.*

This chapter used the ANEL along with the scientific theories of Young and Old Earth scientists to support the literal, grammatical-historical (plain meaning) hermeneutic of Genesis which grants the possibility that scientific exploration can refine the understanding of the Tanak without fear of diminishing the authority of God’s revelation. These theories were utilized to reveal two key implications. First, ethics was a form of religious worship and second, history was viewed as a progression of time from creation to eschatological fulfillment. The use of phenomenological language in the Tanak to describe creation does not invalidate the possibility of divine revelation in accordance with scientific exploration. The DWP is a fundamental rejection of the Independence Model and acceptance of the Dialogue Model wherein science and religion cover overlapping domains sharing common ground in their presuppositions, methods, and concepts. Therefore, we can have a hope that both science and theology, within their unique yet overlapping domains, can achieve a knowledge that is partial, but reflects an ontological reality that is understandable through reasoned dialogue.

The goal of interdisciplinary dialogue within the DWP is not a scientific takeover of religion or a religious takeover of science. Each discipline must interact and resist the

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inclination to suborn the authority of the other. Polkinghorne concludes that the theologian must pursue the path of consonance which seeks to espouse a theology informed by science, but which reserves the right, along with the scientist, to “retain those categories which its experience has determined that it shall use, however counterintuitive they may be.” Only with this approach can science and theology work together to “tackle the moral problems posed by the growth of science.” This observation is affirmed by Peters who writes:

So, curiously enough, we might consider the possibility of a reversal in natural theology. Traditionally the aim of natural theology has been to ask what our study of nature can contribute to our knowledge of God. But might it work in reverse? Might we ask what our knowledge of God can contribute to our knowledge of nature? To know that God is the creator is to know that the world in which we live and move and have our being is creation.

To this end, the DWP outlined in this chapter offers the following hermeneutic:

(1) Hebrew cosmology is concerned with functional, material and temporal origins and consequently has value for the ongoing dialogue between science and religion, (2) Hebrew cosmology relies on the language of concordism and accepts the validity of a literal hermeneutic, and (3) Hebrew cosmology is teleology and, in some cases, may speak to scientific methodology.

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127 Polkinghorne, Belief in God, 86.
128 Ibid., 91.
CHAPTER 4: CONCLUSION

GREETINGS TO THE BENEVOLENT READER from the Publisher For insignificant creatures like us, who live in this world surrounded on all sides like worms in a cheese, it is no small matter to engage in grave disputes about the structure of the world, such as whether our abode or house, which we call the earth, rotates on high around the sun together with the other globes similar to it, or whether the sun rotates around the earth. We are indeed such small creatures that we are very ignorant of such matters. We are like a mouse in a ship who, when asked by a fellow mouse about the ship being at rest on the sea, would never be able to say whether the ship, their common home, is in motion or whether it remains fixed in one and the same place.

— Tobias Adami

The genesis of this thesis dates back close to three decades. While studying engineering at Pennsylvania State University in the early 1990’s, this author studied under Gary N. Knoppers, PhD, Professor of Classics and Ancient Mediterranean Studies. Knoppers taught his Old Testament course from a perspective similar to the UWP. Moving on to study at Oral Roberts University in the late 1990s, this author studied ancient Near Eastern civilizations under Roy Hayden, Professor of Biblical Languages, whose view was more akin to the DWP. In consideration of this background—studying under diverse scholars—this thesis represents this author’s own efforts to apply the

decades of study to shape a capacious biblical hermeneutic for the early chapters of
Genesis that remains open to dialogue with scientific inquiry.

Restatement of the Thesis and Conclusions

In the study of literature from the ancient Near East (ANE), a growing number of
scholars in the past 60 years, both secular and religious, have argued that the creation
story of Genesis 1 is mythology akin to, and shaped by, the milieu of the ancient world.
The two fundamental hermeneutical arguments of these scholars established in chapters
one and two were: (1) The essential properties of Genesis are conditioned by ANE
culture, and (2) Genesis is functionally unscientific mythology. Scholarship advancing
these two arguments was titled the Unified Worldview Paradigm (UWP). This
nomenclature emphasizes the supposition of scholars that all ANE religions shared the
same cosmological worldview and therefore modern interpreters of Genesis 1 must
employ an interpretative paradigm that distances Hebrew cosmology from scientific
inquiry.

In contrast to the UWP, this thesis argued for a Divergent Worldview Paradigm
(DWP) which rejects both of the aforementioned hermeneutical assumptions as
insufficient for understanding the Hebrew cosmology of Genesis 1. The research in
chapter 3 supports the conclusion that the essential qualities of Hebrew cosmology given
in Genesis 1 were distinct from the accidental qualities shared with other ANEL such that
the Hebrew worldview was divergent from all other ANE cultures. Hebrew cosmology,
while presented in ancient language for ancient peoples, gives insight into the physical
beginning and spiritual purpose of creation. Therefore, the modern scholar is uniquely
positioned to employ a paradigm that opens Hebrew cosmology to dialogue with modern scientific exploration.

In developing this thesis, there were four significant points of contention addressed: the sui generis of the Hebrew worldview, the basic meaning of Divine-revelation, the definition of the term myth and how it relates to the book of Genesis, and the consequent implications for the hermeneutical relationship between science and Scripture. The following table summarizes and compares the hermeneutical assumptions underlying both the UWP and the DWP as detailed in this study.

*Table 3: Hermeneutical Assumptions of Genesis One for UWP and DWP*

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<tr>
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<th>Non-Literal</th>
<th>Literal</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>a-Historical</strong></td>
<td>UWP-1: Genesis 1 uses symbolic language to describe spiritual origins.</td>
<td>UWP-2: Genesis 1 uses literal language to describe spiritual origins.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>UWP-1: Genesis 1 uses literal language to describe spiritual origins.</td>
<td>UWP-2: Genesis 1 uses literal language to describe spiritual origins.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Historical</strong></td>
<td>DWP-1: Genesis 1 uses symbolic language to describe both spiritual and material origins.</td>
<td>DWP-2: Genesis 1 uses literal language to describe both spiritual and material origins.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

The above table indicates that the UWP always takes an a-historical approach to Genesis 1 but varies between a non-literal and literal approach to the text itself. Consequently, UWP-1 holds that Genesis 1 uses symbolic language to describe the spiritual origins of humanity. UWP-2, on the other hand, holds that Genesis 1 uses literal language to describe spiritual origins. The DWP always takes an historical approach to Genesis 1, but like scholars holding to the UWP, take either a non-literal or literal approach to the text. Consequently, DWP-1 holds that Genesis 1 uses symbolic language to describe both spiritual and material origins. DWP-2 holds that Genesis 1 uses literal language to describe both spiritual and material origins.
This work advanced the thesis by first providing key definitions of myth, science, and history. Specific to these definitions, the DWP concludes the cosmology of Genesis does not quality as myth, but as a genuine history rooted in YHWH’s revelation to the Hebrews. The claim of scholars such as John H. Walton and Kyle Greenwood that Genesis is culturally-conditioned literature and functionally unscientific mythology is effectively addressed in this thesis. This brief study demonstrates, through specific examples from ANEL written between the 4th millennium BC and into the 4th century BC, that the creation story of Genesis, viewed within its own idiomatic, historical, and theological context is more than mythology shaped by the cultural milieu of the ancient world.

As revealed history—both God’s special revelation of himself through the Tanak and God’s general revelation of himself in nature—Genesis 1 has epistemological virtue for understanding the transcendent reality of God and immanent reality of creation. Consequently, the DWP is distinct from the UWP in arguing: (1) Hebrew cosmology was defined by the essential quality of creation ex nihilo in contrast to the creation ex materia of other ANE religions, (2) the Tanak clearly and consistently expresses an essential theology of nature’s contingency upon the self-existent YHWH who remains distinct from his temporal and material creation, and (3) biblical creation is transcendent personal monotheism, not theomachy.

These essential qualities which distinguish Hebrew cosmology from their ANE neighbors establishes a common basis for scientific inquiry and Hebrew cosmology. The Hebrew cosmological view that God created by the power of His spoken word is unique from all other ANEL. Israel, in the midst of the foreign captivity and confronted with
competing stories of creation such as *Enuma Elish*, was reminded by the inspired writers of Tanak that YHWH did not win a battle or kill the gods to create, but He alone commanded all into existence. Whereas all other ANE cosmology is rooted in an ancient narcissism, the ancient Hebrew worldview remains compatible with modern scientific exploration as neither accepts human experience as the perfect analog of reality. As the physicist Max Planck observed, science is able to “at the very outset of its activities reach out beyond the knowledge given us by this immediate source and make, as it were, a jump into the metaphysical sphere” such that “every individual science sets about its task by the explicit renunciation of the egocentric and anthropocentric standpoint.”

The ancient Hebrew cosmology outlined herein forms an irenic peace between science and religion. To that end, the DWP outlined in chapter three offered the following interpretive paradigm: (1) Hebrew cosmology is concerned with functional, material and temporal origins and consequently has value for the ongoing dialogue between science and religion, (2) Hebrew cosmology relies on the language of concordism and accepts the validity of a literal hermeneutic and (3) Hebrew cosmology is teleology and, in some cases, may speak to scientific methodology.

Additionally, this thesis provided support for a reasoned alternative to philosophical naturalism which interprets the Hebrew cosmological narrative, within the context of Genesis’ historical narrative, as genuine history. The use of phenomenological language and lack of scientific precision compared to 21st century science does not make ancient Hebrew cosmology unscientific. Science answers different questions than Hebrew cosmology, but this does not make them incomparable. YHWH used the

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2 Planck, *Where is Science Going?*, 136–137.
common things observed by the ancient Hebrews to reveal the scientific truth of Creation. To bolster this argument, examples were provided from both Young and Old Earth creation scientists demonstrating compatibility between the creation story of Genesis and 21st century scientific theory. Ultimately, this brief analysis of select areas from the Tanak clearly establishes both the uniqueness of Hebrew cosmology among all other ANE accounts and the value for modern scientific exploration.

In the final analysis, the irenic biblical hermeneutic of Genesis offered in this thesis allows for the possibility that science can work alongside theology to refine the understanding of the Tanak without fear of diminishing the authority of God’s revelation. Hebrew cosmology, as understood within the DWP, recognizes that science and Hebrew cosmology cover overlapping domains and share common ground in their presuppositions, methods, and concepts. Using Hebrew cosmology as a starting point for scientific study is not a guarantee of harmony but allows for the possibility of ongoing dialogue that can advance both the understanding of Genesis and science. When there is discontinuity, there should not be an immediate assumption that the Bible is in error and the science is infallible.

The Need for Further Study

The Divergent Worldview Paradigm (DWP) explored in this thesis holds that the essential properties of Hebrew cosmology are: transcendent personal monotheism, creation ex nihilo, cosmological contingency, ethics as a form of religious worship, and the recognized significance of historical progress. These essential properties make Hebrew cosmology distinct from all other ANE mythologies. However, with the rise of the UWP the unique role of ethics as a form of religious worship and its significance
within the context of historical progress has been compromised. Specifically, the belief in a literal-historical Adam and Eve as a unique creation of YHWH has come into question.

The moral framework for ANE theogony was anthropomorphic making human dignity a man-made fiction and quite distinct from the moral framework of Hebrew cosmology. Ethics for the ANE was rooted in a panentheistic cycle of death and rebirth, where humans were merely an accidental property of theogony and consequently rejects any transcendent value in human life. As modern scholars embrace a scientism compatible with the ANE cosmology, Western civilization has lost the foundation for respecting the dignity and value of human beings. Ramm is quite clear in his assertion that it is impossible to assert a biblical ethic apart from recognizing God as the creator of the natural world, and therefore, the Bible and science are a necessary part of the Christian apologetic.³

With the loss of the distinctive Judeo/Christian teaching of a historical Adam and Eve, the main line of argument for respecting the inherent dignity of humanity has been conceded. Nicholas P. Miller observes that a “fully secularized notions of dignity, devoid of metaphysical content or connection, have come to dominate general thinking in legal and political circles” leaving the world to argue for human dignity without any transcendent foundation.⁴ Riley and Box attempt to reestablish a normative foundation based on the three fields of law, morality and politics, but recognize the transient nature of such an endeavor.⁵

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³ Ramm, Christian View, 26, 29.
In 1952, Niebuhr predicted this very challenge writing that, “despite the constant emphasis upon the ‘dignity of man’ in our own liberal culture, its predominate naturalistic bias frequently results in views of human nature in which the dignity of man is not clear.” Given this problem, a promising area for future study is the development of an argument for the inherent worth of each person, independent of the historical Adam and Eve. This line of argument does not in any way concede the importance of contending for the historical nature of Genesis 1, but rather provides a means of developing a new line of argument—acceptable to a broader range of scholars—founded upon the concept that humans are contingent beings whose ontological value comes from the Hebrew God who created ex nihilo and is revealed in Genesis 1.


APPENDIX A: THE AKKADIAN MYTH OF CREATION

As Babylon rose to power in the middle of the Old Babylonian period, the city god Marduk also rose in prominence. As Babylon was raised to the status of the world’s leading city, Marduk was raised to the status of creator god. This story, also known as Enuma Elish, was usually read on the fourth day of the new year’s festival of Akitû as a celebration of creation and reinforced Marduk and his city of Babylon as the primary force of the day. It ends with a recitation of his fifty cult titles, and is a mixture of theogony, cosmogony and hymn.¹

This epic details the birth of the gods, the battle between Marduk and Tiamat, and the creation of man in a god-ordered universe. The story is prototypical theogony detailing the genesis of the gods and the cosmos. The universe is the stage upon which the gods are the act and cause all things to come into being. The gods are seen to be the very reality of the world and the essential elements and forces of the world. In this story, for example, Apsu and Tiamat are representative of two great seas, Mummu is some form of water such as clouds, mist or ice, Ea is the earth, and Anu is the sky. Through great battles and intrigue the god’s establish their rule and power which corresponds in the Akkadian mind to their experience of the changing of the seasons and the mysteries of nature itself. The rising and the setting of the sun marks the daily battle between these

two great gods. The crashing of the waves upon the shore is the battle between the sea and the land. Marduk sets himself above the other gods by killing Tiamat, splitting her body in two and creating the waters and the sky. This story is focused upon the immanence of the gods in relationship to man. The gods create the seasons and change the course of daily life in the midst of their fury and destruction.
APPENDIX B: THE EGYPTIAN MYTH OF CREATION

Traditionally each region of Egypt had its own god considered to be the ‘creator’ or the god who instituted that city or region. Scholars have noted four main competing cosmological myths representing the rival sanctuaries of Heliopolis, Hermopolis, Thebes, and Memphis. A full summary of each tradition is beyond the scope of this work, but Gordon H. Johnston provides an excellent summary of common elements to each of these myths.

Each version followed the basic storyline: (1) the original undifferentiated monad evolved into primeval waters (Nun); (2) out of these waters (Nun) emerged Atum, the demiurge creator-god, who was generated/self-generated in the waters; (3) his generation in the waters was manifested by a sudden appearance of supernatural light; (4) at the dawn of time Atum the creator-god appeared on the primordial hill when the waters receded; (5) Atum generated the Ennead, manifest in the creation of the material world; (6) the apex of this theogony/cosmogony was the generation of Rê/Rê-Amun and corresponding creation of the sun as his divine image, whose birth was represented by the first sunrise; (7) the daily recurrence of the sunrise and sunset represents a continual process of a one-day creation mythology; (8) the creation of humanity was an accidental event—humanity sprang from the ground from the weeping (alternately tears of sorrow or joy) of the creator-god; (9) at the end of the one-day creative activity, the creator-god rested in satisfaction, not weariness; and (10) the creation cycle is completed by the mythical physical birth of pharaoh as the firstborn of Rê/Rê-Amun as the ruler of the terrestrial realm corresponding to the sun god’s role as ruler of the celestial realm.¹

A complete analysis of each myth is beyond the scope of this appendix, but by way of introduction to the reader unfamiliar with Egyptian mythology, following is a summary of just one of these rival myths for the city of Memphis.² During the First

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¹ Johnston, “Genesis 1,” 182.
² Pritchard, ANE vol. I, 1–2.
Dynasty (c. 3150–c. 2890 BC), the capitol of Egypt was established in Memphis, making it necessary to account for its centrality and importance above the other cities. Memphis was considered the place where the Upper and Lower lands of Egypt were joined as one, and as such Ptah, the god of Memphis, became the Primary creator god of all other gods.

Creation in this myth is treated in a very intellectual and matter of fact nature. Ptah, the city god of Memphis, is simply asserted to be the ultimate creator of all the gods, the creatures, the cities, and the men who dwelt therein. By his “thought” and “speech,” Ptah is asserted to be the creator of the creator god Atum, giving him authority above all other gods. The reader is then told that Ptah even created the gods Horus and Thoth—the gods who are commonly associated with the organs of the heart and the tongue. The heart in the Egyptian mind is the source of thought and the tongue is the figure of human speech and power. The political purpose for establishing Ptah as the ultimate creator of the heart and tongue is that in doing so it bonds all creatures who have these two organs, men and animals alike, to Ptah is the source of their life. With this foundation established, no person could question the centrality of Memphis or its power to rule Egypt. To deny Memphis would be to deny the rule of Ptah and his creation of all things.

The most striking element to this story is its transcendent approach to the gods and creation. The gods act upon one another with little mention of man or the universe. This is not to say that the Egyptians did not make these associations, but it is interesting to note that they are not made in this particular segment of the story. Creation establishes power and authority, the city who worships the most powerful god and can claim that god
as their patron deity has the most authority and power. Ptah’s creative power is in his ability to speak his desires into reality—his heart desires and his tongue creates.
APPENDIX C: AKKADIAN AND EGYPTIAN COSMOLOGIES COMPARED

Both the Egyptian and the Akkadian creation accounts derive from a similar background and purpose. They both attempt to establish a particular city as the capitol of a region by enthroning their god at the head of the pantheon of other city gods. There is a tremendous contrast in the styles presented in these two stories. The Egyptian myth is closest to the biblical account in emphasizing the creative word of god. There is no divine competition for the leadership; Ptah by sheer creative will establishes his authority over the pantheon. Marduk must contend for his position as head of the divine beings. His ability to create by a word is mentioned only as a minor ability; the real power lies in his ability to persuade and manipulate the other gods to his side of the battle.

Another outstanding difference between these two stories is the Akkadian emphasis upon the gods’ impact upon the seasons and consequently the daily lives of the people. The Egyptian god Ptah is more removed and reverenced for his creative power; whereas Marduk is reverenced not only for his initial creative work, but his continuing work and rule over the seasons. Most interesting is that while these two cultures share in their purpose for telling these stories, their method is extremely diverse. Both stories desire to establish political power for a particular city over a region or country by the manipulation of the pantheon. Ptah and Marduk in their respective cities become the key gods to create and rule over all other lesser cities and gods.

There is also something to be said in regard to these two stories and their relationship to the biblical account. The Genesis story is most similar to the Egyptian
story in its emphasis upon the creative word and power of thought and most unlike the Akkadian myth because it lacks creation through divine war. The politics of creation which plays such a prevalent role in the Akkadian and Egyptian stories seems remarkably absent in the Genesis account. Although one might argue that the nation of Israel used this account to establish their authority among the nations, the lack of the theogony and the flat denial of any other true god seems to remove the Genesis story from the fray of political intent.
APPENDIX D: KARL BARTH’S UNIQUE PARADIGM

The focus of this thesis is the advancement of the Divergent Worldview Paradigm as a viable alternative to the Unified Worldview Paradigm which dominates much of contemporary scholarship. These two paradigms, it must be acknowledged, are certainly not exhaustive of every possible paradigm. Karl Barth, one of the most influential theologians of the 20th century, holds a view that does not fit easily within either the Unified or Divergent Worldview Paradigms. There are certainly parts of Barth’s writings that appear to support Walton’s concept of a shared cognitive environment. The writers of the Bible, Barth writes, did not possess a unique view of the world:

Each in his own way and degree, they shared the culture of their age and environment, whose form and content could be contested by other ages and environments, and at certain points can still appear debatable to us. *Quod potuit homo dixit* (Man has said what he could). This means that we cannot overlook or deny it or even alter it. In the biblical view of the world and man we are constantly coming up against presuppositions which are not ours, and statements and judgments which we cannot accept.¹

The modern reader of the Bible, he contends, will find the authors, “echoing contemporaries in time and space who did not share their experience and witness, often resembling them so closely that it is impossible to distinguish between.”² The authors of the Bible, while uniquely Jewish, were still shaped by the culture that surrounded them.³

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² Ibid., 509.

³ Ibid., 510. Or in Barth’s words, “*homo Judaeus.*"
The ancient cultures that shaped the Bible, Barth argues, do not represent all cultures, or even an ideal culture; and, therefore, cannot speak to every culture as purveyors of truth on all subjects. The biblical writers did not make the distinction between saga, legend, myth and history in the way people do today. The biblical writers offer presuppositions and consequent judgements that those in the modern age do not share. In reviewing his writings in *Church Dogmatics*, there is some kinship between Barth’s statement above and the UWP; however, his definitions of key concepts is unique enough that they must not be conflated with either the Unified or Divergent Worldview Paradigms.

One example of Barth’s idiosyncratic paradigm is his definition of myth as a form of human speculation concealed behind a narrative for the purpose of presenting a reoccurring principle grounded in some historic singularity. There is no way, Barth argues, to prevent some scholars from finding myth in the Bible. However, he is concerned that such conclusions reflect the efforts of the scholar to read into the text the bias of his or her own age:

It is really quite natural that an age whose thought, feeling and action are so highly mythical as the so-called modern period that culminates in the Enlightenment (including Idealism and Romanticism) should seek myth in the Bible too—and find it... For the person who does not ask about revelation there is nothing left, of course, but to ask about myth... We can only declare that the interpretation of the Bible as the witness to revelation and the interpretation of the Bible as the witness to myth are mutually exclusive.

Barth rather prefers the term saga over myth which, for him, allows the acceptance of the general historicity of the Bible without currupting his view of

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5 Ibid., 328–329.
revelation. Here too is another of Barth’s unique definitions. For Barth, the Bible is not itsesielt a revelation, but merely a witness to God’s revelation. Thus the revelation of the Bible is not itself a universal truth, but a culturally conditioned truth that must be compared to the revelation of God in other times and cultures that must then in turn be evaluated based on their own unique circumstances.6 His concept of revelation, like myth, falls outside of what is discussed by the scholars surveyed in this thesis.

For Barth, to say the Bible is myth is to reject the Bible as witness to men at a particular time and place in history and instead makes a claim to reveal some timeless non-spacial truth about God that stands behind the story. The Bible as saga, he counters, is a proper claim that the Bible is a witness to a revelation about God to men rooted in a special historical event (bound in time and space) but which “cannot be historiographically expressed.”7 Although brief, this excursus on Barth should serve to illustrate the importance of not forcing all scholars into the paradigms advanced in this thesis: the Unified Worldview Paradigm and the Divergent Worldview Paradigm.

6 Barth, Doctrine of the Word of God, Part 1, 329.

7 This unique phrasing is from the summary in the editor’s preface and not a direct quote from Barth. See Karl Barth, Church Dogmatics: The Doctrine of Creation, Part 1, ed. G. W. Bromley and T. F. Torrance, trans. J. W. Edwards et al., Vol. 3 (London: T&T Clark, 2007), viii.
APPENDIX E: DEFINITIONS

**Accidental Property**: A property defined in the formal study of analytic metaphysics such that if a thing loses that property, then that thing will maintain its existence. In other terms, any property unnecessary to the existence of a thing.

**Ancient Near East (ANE)**: The ANE is a term used to describe the numerous civilizations spanning the 4th millennia BC through the Bronze and Iron ages into the 4th century BC when the Persians fell to Alexander the Great. The ANE covered the land mass occupied by the modern countries of Kuwait, Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Israel, Palestine, Iran, Turkey and Egypt.

**Contingency**: Broadly speaking, contingency refers to unnecessary thing that could not exist on its own and is reliant on an external thing for its existence. Within the scope of this thesis, contingency is the philosophical corollary of *creatio ex nihilo* and an essential quality of Hebrew cosmology that recognizes YHWH—the eternally necessary non-created being—as the causal force of the material word that could not otherwise exist outside of his creative will.

**Cosmogony or Cosmology**: A system of thought that attempts to explain the origins of the universe in scientific, philosophical, and/or theological terms.

**Creatio Continua**: Latin phrase referring to a belief in God’s continued work in sustaining His original creation.
**Creatio Ex Materia:** Latin phrase meaning creation from matter.

**Creatio Ex Nihilo:** Latin phrase meaning creation from nothing.

**Culture:** The attempt by the population within a localized setting (marketplace) who engage the world together to provide an internally coherent set of answers to the shared experiences of life and to manage conflict through social control.

**Dialogue Model:** The view accepted by the DWP that science and religion cover overlapping domains sharing common ground in their presuppositions, methods, and concepts.

**Divergent Worldview Paradigm (DWP):** Contends that the essential properties of Hebrew cosmology (e.g. transcendent personal monotheism, creation *ex nihilo*, cosmological contingency, ethics as a form of religious worship, the sacredness of human life, and the recognized significance of historical progress) are distinct from ANE mythologies and similar only in its accidental properties and aligns with the Dialogue Model of science and religion.

**Essential Property:** A property defined in the formal study of analytic metaphysics such that if a thing loses it, then that thing will cease to exist.

**General Revelation:** The evidence of God’s existence, power and moral qualities available to all mankind in every generation from observation of the natural world.

**History:** A story used to record the chronological progress where both events and people are essential properties used to advance accidental symbolic ideology and rooted
in the epistemological presupposition that human experience is understood primarily through the metaphysical and secondarily through the natural.

**Independence Model:** The view accepted by the UWP that science and religion cover distinct domains using understandably idiosyncratic methodologies or by focusing on distinctive objects, such that the truth of one must exclude the truth of the other.

**Myth:** A story used by a culture that answers the questions of being where events and people become accidental properties used to advance essential symbolic ideology and rooted in the epistemological presupposition that human experience is the analog for the metaphysical.

**Paradigm:** A paradigm functions inside one’s worldview providing a field-specific framework for epistemological inquiry—determining what counts as knowledge and how it should be applied to other fields of inquiry.

**Science:** The term used in the modern sense to denote the human pursuit of knowledge about the workings of the natural world that is justified by empirically falsifiable/verifiable theory construction, sense experience and the collective judgement of peer-reviewed researchers.

**Revelation:** Revelation entails both God’s special revelation of himself through the Tanak and God’s general revelation of himself in nature, which together have epistemological virtue for understanding the transcendent reality of God and immanent reality of creation.
**Special Revelation**: A record of God’s relationship with his creation recorded in the Tanak, given by God through direction inspiration of human writers, which gives both evidence that advances human knowledge about general revelation and unique insight into His purposes.

**Sui Generis**: Latin phrase meaning unique or original.

**Tanak (Christian Old Testament)**: The most common term used in the Talmud and Midrash, and possibly modern Judaism encompassing the תַּרְוָה (Tôra, Law), נֵבֶיִם (Nêbî’îm, Prophets), and קֵצְורים (Kêtûbîm, Writings).

**Theogony**: An essential property of ANE panentheism depicting the birth of the gods whose being is indistinguishable from the natural elements.

**Theomachy**: An essential property of ANE cosmogony depicting a battle between the pantheon of gods and used by kings to establish political authority.

**Unified Worldview Paradigm (UWP)**: Contends that the essential properties of Hebrew cosmology are the product of the shared cognitive environment (SCE) of the ANE which used symbolism as the primary hermeneutic to convey important religious realities over physical realities and aligns with the Independence Model of science and religion.

**Worldview**: A worldview is the penultimate manifestation of philosophical inquiry which provides an overarching lens through which one incorporates all metaphysical suppositions about reality, determines the paradigm for epistemological inquiry, and guides the cultural expression for ethical priorities and moral decision making.
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