

Geocentricity: A Case Study in Bibliology

Dr. Thomas M. Strouse

Introduction

The Lord Jesus Christ, Savior and Creator, undeniably wrote His words of Scripture, including the first chapter of Genesis (cf. 1:15-16), from a geocentric perspective.¹ This perspective requires the exegete of Scripture to respond in one of several ways. For instance, one response is that of the liberal exegete who rejects the Bible as scientifically erroneous in many instances. Another response is that of the neo-evangelical exegete who, to show his knowledge of and "respect" for secular scholarship of the scientific community, interjects evolutionary-based accommodations into the Bible. An example is Gleason Archer, who has been heavily influenced by evolution, and posits the unbiblical theological presupposition of a pre-Adamic race made up of "soul-less" anthropoids.² A third but not final response is that of the fundamentalist exegete who, if consistent with historic fundamentalism, rejects selectively any perspective that has not been accepted by the fathers of fundamentalism. The predominate approach among Fundamentalists is to insist that all geocentric expressions must be understood phenomenologically, or from the vantagepoint of the observer.

A recent example of this latter response has surfaced with its obvious predicable outcome. The fundamentalist Hebrew scholar, par excellence, Dr. Robert McCabe, registrar and professor of Detroit Baptist Theological Seminary, has honored this writer with "A Critique of Dr. Thomas M. Strouse's 'The Geocentric Cosmology of Genesis 1:1-19.'" This critique appeared on <www.sharperiron.org> on June 26, 2006,³ culminating an orchestrated attack upon *Emmanuel Baptist Theological Seminary*.⁴ In general, Dr. McCabe has the unenviable task of proving that just because God declares that the Bible

¹Geocentric expressions such as "*the sun went down*" (Gen. 15:17), "*the sun stood still, and the moon stayed*" (Josh. 10:13), and "*at the rising of the sun*" (Mk. 16:2), permeate the Old and New Testaments. Commentator Mathews observes this truth, stating "The six days of creation (vv. 3-31) are told from the perspective of one who is standing on the earth's surface observing the universe with the naked eye. The account is geocentric in its telling." Kenneth Mathews, *The New American Commentary: Genesis 1-11:26* (Nashville, TN: Broadman and Holman Publ., 1996), p. 144. One must ask this Beeson Divinity School professor whose perspective it was, since neither Adam nor Moses was standing on the earth's surface through the first five days of creation!

²Gleason L. Archer, *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1994), pp. 210, 212.

³Presumably the critique and all blog statements may still be viewed on the site.

⁴This author has privy information as to the pastor in Massachusetts who initiated these attacks, and his self-proclaimed motive for such an attack upon a ministry of one of the Lord's assemblies. The blog site, employing the Nicolaitane tactics of ridicule and fear, attempted to mock this writer with name-calling (village idiot) and slander (Strouse lied). David declared, "*The proud have had me greatly in derision: yet have I not declined from thy law*" (Ps. 119:51).

The blog site has piqued international interest, at least in Europe, in the exegesis Gen. 1 (praise the Lord!), and has raised up defenders for this Christ-honoring interpretation of Scripture as well as for *EBTS*. (cf. Phil. 1:14).

perspective is geocentric, He does not really mean that it is geocentric, since the scientific world has verified that the earth both rotates around its axis and revolves around the sun. Specifically, the good doctor rejects this author's aforementioned essay with four criticisms. This paper is a biblical response to Dr. McCabe's criticisms, attempting to demonstrate Scripturally that the earth is the fixed point around which the heavens revolve, that there is no biblical defense (for lack of verses) of heliocentricity, and that fundamentalism⁵ is not biblical since it has a weak bibliography. In addition, this author offers a summary of the salient points in defense of biblical geocentricity.

Responses to Criticisms

General Comments

Dr. McCabe rightly observes that the discussion on biblical cosmology is actually a case study in bibliography. After all, one's commentary on the Bible is at the same time one's commentary on his own bibliography, including one's text/translation, hermeneutic, and employment of *analogia Scripturae*, or the comparison of Scripture with Scripture. First, Professor McCabe correctly sees this author as one who defends the translation of the KJV and maintains that it is "the only acceptable translation" (p. 3).⁶ To the Detroit registrar's credit he does not broad brush this author as a Ruckmanite, but it does seem that his attack upon geocentricity serves as an oblique attack upon the KJV. Second, Dr. McCabe recognizes that the paper in question taught that "special revelation takes precedence over so-called scientific truth" (p. 2).⁷ Hence, this author did not discuss such things as the center of gravity, weather satellites, stellar parallax, Foucault pendulum, etc. This author dealt with special revelation! This leads to the third consideration, the employment of *analogia Scripturae*. Dr. McCabe diagnosed this present author with the condition of "myopia," or shortsightedness. This means that the paper did not list human

⁵Fundamentalism is a historical, transdenominational, and American movement arising from the 1920's to combat modernism in American Christianity. It has embraced so-called fundamental, cardinal doctrines as essential for defense. Although Dr. Beale assures that fundamentalists "attempt to unite around 'the whole counsel of God,'" David Beale, *In Pursuit of Purity: American Fundamentalism Since 1850* (Greenville, SC: Unusual Publications, 1986) p. 7, the movement is doomed for failure since it is a man-made, extra-biblical movement, over and above the Lord's only New Testament movement--that of His local Baptist assemblies.

It should be observed that fundamentalism, always one step to the right of neo-evangelicalism, evinces "a friendly attitude toward science" (cf. Beale, p. 266), as per some of the bloggers on the aforementioned fundamentalist web site, promoting scientific notions over the Bible.

⁶Of course Dr. McCabe does not fail to condemn this writer because "his paper is slavishly tied to the KJV" (p. 2). In response, this writer embraces the Authorized Version because of the superiority of its underlying texts, and because the modern versions cannot improve upon it.

⁷Although Professor McCabe concedes this truth, he apparently does not believe it since he constantly appeals to science for his arguments against geocentricity and for heliocentricity. For instance, he appeals to "telescopes" (p. 2), "time-lapse photographs of the earth" (p. 2), "our weatherman" (p. 7), etc.

authorities as sources for veritable insights,⁸ but merely looked within the Scripture itself for interpretation, i.e. *analogia Scripturae*. But this Doctor would like to offer a counter diagnosis to his critic. Dr. McCabe is suffering from the condition of "*hyperopia*" or long-sightedness. For linguistic and interpretative "verification of truth," he looks far beyond the Bible to extra-biblical authorities, such as DeYoung, Brown, Driver, Briggs, Waltke, O'Conner, Faulkner, Rooker, *et al.*, i.e., and consequently employs the *analogia fidei* (the comparison of one's presuppositions with Scripture).⁹ The Apostle Paul instructed Timothy to "*study to shew thyself approved unto God*" (II Tim. 2:15), and that the Scripture alone would make the man of God "*perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works*" (II Tim. 3:16-17). From which of these two conditions was Paul suffering?¹⁰

Additionally, Dr. McCabe offers some strange statements in his introduction, such as the notion that "scientifically verifiable realities" give "some form of truth, though not on the same level of truth...there is truth in the physical world" (p. 2).¹¹ It would be interesting to see Dr. McCabe's exegetical interpretation of God's query to Job: "*Knowest thou the ordinances of heaven? Canst thou set the dominion thereof in the earth?*" (Job 38:33). Furthermore, the good professor McCabe is guilty of *petitio principii*; he assumes what he needs to prove. He assumes both heliocentricity (p. 2),¹² and a rotating earth, stating for the latter that "the Earth was rotating on its axis" during the first three days of creation (p. 7). How does he know the earth was rotating when the only verb of relative motion during the first three days of creation was the Spirit of God moving "upon the face of the waters" (Gen. 1:2-13)? What verse in the whole Bible describes the earth's rotation on its axis?¹³

Specific Arguments

I. The Paper is Methodologically Flawed

Dr. McCabe condemns the author's work because it is "methodologically flawed" (p. 2). By this he means that the paper does not quote Old Testament exegetes and Hebrew grammarians as "sources." However, this author was not interested in what these limited "authorities" had to say since his professed purpose was to give a "Biblical

⁸The Detroit professor encourages interaction "with someone who has done genuine exegetical work on Genesis 1 and whose work has received some level of recognition by his peers" (p. 8). This academic requirement for peer approval is in direct opposition to the believer's divine requirement to seek God's approval (II Tim. 2:15).

⁹The fundamental flaw of many fundamentalist Bible colleges and theological seminaries is that they train men to study to show themselves approved unto "fundamental scholarship."

¹⁰Paul's use of human authorities was very sparse and always secondary (cf. Acts 17:28).

¹¹The Lord Jesus Christ said "*Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth*" (Jn. 17:17).

¹²Since there was no sun on the first three days, what was the earth revolving around? And was the earth put in the heavens along with the sun, moon and stars on Day Four? Where does the Bible even hint at these assumptions espoused by Dr. McCabe?

¹³Certainly an appeal to the cryptic reference in Job 38:13-14 would not be attempted, to prove that the earth is rotating on its axis and spinning around the sun on its supposed yearly voyage?

demonstration of geocentricity" that "should challenge Christians to return to the authority of the Bible in all areas including cosmology." Instead of using abundant quotes from penultimate authorities as Professor McCabe has done (thirteen different "scholarly" works but only four different Bible passages), this author employed over fifty footnotes, referencing supporting passages and exercising Hebrew exegesis.

The Detroit professor then excoriates this author's handling of two Hebrew words, thus only briefly engaging in any meaningful exegetical discussion. This disappointment in valuable engagement with one of fundamentalism's best Hebraists is the result of his contrived "problems." For example, Dr. McCabe's first criticism focuses on the translation of the word *raqia* as "firmament." The DBTS professor rebukes the author of the paper at hand for not considering "current lexical" sources which translate the word as "expanse." However, he does state that the translation "firmament" is "possible" (p. 3). He tries to make the translation of this word a KJV issue, which issue is really part of the bigger reason for the critique.¹⁴ To demonstrate the nature of this factitive criticism from Detroit's scholar, all one needs to realize is that the word "firmament" occurs in a variety of translations. The Vulgate originated the reading so it is not new. The Geneva Bible (1599) employed the reading so it is not exclusively KJV. The Douay-Rheims (1899) rendered the word "firmament" so it is not exclusively Protestant sectarian. The Jewish Publication Society translation (1917) used it so it is not exclusively anti-Semitic. Twentieth century translations, such as the 1901 ASV, the 1982 NKJV, and even the liberal 1952 RSV, translated the Hebrew word as "firmament," and so the translation is not outdated. In conclusion, the word "firmament" has a long history of acceptance up to the present through diverse theological perspectives, but more importantly it has been received by the Lord's assemblies as a valid rendering. This author stayed with the KJV rendering of "firmament," not because of some alleged need to defend "inspired KJV" words, but because "it is a good translation."

Dr. McCabe's second criticism revolves around the dual ending on the Hebrew word *hashshamayim* (heaven[s]). This criticism is even more disappointing. He denies that the dual ending on nouns represents any semantical meaning for the word. Of course most dual endings occur on words like "eyes," "hands," "feet," etc., where a pair of objects are included. In these cases the dual use, rather than the plural, is obvious and contributes to the semantics of the word. The Detroit Hebraist continues, calling this author's effort to notice the distinction between the plural ending and dual ending on nouns as "absurd." Most theologians recognize, for instance, the plural ending on the third word of the Hebrew Old Testament (OT), *'elohim* (God), allows for what develops later into the doctrine of the triune Godhead. In reading Gen. 1:1, the Hebrew reader would not only have noticed the plural ending for God, but also the dual ending for heaven. If words have meaning, and if it is legitimate to find couched in *'elohim* the triune doctrine, why not allow Scripture to refer to the heavens as the two physical heavens, including the atmosphere and stellar space, since this is exactly what the context of Gen. 1 does state (Gen. 1:15, 20), and since Paul adds that there are three heavens (II

¹⁴At least four times Dr. McCabe derides this author's use of the KJV, stating that the paper "is slavishly tied to the KJV" (p. 2), that it cites the Vulgate and LXX use of firmament "to support the KJV" (p. 3), that "the KJV is the only acceptable translation" (p. 3), and that methodologically, "even for someone who is King James Only," interaction with other sources is required (p. 3).

Cor. 12:1-3)? Furthermore, the good doctor remonstrates Strouse's "nonsense" by introducing two additional words into the fray. He acknowledges that the Hebrew "water" (*mayim*) is a dual, cynically asking, "are we to understand that there are two waters?" As a matter of fact, there is the earth water (Gen. 1:7) and the water above the heavens (Ps. 148:4). The second word he throws into the mix is the dual word Jerusalem, suggesting "Does Jerusalem have two levels." Surely the scholar from Detroit has not forgotten the biblical teaching that there is the heavenly Jerusalem as well as the earthly city (cf. Heb. 12:22; Rev. 21:2, et al). Another interesting dual noun, which Dr. McCabe does not mention, is *Mizraim*, the Hebrew word usually translated Egypt. The Lord God chose the man *Mizraim* (dual ending) to settle eventually in Egypt, the land of "two straits." How did that happen?

Because Dr. McCabe pays lip service to the Scriptures by not allowing the Lord to speak except through scholars, his critique is superficial, contrived, and exegetically flawed. His approach is fallacious because his bibliology is weak.

II. The Paper Employs a Strawman argument

This second criticism, a historical one, is so convoluted it is baffling to know how to respond. The seminary professor's lengthy lecture on the ins and outs of the history and positions of ancient cosmology is specious. This writer attempted to give a simple historical overview, since the paper focuses on biblical exegesis and not on history, observing that Copernicus overturned the prevailing Christian view of geocentricity with his philosophical assumptions stemming from pagan philosophers. Theologian McCabe levels two charges against the paper, namely improper documentation and a strawman set-up. For instance, he asks whom these early Christians were. The writer thought that it was unnecessary to document the obvious truth that since the Bible was written from a geocentric perspective, and since the telescope was not invented until *circa* 1608, that all Bible believing Christians would hold to a basic geocentric understanding. Certainly James, who wrote to the scattered Jews (Jam. 1:1), asserted astronomical terms such as *planasthe*, (wandering like a planet), *photon* (lights), *parallage* (parallax), and *tropes* (tropic) from a geocentric perspective (Jam. 1:16-17).¹⁵ Those who suffer from *hyperopia* seem to be biblically challenged at this point.

The Detroit doctor is absolutely wrong in his second charge. He states, "Strouse's strawman clouds the issue for he pits the geocentricism of 'early Christians,' (*sic*) religious faith, against Copernicus's Greek philosophically based heliocentrism, pagan science. The truth is that the issue in Copernicus's day was science versus science, rather than Strouse's prejudicial religious faith versus pagan science" (p. 4). A strawman argument would be the construction of something patently false and then the destruction of it. This author erected no strawman. At the risk of being perceived as healed of his *myopia*, this writer will, with great disdain, cite several secondary authorities to show both the premiere influence of and religious presuppositions from Copernicus. For instance, the eminent astronomical scholar, George Abell declares the influence of Copernicus, stating:

¹⁵The Bible teaches that believers, having the indwelling Author of Scripture with the words of God and in the Lord's assemblies, have the potential of knowing absolutely (*oida*) all revelatory truth (I Jn. 2:20, 27; cf. also II Tim. 3:16-17), including cosmogony and cosmology.

Copernicus' great contribution to science was a critical reappraisal of the existing theories of cosmology and the development of a new model of the solar system. His unorthodox idea that the sun, not the earth, is the center of the solar system had become known by 1530, chiefly through an early manuscript circulated by him and his friends.¹⁶

Copernicus' appeal to the deity of the sun was certainly not, as Dr. McCabe attempts to argue, "science versus science." The Roman Catholic Canon from Poland wrote:

In this most beautiful temple of God how could the sun be given a better place to illuminate the whole all at once? Rightly he is called the Lamp, Soul and Ruler of the Universe. Hermes Trismegistus calls him the Visible God while Sophocles's Electra calls him the All-seeing One. Let us place it upon a royal throne, let it truly guide the circling family of planets, earth included. Such a picture--so simple, clear and beautiful.¹⁷

Professor McCabe's contrived and consequently fallacious assertions only pave the way for the further deterioration of his critique.

III. The Paper Begs the Question

Dr. McCabe condemns this writer's assumption that Gen. 1:1-19 teaches geocentricism. The assumption comes from the fact that the account is written from a geocentric perspective by God who is outside of His creation, and knows what is absolute and what moves relative to the absolute. Manifesting his *hyperopia* once again, the good professor cites Dr. Danny Faulkner, stating the outlandish claim that "the truth is that there is no biblical text that explicitly affirms either geocentricism or heliocentricism, nor can a synthesis of clear texts be used to support either model" (p. 4). The reader is encouraged to read footnote 1 again for just a few of the many biblical sources for the geocentric perspective of Scripture. In addition, the reader may want to check the sixty-seven times the Bible teaches that the sun rises, goes down, etc. (from Gen. 15:12 to Jam. 1:11), and the two exceptional cases when the sun stopped (Josh. 10:12-13) or went backwards (Isa. 38:7-8). Perhaps the Hebrew professor from Detroit would like to exegete Habakkuk's analysis of Joshua 10:12-13. The prophet stated that "*The sun and moon stood still in their habitation...*" (Hab. 3:11). The exegete will notice in Habakkuk's text that the conjunction "*and*" is not in the Hebrew text, and the verb "stood" is third masculine singular, lumping the sun and moon together in their respective "standing." All concede that the moon is geocentric, and if, according to this verse, it stood still along with the sun, then this verse teaches geocentricity.

It is a shame that *hyperopiacs* must go to such lengths to deny Scripture. In addition to Professor McCabe's previous denials, he struggles to express the apparent

¹⁶ George O. Abell, *Exploration of the Universe* (NY: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1975), p. 37.

¹⁷Nicholas Copernicus. *De revolutionibus orbium coelestium*, Book I (n.p.: N.P., 1542), chapter 10, folio 9v.

geocentricity of Gen. 1 by stating "this indicates that the Earth is not heliocentric..." (p. 5). He cannot even say that the description of the creation in Gen. 1:1-19 was from geocentric perspective. Furthermore the seminary professor attempts to argue for a theological and redemptive geocentricity while denying a physical geocentricity. The humanist Burgess stated, "The story of Christianity tells about a plan of salvation centered upon a particular people and a particular man. As long as someone is thinking in terms of a geocentric universe and an earth-deity, the story has a certain plausibility."¹⁸ Furthermore, the reader should realize that philosophically, but not biblically, heliocentricity is the rationalistic bridge from biblical geocentricity to atheistic a-centricity.¹⁹

IV. The Paper is Myopic

Dr. McCabe has already used this criticism that the paper lacks sufficient documentation, and hence it is myopic. Actually his four criticisms are really only three. But since he does introduce new attacks upon the text of Scripture because of his predictable interaction with scholarly, albeit secondary, authorities, including Waltke and Rooker, his criticism will be analyzed. First, Dr. McCabe demonstrates his thorough infection of *hyperopia* by listing numerous articles that have appeared in the *Bibliotheca Sacra* journal, of which articles this author is aware. Second, the professor suggests that this author holds to a poetic and therefore figurative interpretation of Gen. 1., since he refers to a series of three couplets in the narrative (p. 6). The Detroit theologian's attempt to identify this writer, who obviously takes the Gen. 1 account literally, with the liberal figurative hermeneutic, is not only unconscionable but also contrived.

The critique raises two exegetical issues that must be answered biblically. The Hebraist from Detroit makes an unbiblical assumption. He assumes that Gen. 1:1 records the creation of the heavens during Day One. Instead, Gen. 1:1 is the title of Moses' literary *inclusio* culminating with Gen. 2:1-3.²⁰ There are several irrefragible arguments for this assertion. 1) The expression "heaven and the earth" consistently refers to a completed entity (Gen. 2:1, 4; 14:19, 22; Mt. 24:35; *et al*). 2) Since Gen. 1:2-19 describes an incomplete entity, the two cannot exist contemporaneously and thus verse one is the title. 3) This argument is clinched by the fact that the conjunction in verse two is a disjunctive *waw*.²¹ In other words, since the conjunction "and" is attached to the noun "earth," and not to the next verb, verse two is non-sequential to verse one. Moses absolutely did not describe the activity of verse two as following that of verse one. The activity of verse two was the beginning of God's creation during the creation week, and started the creative events of Day One. 4. The verb "created" (*bara'*) always refers to a

¹⁸A. J. Burgess, *Christian Century*, December 1976: 1100.

¹⁹Carl Sagan has eliminated all significance for the earth in his recent work *The Pale Blue Dot: A Vision of the Human Future in Space* (NY: Ballantine Books, 1997), 384 pp.

²⁰Gen. 1:1 is the title and verse 2:1 is the summary of Moses' *inclusio*.

²¹"The disjunctive *Waw* is *prefixed to a non-verbal form* and **is non-sequential** (bold mine), that is, it introduces some kind of a break or interruption in the narrative." Gary D. Pratico and Miles V. Van Pelt, *Basics of Biblical Hebrew* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), p. 281. *Vide* also Gen. 3:1 and 4:5.

completed product. Consequently, the heavens were not created until Day Two, coming from the division of the earth waters (Gen. 1:6-8; cf. 2:4).

The second exegetical issue that needs biblical clarity is Dr. McCabe's confusion concerning Gen. 1:2. He rejects the biblical teaching that the Spirit of God was the light source until the sun, moon, and stars were created on Day Four. He questions whether verse two is even referring to the Spirit of God, even though most English translations render it thus.²² He fails to see how Ps. 104:2 is connected with Gen. 1:3 (p. 7). Of course the connection becomes obvious as one practices *myopia* and examines the context of this great creation psalm. The psalmist acknowledged the blessed LORD as the One Who created the heavens and earth (vv. 1-9), Who prepared the earth for habitation (vv. 10-23), Who rules over His creation (vv. 24-32), and consequently Who is worthy of praise (vv. 33-35). During the Lord's initial creation, Ps. 104:2 states that He clothed Himself with light.²³ That He did this on Day One is confirmed by the fact that Ps. 84:11 metaphorically states that "*the LORD God is a sun,*" and Rev. 21:23 states concerning the New Jerusalem: "*And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof.*" However, the good doctor from Detroit manifests his eisegesis by declaring that "the Earth was rotating" and that these texts do not teach "that light emanated from the Spirit." Again, it must be stressed that neither Gen. 1 nor any other text in Scripture teaches that the earth rotates on its axis.²⁴ The only movement on Day One was the Spirit of God moving (as a light source according to Ps. 104:2) on the face of the waters of the earth.

Finally, Dr. McCabe gets to his real argument against the apparent geocentric passages of Scripture, including Josh. 10:12²⁵ and Eccl. 1:5-7. He claims these passages must be explained because the writers used "phenomenological language," or expressions from their vantagepoint.²⁶ Apparently, the best example that the *hyperopic* perspective can claim is the "weatherman." Professor McCabe goes on to explain that just because the Bible gives a geocentric perspective, that planetariums are geocentric, and that God's theological purposes are geocentric, one cannot claim that the earth is physically

²²Even the new "darling" of fundamentalism, the *ESV*, translates *ruach 'elohim* as Spirit of God.

²³Psalm 104:2 also declares that the Lord stretched out the heavens when He created them during the creation week (cf. Isa. 42:5). Is the Hebrew professor from Detroit attempting to deny that Psalm 104 is teaching that the LORD covered Himself with light during the creation week?

²⁴It should be noted as well, that no Bible verse ever puts the earth *in* the heavens (as are the sun, moon, and stars [Gen. 1:14-19]), and therefore the earth could *not* possibly revolve around the sun every 365 days since it is *not* in the heavens *with* the sun. Furthermore, since the earth is not in the firmament (heavens), it is not wandering around, and consequently it is not a "planet."

²⁵Of course v. 13 is the divine commentary on what happened that day--the sun and moon stood still! When will man allow the Lord God to speak?

²⁶It is impossible to reconcile heliocentric phenomenology with passages such as Ps. 104:19: "*He appointed the moon for seasons: the sun knoweth his going down,*" and Mt. 5:45: "*That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.*" In the latter case, the Scripture declares that God makes the sun rise and that He sends the rain. Where is the poetic or phenomenological language in these biblical assertions?

geocentric.²⁷ He then contradicts himself by asserting "that the passages used by Strouse are not explicitly describing either a geocentric or heliocentric nature of the universe." If the passages are not describing geocentricity, why is it necessary to use the phenomenological hermeneutic?

Dr. McCabe, professor and theologian from Detroit, has a conundrum. Should he critique the paper and thus honor a discussion of it, or ignore the paper. He opts to give his *hyperopic* notions. He then asks for interaction with someone who has academic credentials, such as Dr. John Whitcomb, to discuss Gen. 1. He suggests, "Better yet, why not get a young Earth creationist with academic credentials to provide an academic defense of heliocentricism?" But here is even a better suggestion, even a challenge, to Dr. McCabe and all *hyperopic* fundamentalists: pick your very best exegete and present the *biblical* defense for heliocentricity. Examine the Greek and Hebrew of every verse in the Bible teaching heliocentricity and present the evidences. Better yet, why not replace your *hyperopia* with *myopia* and get serious with the biblical text?

Conclusion of Response

In short, the critique of Dr. Robert V. McCabe, registrar and professor of Old Testament at Detroit Baptist Theological Seminary, is an example of how not to write an exegetical critique, especially when he denies the grammatical context of the central creation passage of Scripture along with numerous supporting passages, and flees to man's wisdom as the presiding authority on the Bible. His contrived arguments loom over the critique. Hebraist McCabe does not really engage in exegetical discussion, but instead denies any legitimacy for the paper because of the lack of documentation. He does not attempt to give explanatory exegesis on the points of contention but merely offers a superficial summary. His "critique" is symptomatic of the bigger issue of bibliology. Fundamentalism, by its very nature of selectivism, takes a weak position on Scripture and denies or rejects any biblical teaching not found within the history of the movement.²⁸ Nonetheless, the geocentric interpretation of Gen. 1:1-19 will not be contained by the "green withs" (cf. Judg. 16:7-9) of the *hyperopia* of pseudo-science, rationalism, empiricism.

A Review of Biblical Geocentricity

The following outline lists the salient points of Scripture which teach physical geocentricity of the earth as the immobile center of the heavens:

I. The Bible teaches consistently a geocentric frame of reference (the earth is the absolute fixed point around which all else turns)

²⁷Maybe God's declaration of geocentricity confirmed by man's experience of geocentricity occurs because the earth actually is the immobile center of the cosmos. Maybe it does not feel like the earth is moving because in actuality it is not moving! Maybe the emperor wasn't wearing clothes after all.

²⁸Apparently, "fundamentalist scholars" must treat the biblical geocentric framework of the cosmos as a non-essential, and ignore the early "voices" in "proto-fundamentalism," such as Luther, Calvin, M. Henry, Poole, Owen, etc.

- A. The Creation account teaches geocentricity exclusively (Gen. 1:1-19)
 - 1. The earth was created first on Day One and the heavens (dual) were created from the earth on Day Two (Gen. 1:2-6).
 - 2. The earth was completely distinct from the heavens and never placed in the heavens to revolve around the sun (Gen. 1:14 ff.).
 - 3. The Spirit of God (according to Ps. 104:2 clothed with light during the creation week) was the moving source of light around the stationary earth for Days One, Two, and Three.
- B. The biblically recorded structure of the universe is geocentric.
 - 1. The spherical earth (Isa. 40:22) was separated from the waters by the firmament (=heavens).²⁹
 - 2. The created heavens and earth contained the earth, the first heaven (face of the firmament), the second heaven, and the outer layer of water or a crystal sea (Ps. 148:4; Rev. 4:6).
- C. The movements are geocentric.
 - 1. The earth is stationary (Ps. 93:1, I Chron. 16:30).
 - 2. The sun, as a light bearer for the earth, has a circuit (Ps. 19:6; Eccl. 1:5).
 - 3. The heaven has a circuit (Job 22:14).³⁰
 - 4. The stars have their courses (Judg. 5:20).
- D. The Bible phraseology is geocentric.
 - 1. Sixty-seven times the Bible expresses that the sun rises, goes down, etc. (Gen. 15:12 to Jam. 1:11).
 - 2. The Bible teaches in two exceptional cases that the sun stopped or went backwards (Josh. 10:12-13; Isa. 38:7-8).
- E. The Bible analogies are geocentric.
 - 1. The earth hangs on nothing--it is not moving, it is hanging (Job 26:7).
 - 2. The earth has a place (Isa. 13:13).
 - 3. The earth is at rest as God's footstool (Isa. 66:1).
- F. Earth and Heaven are two distinct worlds (Heb. 11:3)
 - 1. They are distinguished ("*heaven and earth*") over 100 times from Gen. 1:1 to Rev. 21:1

²⁹Although Isaiah refers to "*the four corners of the earth*" (Isa. 11:12), he obviously means the four directions from Jerusalem, as the context dictates (cf. v. 11; Rev. 7:1). The word *canaph* could be translated wings, edges, etc. The Hebrew word refers to "extremities," and on birds these would be wings, and on geographical settings these would be edges, boundaries, or even corners. The Bible does not teach a flat earth since it clearly teaches that the earth is a sphere.

³⁰Recently, scientist Marcus Chown hypothesized that the universe may be spinning like a swirling fluid. He asserted: "Look up at the sky. Almost everything out there is spinning around: stars, galaxies, planets, moons—they are all rotating. Yet physicists believe that the universe itself is not revolving. Why? It's a question that Pawel Mazur can't answer. Mazur, physicist at the University of South Carolina in Columbia, is one of a number who think it is entirely possible that our universe is spinning on an axis. If these people are right, it could make understanding the universe a whole lot simpler...rotation requires an axis, and a cosmic axis of rotation would bestow a 'special' direction on the universe—along the axis." Marcus Chown, "Do the Cosmic Twist," *New Scientist*, 10 June 2006: 34-37.

2. They have their own respective ordinances or laws (Job 38:33; I Cor. 15:40-41).

G. Alleged heliocentric Scriptures

1. Isa. 24:1--the earth will be turned upside down (this deals with the Tribulation judgment by the massive, worldwide earthquake activity, and not with a daily rotation on its axis).

2. Job 38:14--the earth will be turned in judgment (again, as its context dictates this predicts God's judgment on earth and certainly does not teach a rotation on its axis).

II. Science can only teach relative motion.

A. Observationally, man has only three options.

1. The earth moves relative to the sun and moon.

2. The earth moves relative to the stellar background.

3. The heavens, containing the sun, moon, and stars, move relative to the earth.

B. Scientifically, physics and mathematics can prove either.

1. Sir Fred Hoyle: "We know that the difference between a heliocentric theory and a geocentric theory is one of relative motion only, and that such a difference has no physical significance."³¹

2. Agnostic Bertrand Russell: "Before Copernicus, people thought that the earth stood still and that the heavens revolved about it once a day. Copernicus taught that 'really' the earth revolves once a day, and the daily rotation of sun and stars is only 'apparent'...But in the modern theory the question between Copernicus and his predecessors is merely one of convenience; all motion is relative, and there is no difference between the two... Astronomy is easier if we take the sun as fixed than if we take the earth...but to say more for Copernicus is to assume absolute motion, which is a fiction. It is a mere convention to take one body as at rest. All such conventions are equally legitimate, though not all are equally convenient."³²

III. Common Objections to Geocentricity

A. So-called Physical Proofs

1. The Equatorial Bulge

a. The "spin" of the earth causes the earth to bulge at the equator.

b. But, the force of the heavens revolving around the earth pulls the equator out.

2. The Geostationary Satellite

a. The satellite hovers over the same point on the equator because the force of gravity balances out the centrifugal force pushing the satellite away.

b. But the satellite hovers in one spot because the force of gravity balances out the centrifugal pull of the rotating heavens.

B. The speed of light

³¹Hoyle, Sir. Fred, *Astronomy and Cosmology--A Modern Course* (San Francisco: W. H. Freeman and Co., 1975), p. 416.

³²Bertrand Russell, *The ABC of Relativity* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1958), p. 13.

1. Objection: "The geocentric alternative leads to a fundamental problem: the nearest night star is Alpha Centauri, 4.3 light years away. If this star actually circles the earth every 24 hours, then its speed must be nearly 10,000 times faster than the speed of light! Such motion is clearly impossible in our physical universe. The earth's motion is clearly shown by the graceful movement of the sun, moon, and stars through the sky."³³

2. Response:

a. Physical answer: The speed of light (186,000 mph.) is operational within the space of the heavens. The heavens, likened unto a spinning top, moves as a unit. The face of the heavens moves about 1040 m.p.h. relative to the immobile earth at the equator. The embedded sun, moon, stars, galaxies, etc. move relative to each other as a unit around the earth daily.

b. Scriptural answer: The Lord told Job he did not know the laws of the heavens, and that they could not be superimposed on the earth (Job 38:33).

IV. The History of Geocentrism

A. The historical summary of the demise of Geocentricism

1. Moses: revelationally geocentric.
2. Ancient Greeks: observationally geocentric.
3. Early Christians: biblically geocentric.
4. Medieval RCC: geocentric.
5. Renaissance: Qualified geocentric/observationally heliocentric.
6. Scientific Awakening: observationally heliocentric.
7. Evolution: philosophically and observationally heliocentric.
8. Einstein: philosophically heliocentric.
9. Sagan: philosophically a-centric.

B. Human Responses to the fact of the historical demise of geocentricity.

1. Martin Luther (16th century): "This is what that fellow (Copernicus) does who wishes to turn the whole of astronomy upside down. Even in these that are thrown into disorder I believe the holy Scriptures, for Joshua commanded the sun to stand still and not the earth."³⁴
2. John Calvin (16th century): "The heavens revolve daily; immense as is their fabric, and inconceivable the rapidity of their revolutions, we experience no concussion--no disturbance in the harmony of their motion."³⁵
3. Matthew Henry (17th century) on Josh. 10:12-13: "Israel's help came from above the clouds, the sun itself, who by his constant motion serves the whole earth, by halting..."³⁶

³³Donald DeYoung, "Does the Earth Really Move? A Look at Geocentrism," *Creation* 10 (June-August, 1988): 11.

³⁴Helmut T. Lehmann and Theodore G. Tappert, *Luther's Works Table Talk* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress Publ., 1967), pp. 358-359.

³⁵F. N. Lee, *Calvin on the Sciences* (Foxton, England: Burlingame Press, 1969), p. 41.

³⁶*Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible: Genesis to Joshua*, Vol. I (NY: Fleming H. Revell Company, n.d.), loc. cit.

4. Matthew Poole (17th century) on Eccl. 1:5: "The sun is in perpetual motion, sometimes arising, and sometimes setting, and then arising again, and so constantly repeating its course in all succeeding days, and years, and ages; and the like he observes concerning the winds and rivers, ver. 6,7."³⁷

5. John Owen (17th century) on Ps. 19: "The visible heavens are thus a revelation of God, the sun bringing by His circlings successive day and night in turn."³⁸

Summary and Conclusion

The Lord wrote the Bible from a geocentric perspective. Christians may be influenced by secular science and reject this teaching through sophisticated hermeneutics such as poetic expressions or as "phenomenology." Or Bible believers may allow the Lord God to speak and teach the truth about His creation.

There is a place for biblical seminaries to teach students research procedures and proper documentation. However, when the exegesis of Scripture is subjugated to the wisdom of man,³⁹ whether through the influence of lexical and grammatical helps or commentaries, the seminary has failed and the seminarian becomes a weak student of Scripture. *EBTS* seminarians are being prepared to study the Scriptures, and are being encouraged to exhibit manly courage in the face of the pseudo-science of the world and of the peer pressure of biblically anemic fundamentalism.

³⁷Matthew Poole, *A Commentary on the Holy Bible: Psalms-Malachi*, Vol. II (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publ., reprint), p. 279.

³⁸John Owen, *Biblical Theology: The Nature, Origin, Development, and Study of Theological Truth* (Morgan, PA: Soli Deo Gloria Publ., 1994 reprint of 1661 edition), p. 38.

³⁹"That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God" (I Cor. 2:5).