

A Generic Response to William Lane Craig Concerning Genre and Genealogies in Genesis

Donald C. “Mac” McIntyre, PhD Student in OT at Baptist Bible Seminary, 3549 Springfield Drive, Charleston WV, 25306

Abstract

William Lane Craig's recent work *In Quest of the Historical Adam* (2021) makes claims concerning the age of the earth, the evolution of man, and the text of the primeval history which he classifies as mytho-history. This classification of the primeval history's genre as mytho-history is problematic. Such a conclusion betrays a reader response hermeneutic consequent of Craig's presuppositions concerning recent scientific hypotheses. This article will seek to show that the proper genre of Genesis 2:4ff is historical narrative and not mytho-history. If the article is successful, then the reader will be left to decide whether to accept the historical narrative as factual or to reject its factuality, rendering the Bible as errant. This is the only hermeneutically valid option if authorial intention and original audience response to the text is maintained as the locus of meaning which the historical-grammatical method of exegesis has long demanded.

Keywords: Historical Adam, *In Quest of the Historical Adam*, William Lane Craig, mytho-history, primeval history, Genesis 2

Introduction

Theology is derived from sound exegetical work in the biblical text and the careful integration of relevant extrabiblical data (Erickson 2013, 57). Failure in exegesis can result in false theological statements (Erickson 2013, 57). Erickson argues that theology consists of various types of theological statements with varying degrees of biblical authority (Erickson 2013, 65). The highest level of authority is to be awarded to “direct statements of Scripture” (Erickson 2013, 65). However post-enlightenment philosophies have drastically affected the interpretation of Scripture through advancing alternative worldviews that seem to deny the direct statements of Scripture (Woodbridge and James 2013, 526–561). Perhaps nowhere in the Bible has been affected by this phenomenon more than the Pentateuch through Charles Darwin's influence on men like Julius Welhausen, Gerhard Von Rad, and Martin Noth (Wolf 2007, Loc.1409–1525). Though the documentary hypothesis has lost favor in recent years through canonical criticism, archaeological data, and critical assessments of the movement's presuppositions, Darwin's influence on Pentateuchal studies continues to affect Pentateuchal studies in the area of the book of Genesis and creation (Wolf 2007, Loc.1665). William Lane Craig's recent *In Quest of the Historical Adam* (2021) has attempted to offer an evolutionary model whereby he asserts that Adam was a historical figure but was the result of evolution (366). Though Craig's work is multi-faceted, offering scientific, archaeological, and exegetical justifications for his conclusion, the genesis of his fallacious conclusion is found in his appraisal

of Genesis as mytho-history (2021, 221–226). This article will seek to show that the account of Genesis 2:4–4:26 is best classified as historical narrative, and therefore should be viewed as an accurate depiction of the creation of mankind from the dust of the ground as seen in Genesis 2:7.

The Necessity of Proper Genre Identification

“The Bible speaks in highly diverse literary genres that play upon our hearts and minds in a great variety of speech acts” (Carson 2000, 101). The proper identification of genre is so pivotal to exegesis that Tremper Longman III states, “Genre may well be the literary concept most important to the interpretive task. Genres are classes of texts grouped according to similarities in structure, content, mood, or setting” (Longman 1997, 19). The ability to identify the genre correctly allows the interpreter to perceive the rules by which he will play his part in the game of interpretation (Vanhoozer 1998, 337–339). In fact, Vanhoozer would go so far as to say that one must achieve some level of generic competence to understand a text properly and that this idea constructs a type of “covenant of discourse” whereby the “readers implicitly accept the validity conditions of understanding when they begin to read. Meaning and understanding involve generic ‘agreements’ between author and reader” (Vanhoozer 1998, 343). It is exactly at this point which Craig has erred.

Craig concludes that “the many striking family resemblances between Gen 1–11 and ANE myths lead one to think of the primeval history as comprising Hebrew myths” (Craig 2021, 226). This allows Craig some level of exegetical freedom to

arrive at his conclusions concerning the nature of the historical Adam. The rest of this study will seek to evaluate the tenability of Craig's mytho-historical genre classification of the primeval history, which will prove inadequate. Following the evaluation of a mytho-history as a genre, a second evaluation will show that the text of Genesis 2:4ff in particular is best classified as historiography resulting in the historicity of Adam's creation directly from the ground through direct agency of God.

The Insufficiency of Mytho-Historic Literature as a Genre Classification for Genesis 2

Definition

Craig gives no clear definition for mytho-history, instead offering block quotes and a prolonged description dependent on folklorists. A working definition for mytho-history must be constructed from his discussion. In this case, mytho-history would be a composition of Hebrew myths whose "primary purpose is to ground realities present to the...author...and important for...society in the primordial past...[evincing] a historical interest on the author's part in persons who once lived and wrought" (Craig 2021, 226).

Identification

The identification of mytho-history requires the assessment of mythical and historical elements within a narrative. Craig provides a succinct list of the characterizations of myths on page 76, provided in table 1.

Craig identifies the author's "arranging causally connected events in chronological order" as "sufficient for a genuine historical interest" (Craig 2021, 221). How Craig delineates between historical and mythical elements seems to be completely subjective whereby only the existence of named human characters are considered historically accurate in the primeval history, while the narrative surrounding those characters, whether their method creation, stated age, or depicted actions and habits, are mythological

(Craig 2021, 135–159). This genre assessment must now be evaluated.

Response

A response to Craig's mytho-history genre classification must be comprehensive, exposing the faulty criteria given for identifying myths. The first statement that myths are narratives, whether oral or literary, and the second criteria that myths are traditional stories handed down from generation to generation could just as easily be applied to any piece of ancient historiography (Craig 2021, 76). Sparks notes that historical writing in the Ancient Near East (ANE) consisted typically of chronicles (lists of events), and annals (narrative accounts of events) (Sparks 2005, 363). Similarly, Halpern notes that narrative history was the "genre most common before the advent of academic journals, and the genre most prized even today" but warns that narrative history "loses all meaning in the hands of a reader unable to discern what is fictitious and what is factitious" (Halpern 1996, 11). Narrative is a valid, and perhaps even optimal, genre for historiography. Bright notes that much of the literary material, including the traditional (that is, historical), was handed down orally in the ancient world, and that this phenomenon continues "in more recent times, in societies where writing materials are scarce and the rate of illiteracy high" (Bright 2000, Loc.2181). Again, the handing down of material is not the sole propriety of myth.

The third criterion for Craig's identification of myths is their sacred status in society (Craig 2021, 76). However, there was no distinction between the sacred and secular in the ANE worldview rendering this assessment criterion inadequate (Long 1997, 91). Historiography in the Israelite worldview necessitated that its history be considered sacred. Historiography is "inescapably biased" regardless of the author's objective goals, since the historian "interprets his sources through the lenses of his own training, experiences, presuppositions, and

Table 1. Characterizations of myth.

1.	Myths are narratives, whether oral or literary.
2.	Myths are traditional stories handed down from generation to generation.
3.	Myths are sacred for the society that embraces them.
4.	Myths are objects of belief by members of the society that embraces them.
5.	Myths are set in a primeval age or another realm.
6.	Myths are stories in which deities are important characters.
7.	Myths seek to anchor present realities such as the world, mankind, natural phenomena, cultural practices, and the prevailing cult in a primordial time.
8.	Myths are associated with rituals.
9.	Myths express correspondences between the deities and nature.
10.	Myths exhibit fantastic elements and are not troubled by logical contradiction or incoherence.

prejudices” (Merrill 1997, 70). The history of Israel revolves around experiences in salvation history in which God broke into history and delivered the people great promises and salvation from grave dangers. Eichrodt asserts that, “the fundamental character of the Old Testament (OT) revelation of God is here made unmistakably clear. For on one point all the various expressions of the hope of salvation are agreed, that they make a *real entry of God into history* the centre of their belief” (Eichrodt 1961, Loc. 11262–11263). For the Israelite, history was sacred because it was within the confines of history that the Sacred One acted on their behalf.

The idea that myths served as objects of belief by society (Craig 2021, 76) would likewise be true, and indeed more so, for any piece of historiography. Historiography has always been written with the goal of being believed. Those works which stand the test of time are those which are most successful in that persuasive endeavor. Sparks notes this persuasive goal stating that “there can be little doubt that history writers—both ancient and modern—hope to persuade readers to share their viewpoint” (Sparks 2005, 362). Thus, Flores can state that “History destined to become our own appears first as informative content and as an expression of ideas about the past, but when becoming a part of the reader, these ideas, this information, cease to be conceived as alien to him or herself and become their own beliefs and opinions” (Flores 2017, 516).

The idea that a myth occurs in primeval history or another realm (Craig 2021, 76), criterion five, is problematic. Primeval descriptions do not disqualify historicity, and any doubt to the historicity of primeval descriptions of history would denote a hermeneutic of suspicion. Since Craig has claimed that through “our increased knowledge of the world, we now see that certain elements in the narrative, if taken literally are palpably false” (2021, 139), his natural predisposition against the historicity of the primeval history is clear from the outset. The question of how he came to this conclusion must be found through his argumentation, which is highly dependent upon higher criticism. The higher critics whom Craig is dependent upon often charge the Pentateuchal author with ulterior motives based on their own presuppositions (2021, 83–87; for an evaluation of these critics, see Woodbridge and James 2013, 526–561; regarding presuppositions see Clines 1997, 9–18). It is at this point that one begins to sense that a classification of mytho-history is an anachronistic value judgement by an interpreter who assumes authority over a text.

The fifth criterion evinces a fallacious predisposition whereby history cannot include anything lacking external documentation for verification (Kaiser and Wegner 2016, 15). Because

the events portrayed in Genesis 1–2 occur before the advent of mankind (six-day Creation), and all the events of the primeval history may have occurred before the advent of writing (the date of writing’s origination is still widely debated), some are predisposed to skepticism regarding the authenticity of the traditions which birthed those accounts. Such skepticism lacks supporting evidence itself, since “We were not there when the world began, whether we are scientists, historians, or biblical scholars. This leaves us with unproven theories of beliefs—unproven in that they are not scientifically verifiable to everyone’s satisfaction” (Averbeck 1994, 101). The skepticism which leads to the primeval history being judged mythologically, as opposed to historically, has drastic implications on the role of God in revelation and inspiration during the inscripturation process (Oswalt 2009, 194). In many instances, however, the facts are such as to be known only to God and to be communicated only by revelation (Merrill 1997, 70).

The sixth criterion, where a deity is a primary character (Craig 2021, 76), is problematic. It portrays an anti-supernaturalistic worldview not expected of a Christian interpreter. Craig, as a classical apologist clearly believes in the existence of God, and particularly the Christian God (Craig et al. 2010, 25–54). Craig has defended the historicity of the resurrection, as well as the historical reliability of the New Testament (Craig 2008, 333–400). Craig should be predisposed towards reading historiographic narratives with the deity as a main character since his career in apologetics has revolved around that exact claim. *Mutatis mutandis*; if the main character in the New Testament is deity, then one could reasonably expect that on occasion, a primary character of the Old Testament would likewise be deity. However, it must be stated that “to question the application of the label of ‘historiography’ to certain books or certain descriptions in the Bible because they . . . allow for miracles and divine intervention is to overlook the intention of the authors to write history from their own standpoint and in accordance with their world-view” (Amit 1999, 13). Like other ancient historiographies, the Israelite historiography by nature of worldview must include “the intervention of supernatural powers in human affairs” (Yamauchi 1994, 3). Most ANE literary remains which are deemed as historiographical narrative include some reference to their respective localized deities (for example, the Mesha Inscription, the Behistun Stone, and Herodotus); *mutatis mutandis*, if other ancient historiographies appealed to deities yet remain viewed as historiographic, so too may Israel’s literature. The cavalier dismissal of the Old Testament narratives for the representation of the deity is thus fallacious (Kaiser and Wegner 2016, 14).

The seventh criterion of myths, serving to anchor present realities (world, man, natural phenomena, cult) in the primordial time (Craig 2021, 76) is guilty of circular reasoning. This assertion assumes that the narrative in purview is the consequence of the contemporary reality with a rhetorical purpose of justifying the present state of the author before his audience. This is problematic because the author implies through his writing, via the historical genre's nature of causality, that the narrated event was the cause of the contemporary practice. If the text is approached charitably, the author's contemporary practice could equally be explained as originating from those narrated events historicity as historiography claims to do.

The eighth criterion, that "Myths are associated with rituals," (Craig 2021, 76) is equally true for historiography. Legitimate and verifiable historical events are frequently associated with rituals, whether civil or religious. The Fourth of July in America has a ritual celebration of fireworks grounded in the reality of America's signing of the Declaration of Independence. Those fireworks commenced shortly after the signing of that document, and well within memory (De Bolla 2008, xxxi–xxxii). This shows the creation of a ritual celebration that commemorated a historically verifiable event by a community with access to sufficient evidence of that event's historicity. Similarly, the Bible demands just such rituals. Amit points out that "The role of history in biblical literature is not limited to historical descriptions and contexts; it is also explicit in the injunction to recall and repeat the events of the past in connection with various rites and objects" (Amit 1999, 18). Again, Craig's interpretative method is questionable. Craig has argued persuasively, and incessantly, for the historicity of the resurrection. The historical event of the resurrection resulted in a ritual celebration through the advent of the Sunday worship gathering in the New Testament in the immediate aftermath of that event. One must begin to wonder why Craig is so quick to defend the resurrection, but not to apply the same belief in the antecedent theology which the resurrection is based upon. It seems that Craig has awarded differing levels of inspiration and authority to the resurrection event and perhaps the New Testament than he has granted to the Old Testament accounts of Genesis.

The ninth criterion for myths is that "Myths express correspondences between the deities and nature" (Craig 2021, 76). This criterion again presupposes an anti-supernaturalistic worldview and can be judged as fallacious. A creative deity would undoubtedly leave a correspondence between himself and his creation in some way. The law of analogy, as formulated by Geisler, satisfactorily explains this:

"An effect is similar to its efficient cause" (Geisler 2013, 16). Historiography likewise deals with correspondences through its frequent depictions of cause-and-effect relationships. Sparks concludes that "the historian's presentation must assume some rationale of historical causation" (Sparks 2005, 362). If God exists and creates, given for the sake of the argument in Craig's case, then it is logical to assume through the principle of analogy that there would be a correspondence between God and nature, and that a description of these correspondences is consistent with historiography.

The last characteristic of myths is the most troubling, and the crux of the evangelical's problem with Craig regarding his Historical Adam. The tenth criterion states that "Myths exhibit fantastic elements and are not troubled by logical contradiction or incoherence" (Craig 2021, 76). This assertion betrays Craig's skepticism towards the primeval history. Though these characteristics were derived from other literary analysts, those analysts were describing literature which they did not believe to be an accurate depiction of history and therefore classified those narratives as myths (Craig 2021, 68). The assessment of myths exhibiting "fantastic elements" is an anachronistic value judgement imposed upon the text by a reader. Craig exhibits both aspects, freely stating that "in light of our increased knowledge of the world, we now see that certain elements in the narrative, if taken literally are palpably false" (2021, 139). Here Craig confesses that this assessment was not shared by the original audience (2021, 68), but is the result of "our" (that is, the contemporary reader's) increased knowledge, and then scathingly attacks the truthfulness of a narrative account by calling it "palpably false," (2021, 139), which is a value judgement.

This judgement was not shared by the audience, nor can it be assumed as the intended effect of the author even if the genre of myth would be granted. Myths were written to be believed; and they were accepted as history by the audience (Craig 2021, 68). "History in sum is subject to falsification, to argument as to the accuracy of its particulars and the assessment of their interrelations" (Halpern 1996, 10). When these historical narratives are challenged and found to be false, then and only then, can these historical narratives be reclassified as a myth. As such, the literary classification of a myth is always an anachronistic judgement which requires the historical debunking of a narrative. For an evangelical this is troubling. All of the criteria by which Craig has classified the primeval history as a myth are either shared by historiography, or fallacious, with the exception of the last criterion. The last criterion is the only true

distinction between historiography and myth. The question becomes whether the primeval histories can in fact be said to exhibit “fantastic elements and inconsistencies.”

If this final criterion is defeated then one could dismiss all preceding criteria, as regards Genesis 2:4ff and classifying that section of text as historiography. The classification of Genesis 2:4ff as historiography has drastic ramifications for Craig’s thesis. Though the fantastic elements and inconsistencies which Craig lists are all worthy of discussion, they have been rebutted previous to Craig’s work elsewhere. Believing in the inerrancy and infallibility of Scripture, this article will instead challenge Craig’s genre classification of Genesis 2:4ff as mytho-history. The assessment of fantastic elements (that is, false assertions) necessary for a mythological classification is an anachronistic value statement which is the result of a reader’s response. It requires the reader to evaluate the reading and classify it as false in light of contemporary experiences. As seen in Figure 2.1 of Craig’s work, (2021, 68) the myth was believed as fact by the original audience. Craig notes that the audience believed these stories but claims that the modern reader has “increased knowledge of the world” which allows him to pass judgement upon the work’s historicity. This is hermeneutically fallacious for multiple reasons.

Hermeneutical Problems Regarding Craig’s Assessment of the Primeval History

Craig’s assessment of the text is admittedly outside of the goal of the author and admittedly different than the understanding of the audience, if a myth was to be believed as fact concerning a remote time in an earlier world concerning the sacred activity of non-humans (2021, 68). Craig’s hermeneutic lies outside of the principles of the historical-grammatical method of interpretation in three ways.

Avoids Authorial Intention

The goal of exegesis is “the process of leading out from a text its original meaning” (Blomberg and Foutz Markley 2010, Loc.94). There is an ongoing debate about the meaning of meaning. Hirsh has argued that communication requires a determinate verbal meaning, and this determinate verbal meaning necessitates a determining will (Hirsch 1979, 46). He then defines verbal meaning “as a willed type which an author expresses by linguistic symbols which can be understood by another through those symbols” (Hirsch 1979, 49). The will of the author, if a myth in the classical sense as Craig describes, was to be believed. What Craig has done was well outside of the original meaning of the text of the primeval history. Nowhere in the biblical text could evolution be

implied. Craig’s attempt to justify his assessment as biblically valid through a reclassification of genres is a hermeneutical misstep. Walter C. Kaiser notes that “the meaning of any given word (and therefore its text and context) will be discretely contained in a single intention of the author” (Kaiser 1981, Loc.1546). Even if Craig was successful at reclassifying large parts of the primeval history as a myth, he is still brazenly refusing to submit to the authority of the biblical text according to the authorial intention. Throughout Scripture, God asserts his divine co-authorship through inspiration, and demands that these words be believed, remembered, and obeyed. Failure to believe, remember, and obey leads to devastation (Sailhamer 1992, 61, 71, 457, 482, etc.). By Craig’s failure to believe the intended meaning of the text he finds himself outside of what VanHoozer describes as the “covenant of discourse” whereby “readers implicitly accept the validity conditions of understanding when they begin to read” (VanHoozer 1998, 346).

The idea of mythology in the Old Testament has rightly been disregarded when understood in its contemporary sense (Oswalt 2009, 29–46). To accept the notion of a divinely inspired false depiction of creation, offered for an ulterior motive, that could not be understood through the communicative act by the original audience, would be inconsistent with the nature of God embraced by evangelicalism (Oswalt 2009, 29–30). Though the case has yet to be proven for historiography, the arguments above show that historiography has not been convincingly disproven by Craig from a literary perspective. Halpern notes that “The antiquarianism of historiography, its traffic in particular truths, demands author-centered interpretation” (Halpern 1996, 11). Regardless of the genre accepted, Craig refuses to submit himself to the author’s intention. He is within his epistemic rights to do so if he qualifies the text as “palpably false” (Craig 2021, 139), however, he is not free to justify this on exegetical grounds through an anachronistic genre reclassification matched by an aversion to authorial intention.

Eschews Audience Reception

The second problem with Craig’s hermeneutical reclassification is that he willingly rejects the audience’s original understanding of the author’s text. Craig freely asserts that “It is uncontroversial that the narratives of Gen 1–11 are sacred for Israelite society” (2021, 88) and a page later that “the stories of Gen 1–11 are to be believed by members of Israelite society” (2021, 89). However, Craig does not share the beliefs of those members of ancient Israelite society. This is poor exegesis. Blomberg and Foutz Markley have noted that “The job of

the responsible exegete, therefore, is to overcome the obstacle of cultural distance by understanding the relevant aspects of the social atmosphere as the authors and the audience of Scripture would have understood them" (2010, 63). If the text has a single meaning, that is authorial intended, with a deliberate effect on a particular audience, then one is bound to honor that meaning as the meaning of the text. Again, Craig is free to disagree, but he is not free to advocate a different meaning.

Misplaces the Locus of Meaning for A Text in the Contemporary Reader

As has been noted, Craig has elevated his own personal convictions above that of the original author and original audience and proffered an interpretation which cannot be accepted as textual. Hirsch notes that a text represents someone's meaning, if not that of the author, then it must be that of the critic (1979, 3). "When critic's deliberately banished the original author, they themselves usurped his place" (Hirsch 1979, 5). If the author meant for something to be believed, and the reader does not believe that text, then the reader must reject the persuasive appeal of that text. This is an evaluation of authorial credibility and not one of textual meaning, and therefore lies outside of exegesis and theology. Craig's work would be more at home within the realm of philosophy and particularly logic. Craig makes known that he cannot consent to the author's desired meaning, which is his right as an interpreter. What is not his right as an interpreter is to reclassify a text as a myth, which had a textually encapsulated meaning adequately expressed by the author with the goal of being believed by the audience. The text of the Pentateuch claims divine inspiration for the human author (Exodus 34:27; Numbers 1:1; Deuteronomy 31:19) and implies inerrancy through that divine inspiration (Erickson 2013, 46). Craig cannot reject those inspired and inerrant truths reflected in the properly exegeted text and still call himself an evangelical by performing interpretive gymnastics through genre reclassification which would have been foreign to the author and audience. To do such is to move the locus of meaning from authorial intention to the audience, allowing for no reliable objective meaning of the text. What remains to be seen is whether or not the text can be classified as another genre which accords with the original author's intention and audience's reception. For brevity's sake, this article will limit itself to Genesis 2:4–4:26, though its principle could be applied to the remainder of the primeval history, since it is in this subsection of Genesis that evolution must be clearly rejected if the genre of historiography can be maintained.

Genesis 2 as Historiography

Definition

Kenton Sparks offers helpful terms for historiography and history writing, "In my nomenclature, *historiography* refers to any text that presents the past on the basis of its author's source inquiry, and the term *history writing* is a still narrower category that includes historiographies that define the significance of past events through an extended, selective, and chronologically sensitive narrative" (Sparks 2005, 362). Spark's intention for drawing this distinction was to provide a difference between those sources he has grouped in his text, some of which were narratives, and others which were comprised of historical documents such as various lists (Sparks 2005, xiii–xiv). This article need not draw such a distinction, since it is seeking to describe the final form of a text based on the Pentateuch's literary unity (Sailhamer 1992, 2). For the purposes of this article, historiography will be defined as a selective narrative which is chronologically arranged attempting to present the past.

Identification

There are many types of narratives, and these narratives can be embedded within other forms necessitating a more nuanced approach to analysis. However, embedded discourse types are still governed by their primary discourse type (Rocine 2000, 119, 306). Since the primary discourse genre being argued for is historiography, which has been defined as "a selective narrative," then criteria for recognizing this type of discourse is necessitated. Rocine describes genre as a discourse type which seeks to perform a generic task and can be characterized by possessing a set of grammatical constructions (2000, 1). Rocine describes historical narrative's task as telling a story about the past (2000, 1). Historical narrative's peculiar grammatical constructions include: the *wayyiqtol* verb form as the mainline verb form (Rocine 2000, 4), the employment of verbless clauses to set scenes (2000, 10), the absence of *qatal* verb forms in clause initial position (2000, 22), the employment of participles for background activities (2000, 58), the presence of direct speech through **אמר** and **דבר** (2000, 62), and the presence of a *qatal* perfect verb form with a fronted element resulting in an independent clause (2000, 23, 75).

Though Rocine's definition is useful syntactically and pragmatically, there can be further qualifications from a rhetorical perspective. Walter C. Kaiser has argued for the historical nature of the primeval history by noting certain literary elements which served as "numerous occasions to inspect the authenticity of the text" like geographical terms, personal and generic names, and cultural items (for

example, precious metals, gem stones, instruments, architectural structures), so that he can conclude, “Every one of the items listed in Genesis 1–11 exposed the Biblical writer to a challenge to his reliability, if one of more of this plethora of data could be found to be misplaced in time or location. But no one has ever demonstrated such anachronistic material in the text” (Kaiser 2014, 14). These assertions cannot be deemed as unnecessary if Halpern is correct in noting that the historian “will avoid gratuitous decorations... whose reconstruction is not demanded by the evidence” (Halpern 1996, 12). The presence of these details must then be deemed as essential to the author’s purpose. Since these elements were seemingly verifiable to the original audience, then it stands to reason that they were presented as evidence for historicity, serving the rhetorical purpose of establishing the credibility of the author among the audience, just as the good use of references still reflects well upon historians.

The inclusion of data which could be challenged by the original audience demands to be employed as an identifying criterion of the historiographical genre. Indeed “The centrality of history in the composition and editing of the biblical complex is reflected not only in the plethora of historical descriptions and references, but also in the careful provision of historical backgrounds, and the sophisticated use of historical frameworks and contexts” (Amit 1999, 16). This is something which Halpern concedes, “If the author... attempts knowingly to perpetrate on the reader a fraudulent reconstruction contradicted or unsupported by evidence, then the author is not engaged in writing history” (Halpern 1996, 8). These qualifications are more stringent than, though not in disagreement with, Amit. Amit states that “We may therefore conclude that to qualify as a historiographic work it is only necessary for the author to be consciously seeking to describe the past” (Amit 1999, 14) and that these elements will be the criterion by which we assess the conscious intention of the author by pragmatic, semantic, and rhetorical constructions, and devices.

Assessment

The Pentateuch is consistently presented as a singular work throughout the biblical witness. As with any piece of composite literature, a unified work will have a primary purpose, and a primary genre, though others may be embedded. The Pentateuch is primarily composed of historiographical material, whether birth accounts, biographies to include travelogues, marriage accounts, war annals, and death accounts, as well as covenant documents/treaties, or lists of various types which are essential to the historiographical task—like law codes and

genealogies. Though one might be inclined to grant these examples in the Pentateuch generally, they are slower to award such veracity to the primeval history.

The primeval history, like the Pentateuch which it is part and parcel of, likewise includes individuals who are portrayed in unflattering ways consistent with round characters who fit the criterion of embarrassment (Craig 2008, 312). Names of individuals, ages at death, marital information, and progeny are provided in some detail inviting the reader to verify these qualifications. Boundaries and landmarks are presented before the deluge, and this is particularly important. The Pentateuchal author has included information which would be unnecessary for a myth through the inclusion of the location of the Garden of Eden. By announcing the boundaries of the Garden of Eden through the naming of the rivers which surrounded it, the author has placed a location on an area which no longer had any significance for the contemporary audience. Eden’s pristine condition was lost through a combination of the curse, the absence of man to cultivate its grounds, and eventually destruction through the Flood. Eden’s boundaries lay outside Canaan, the land promised to the Israelites serving as the goal of the Pentateuchal narrative. The territory found within the Pentateuch’s depicted boundaries of Eden held no continuing significance for the Israelite community—there is no pilgrimage commanded, no shrine sanctioned, no worship depicted, and no exhortation towards eventual possession. The inclusion of these seemingly unnecessary details denotes some sort of rhetorical purpose by inviting the audience to verify the assertion of boundaries somehow. These descriptions have no evident purpose except for offering a point of communal evaluation and validation.

Though examples of clear historiographical intent within the primeval history could be multiplied, there is one piece of historiographical data which seems to be of critical importance to the author of Genesis which Craig clearly disregards: genealogies. If genealogies are indicative of historiography, the sheer preponderance of them in Genesis demands their attention. In fact, Craig implies this assessment by devoting a whole chapter to the task of explaining away their historiographical function (Craig 2001, 200–236). The reason for Craig’s dismissal of genealogies as historiography is obvious—if genealogies are historiography, then Craig’s argument for evolution regarding the historical Adam cannot stand for the evangelical who ascribes to the epistemological conviction of an inerrant Bible when properly interpreted. The rest of this paper will now assess the genre and role of genealogies within the book of Genesis and their implications for Craig’s argument.

Genealogies as Historiography Genealogies and King Lists Are Classified as Historiography

Genealogies and king lists are comprised of historical people, dates, and occasionally vocations and locative markers. As such, they fit Spark's definition of historiography which is "any text that presents the past on the basis of its author's source inquiry" (Sparks 2005, 362). As has been noted above, historiography was intended to be read as factual. Mythic elements from other ANE genealogies and king lists may have been intentionally or unintentionally fallacious, but the author's intention was to be regarded as factual historic depictions (Craig 2021, 204–206).

The Book of Genesis Is Formed on Tôl'dôt

Craig argues against the use of the *tôl'dôt* as a structuring device asserting that the "careless statement is at best misleading and at worst grossly mistaken. As anyone can tell, the book of Genesis falls naturally into three parts: the primaeval history, the patriarchal narratives, and the story of Joseph and his family" (Craig 2021, 201). This is an overstatement, and not faithful to the history of interpretation. Bruce Waltke and Cathi Fredricks produced a commentary based on the *tôl'dôt* structure in 2001 (Waltke and Fredricks 2001). DeRouchie published an article modifying the proposal in 2013 (DeRouchie 2013), August has given agreement in 2017 (August 2017), and Cooper has published a recent dissertation on the topic (Cooper 2021). Hirsch notes that "an idea of the whole controls, connects and unifies our understanding of the parts" (Hirsh 1979, 76). As such, a literary work which employs a historiographic genre as a principal structuring device should lead the interpreter to assess the work as historiographical material.

Tôl'dôt Grammatically Implies Physical Descent

תולדת is derived from the hiphil form of יל and therefore its primary function in the Hebrew Bible is to denote physical progeny (Köhler et. al. 2001, 1699–1700). This is a major difference between the genealogies and king lists which Craig cites. The ANE genealogies and lists utilize lexemes which have a broader semantic range. The term "son," which is used in the Sumerian Kings List, has widespread metaphorical usage in the ANE throughout imperial literature and need not imply blood ties (Beirbrier 1980, 102–104). By the Pentateuchal author using יל throughout certain *tôl'dôts* he establishes a lexically unambiguous direct genealogical relationship. This term is never used metaphorically in the Hebrew narrative, though its metaphorical use in poetry is

slightly more common. If Genesis 2:4 is forward pointing, as will be argued below, then it is found introducing narrative, and should be taken literally.

Tôl'dôt in Genesis Are Forward Pointing, Not Backwards Pointing

Craig asserts that "The *tôl'dôt* of the heavens and the earth (2:4–4:26) is not about the generations issuing from the heavens and the earth but consists of the stories of humanity's creation and fall into sin. Genesis 2:4a is better regarded as a summary of the unfolding of creation that began in 1:1 than as the *de novo* beginning of a new section" (Craig 2021, 202). This is patently false. DeRouchie states that "By their very nature, the *tôl'dôt* address what is produced from a progenitor and not the progenitor itself" (DeRouchie 2013, 225). Though the lexical evidence points forward in a cause/effect relationship, there is another syntactical maker to substantiate the idea that this particular *tôl'dôt* is not only forward pointing but also that the *tôl'dôt* of 2:4 is a separate entity and stands alone. The *tôl'dôt* of Genesis 2:4 is asyndetic. This would either embed a separate unit in a larger structure beginning in 2:4, or introduce a new textual unit (DeRouchie 2013, 232). Since the *tôl'dôts* are repeated as a structuring device in Genesis, it is better to view this as a new textual unit.

All Tôl'dôt Forms Outside of Genesis 2:4 Include Direct Progeny

DeRouchie points out that Genesis 2:4 is "the only *toledot*... in all of Scripture wherein the progenitor of the *toledot* is something other than a named human person" (DeRouchie 2013, 243–244). Had the תולדת been used less frequently in the Pentateuch, then this instance could be described as a literary device, however, every single occurrence in the Hebrew Bible outside of this includes a direct descent of a human from a progenitor, and the occurrence in Genesis 2:4 which Craig contests as mythical, uses the term in just this way as will now be examined.

Genesis 2 Directly Asserts Direct Progeny of Man from Earth

The *tôl'dôt* formula begins with a verbless clause and serves to identify something—namely the heavens and the earth, and the lexical form of the term *tôl'dôt* denotes that the heavens and earth will produce an offspring (DeRouchie 2013, 224). This account points forward to a progeny for the heavens and the earth, namely Adam when "the LORD God formed the man of the dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life" (Genesis 2:7, ESV). Heavens and earth are emphasized syntactically through the fronted verbless clause

as the progenitors, and the condition of the land is highlighted before the creation of the human being. Sailhamer notes this terrestrial creation stating that “Man’s origin was the dust of the ground. One can also see in this picture of man’s origin an anticipation of his destiny in the Fall, when he would again return to the ‘dust’ (*āpār*, 3:19). In Creation man arose out of the dust, but in the Fall he returned to the dust” (Sailhamer 1992, 41). Jewish literature points to an idea of a mother earth (Corley 2016, 343–361). This direct line of progeny is lexically warranted and substantiated in the narrative, showing a direct relationship. Craig’s view disregards lexical meaning, narrated reporting, and syntactic emphasis, causing him to come to a faulty exegetical conclusion regarding genre, enabling a false theological conclusion of evolution.

The Etiological Function of Genealogies in the Hebrew Bible

Craig classifies the genealogies as mytho-history (2021, 222) because of their occurrence in combination with mythological narrative (2021, 221). Craig states that “While the genealogies of Genesis evince an interest in history on the part of the author and his audience, it is important to keep in mind that it is a mytho-history that is being narrated” (2021, 223). This assumption of mytho-history has been challenged above, and the primeval history was not intended to be regarded as myth by the author. The primeval history was not received as myth by the original audience. It was the historical interest, which Craig grants, which would have determined in part the function of genealogies (2021, 204). And that historical interest can be found through assessing their etiological function. Craig allows for, and even argues for, an etiological purpose when he states that the genealogies of Genesis were “carefully constructed so as to share in the character of the myths they order, contributing to the overall etiological purpose of the primaevial history” (2021, 226). Determining that etiological purpose is a problem for Craig’s assessment. The idea of ethnicity as a central etiological purpose in various laws throughout the Pentateuch seems to be a central concern (de Villiers 2019, 2–3). The consistent testimony of the Hebrew canon seems to imply that the etiological purpose of genealogies was to maintain racial purity and ethnic identity evidenced by the *tôl’dôt* sections whereby elect lines are separated from unselected lines, emphasizing “a select group of image-bearers in each generation” (DeRouchie 2013, 240). This select group of image bearers are contrasted with other groups who were left unselected, “outside the promised line” of descent (August 2017, 275, 278–279) so that the etiological purpose of the genealogies became a

matter of race/ethnicity which would carry on the Abrahamic blessing and *protevangelium* found in a singular particular seed (Genesis 3:15 and 12:19–21). Ethnicity was central to Israelite thought because of this “seed” theme that is developed and narrowed through the Abrahamic promise. Sparks makes this same assessment, though apart from the seed theme:

Van den Berghe’s theory, that ethnicity is a natural extension of kinship, finds particularly strong support in the biblical materials, especially in Deuteronomy. Deuteronomic ‘brother theology’ was a deliberate attempt to extend natural affiliations of kinship beyond the immediate family to fellow Judeans and Israelites. The presumption in Deuteronomy is that the notion of ancestral origins would heighten one’s sense of commonality with others in the community. This evidence seems to confirm what is intuitively appealing in my view: that ethnicity is primarily an extension of either real or fictive kinship affiliations. (Sparks 1998, 328–329)

Though Sparks is inclined to see this throughout the Bible, he limits his study to only those passages occurring after Genesis 10. For those who do not accept a “fictive” account of the scriptural witness in the book of Genesis, there is reason to accept that this emphasis of ethnicity does not extend to throughout the whole work. If Abraham’s seed was important, and blessing was limited to one genealogical line, then the genealogies preceding most likely served the same function. The fact that the unselected lines do not continue throughout the narrative affirms this assessment.

Evolution Would Require a Figurative Reading Foreign to Historical Narrative

It has become clear that genealogies expressed historical interest, dealt with real persons, and served an etiological purpose of distinguishing selected lines to carry on the seed theme developed through the protoevangelium and the Abrahamic promise. These genealogies, if read apart from presuppositions of falsehood, approached as a model reader in accord with the authorial intention and original audience reception, would be read as historiography. Craig’s evolutionary theory would require a figurative reading of Genesis 2:7 which would be foreign to historiographical material. The term *forming* is used both of mankind and animals in Genesis 2, but there is a qualification added to mankind’s creation not found in the creation of animals, the qualification of source through the prepositional phrase “from the ground.” Since the Israelites placed a high priority upon ethnicity, and since they had a high view of mankind over that of the animals, they surely would not have read this and accepted any form of evolution as descriptive of their origins. Historiography is to

be interpreted literally, and there is nothing about this reading which demands a figurative reading for creation from dust if divine agency is accepted. If God can create *fiat ex nihilo*, as Craig argues (Craig 2008, 112–156), then so too can He create from dust if He so chooses.

Evolution Would Undermine the *Imago Dei* Doctrine

The creation account in Genesis 1 spoke of man being made in God's image, while Genesis 2 speaks of man being formed from the ground. Both accounts emphasize mankind's integral function in creation of serving as a steward over the land and its inhabitants so that it would become more profitable (Mathews 1996, 174–175). Though Genesis 1 will be avoided in a genre argument, Genesis 9 can be employed since it too is found within a *tôl'dôt* structure and is therefore historiography. In Genesis 9:6, God announces the death penalty for murder based on the creation of mankind in God's image. Similarly, in Genesis 5:1 the *imago dei* is asserted for Adam. However, there is an interesting departure in the use of the terms for likeness and image by which Seth is fathered after Adam's likeness and image (5:3). The text of 5:1 and 9:6 establish mankind as bearers of God's image. Genesis 5:3 establishes the image of the progenitor marking his progeny. If Craig is correct, our lineage can be traced back to "*Sahelanthropus tchadensis*, an apelike creature" (Craig 2021, 366). Mankind would thus still retain that "apelike" image since progenitors pass on their image to their progeny.

If this were simply an anatomical relationship, there may be some merit, whereby these creatures had posable thumbs and were bipedestrian. However, it is not simply anatomical structural similarities which are inherent in this term. There are clear sociological connotations with this term. As has been argued above, the goal of interpretation is to discern the original author's intended meaning for the original audience. The first questions one must ask is what the Pentateuchal author meant, and how his audience would have understood it. It is agreed upon that the key word is image. The term is **צַלְמִי**, defined by Swanson as "1. . . image, idol, i.e., a created and formed artifact that is worshiped as or as representing a pagan deity . . . image, likeness, i.e., that which is a pattern, model, or example of something . . . note: the exact reference of whether this is moral, ethical, physical, nature, etc. is not clear" (Swanson 1997, entry 10614). *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of The Old Testament* (HALOT) simply lists terms like statue, idol, images, figures, or likeness of a man as the image of God (Köhler et. al. 2001, 1965). However, the primary use of the term in the Hebrew corpus is that of an image or statue of some

type that served as an idol. Swanson describes the utilization of the term in the primeval history, noting that "the exact reference of whether this is moral, ethical, physical, nature, etc. is not clear." However, the people of Israel would have surely understood the term in the primary sense—that of an idol.

The Pentateuchal author had clearly commanded the audience, "You shall not make for yourself an image in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. You shall not bow down to them or worship them" (Exodus 20:4–5a NIV). This term served as the germinate form of the doctrine of transcendence: "God is not the world, cannot be identified with the world, and cannot be manipulated through the world" (Oswalt 2009, 65). One must question the author's employment of this terminology, when "On every side of Israel opulent religious practices centering on images were taking place" (Oswalt 2009, 65). In the ANE context which Israel moved in, "The gods are always represented by images in the shapes of this world. The idol is an ideal representative of continuity" (Oswalt 2009, 43). This continuity describes the philosophical principle that asserts that all things are continuous with each other (Oswalt 2009, 43). Oswalt asserts that "The typical idol is at the same time divine, human, and nature. Furthermore, by doing things to the idol, one is simultaneously doing things to the god or goddess and to the natural force he or she inhabits" (Oswalt 2009, 57). By the author using the term *image*, he is communicating that, in some way, mankind, not only resembles the appearance of God, but also that how one interacts with humans is indicative of how they interact with God.

This idea of mankind in God's image is a pivotal theological doctrine because in some way how mankind interacts with others affects God, since man is His image bearer. This is the highest possible view of mankind, because now mankind is seen as a type of pathway to worship. Though humans are not the direct object of worship, proper worship must include interaction with humankind through some type of agency. While many of the ANE myths involved a low view of humanity the biblical account portrays man as the pinnacle of creation. God created man like himself, yet distinct from himself.

The term *formed* in Genesis 2:7 is that of a craftsman, and the material in the craftsman's hands is the dirt of the ground (Mathews 1996, 195). This dirt was the passive progenitor of mankind, while God is depicted as the active progenitor. This formation by direct physical action in the creation of man, differing from all other creatures which were spoken into existence showed God's special action in the formation of mankind. God's role as active progenitor qualified Adam to uniquely be the son of

God as asserted in the scriptural testimony (Luke 3:38). Christ became a man through the incarnation. It stands to reason that if progenitors pass on their image to their direct progeny, then evolution would insinuate that Christ would not only be the express image of God, but also through direct progeny would bear the image of animals. Such a statement is preposterous.

A historiographical reading of Genesis 2:4ff, implied by the *tôl'dôt* formula, denies a figural reading of any other option than the direct physical agency of God in forming mankind from the dirt. Mankind is announced as qualitatively different from other creatures due to the *imago dei* in Genesis 9:6 (also historiographical in genre for the same reasons described above) through direct agency of God. The fact that mankind is given permission to hunt other creatures implies that other creatures, which may have included the ape-like *sahelanthropus tchadensis*, lack the *imago dei*. If progenitors pass down their image, then evolution would require mankind to have the image and likeness of those creatures, which God has expressly rejected in the Noahic covenant. Though this assessment seems fantastic to Darwinist sympathizers, it must be remembered that this assessment is the long-standing assessment of the Christian witness.

No Major Pre-Darwinian Interpreter Challenged Genesis' Classification as Historical Narrative

Throughout the history of Christendom, no major interpreter of the church has asserted evolution as a viable conclusion from the text of Scripture. It was not until the early nineteenth century, through the work of Darwin, that such views became vogue (Mortensen 2004, 339). Erickson notes the necessity of historical theological inquiry as part of his systematic theological method and warns theologians to “beware of too close an identification with any current mood in culture. The rapid changes in theologies are but a reflection of the rapid changes in culture in general. In times of such rapid change, it is probably wise not to attempt too close a fit between theology and the world in which it is expressed” (Erickson 2013, 51–52). Craig has departed from most Christian interpreters over the past two millennia seeking to be sensitive to the current socio-political climate. However, his conclusions cannot be said to have been derived from exegesis and therefore cannot be substantiated as sound theology.

Conclusion

Good theology is built upon sound exegesis and a valid theological method. Exegesis requires an accurate assessment of a text's genre, authorial intention, and original audience's reception. Craig's

work on the historical Adam exhibits an invalid reader-response hermeneutic, whereby he finds certain textual claims to be “palpably false” in light of contemporary knowledge (Craig 2021, 139). This leads Craig to reverse a sound theological method by seeking to reclassify the genre of Genesis 2. One cannot view the *tôl'dôt* of Genesis 2:4 as a colophon for the creation history of Genesis 1. Instead, Genesis 2:4 is clearly seen to be forward pointing, through lexeme and syntax, demanding a direct progeny. Since Genesis 2:4 employs a *tôl'dôt* formula, it is to be regarded as historiography, regardless of the presence of the etiological intention. Furthermore, the etiological concern for genealogies in Genesis was always that of physical descent to discern the elect line, and therefore preserve racial purity and ethnic identity which were paramount concerns. All other instances of the *tôl'dôt* introductory formula in the Hebrew Bible deal with historiographical material, and the ANE counterparts are likewise classified as historical records.

By misclassifying the 2:4ff as mytho-history and seeking to constantly draw a distinction between his own personal reception against that of the original audience, Craig has failed to perform his duty as a model reader by embracing authorial intention and audience reception. Such hermeneutical missteps jeopardize both the interpretive and the theological task. Even if Genesis was considered a myth in the classical sense, myths were to be believed in those societies which embraced them; and Craig fails to embrace this text in like manner (Craig 2021, 139). However, this examination has sought to show that Genesis 2:4ff is portrayed as ancient historiography leaving the reader of this work to evaluate between two competing truth claims. The evangelical, if convinced of the historiographical intention of the Pentateuchal author and the historiographical reception of the Pentateuchal audience, must either accept the divinely inspired Word of God as a historiographical depiction of the creation of mankind to be believed as fact, or they must reject the infallibility of that text and thereby their claim to evangelicalism. If one classifies Genesis 2:4ff as historiography yet rejects the account as being mythological in some way, they have announced their ultimate allegiance to an alternative competing truth claim abandoning the authority of the biblical text. Craig has made just such an announcement in his *In Quest of the Historical Adam*, announcing his allegiance to a Darwinian presupposition, abandoning the inspired authority of the primeval history.

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