

COMMENTS ON MR. VERDUIN'S ESSAY

1. All evangelicals believe that man is a created being, but we have varied ideas on unrevealed details of how God created.
2. Consider the phrase "God breathed into his nostrils the breath of life." If God is Spirit and no man has seen him, then he has no body, hence no lungs; so God did not literally breathe out a puff of air. Therefore the meaning of the phrase is "God made man alive." Because the breathing made man "a living soul," we need to know what biblical use is made of this phrase. In Genesis 1:24 the animals are called "living creatures," which Hebrew scholars say is the same word used of man, "living soul." So God, who first made living creatures, later by his breath makes man the same kind of living creature.
3. But man is not just a living creature, possessing only a physiological nature common to animals. He is also made in the image of God (which, to author Verduin, means that man reminds one of God because man creates). A Yale biologist, Edmund Sinnott, has emphasized that man's unique feature is his creative imagination. But are not man's consciousness of God and man's awareness of "oughts" and "ought nots" also attributes of His image? James M. Murk of the anthropology department of Wheaton College holds that "three things are unique to man: (1) All his behavior is learned; (2) he has a complex symbolizing capacity enabling multiple abstractions (creative imagination?) and extrinsic symbolic representation; (3) he has a moral sense."
4. The "dust" of which man was made is the "dust" to which he returns. It is composed of proteins, carbohydrates, fats, and other chemical compounds that eventually after death become such elements as carbon, hydrogen, oxygen, and nitrogen, or simple combinations of them. Hence "dust" is earthy material, and man is "earthy", as well as spiritual. We do not know in what combinations the chemicals existed in the dust when God started to make man.
5. Fossils of man are scarce and fragmentary but reveal that creatures which in most respects are similar to modern man in anatomy yet differed from him in minor details of size, skull, capacity, brow ridges, and chin. Upright posture and a distinctive kind of teeth are the criteria for anatomical man. Even the Australopithecines (the South Africa man-apes) had pelvic bones that reveal bipedal locomotion of some kind. Washburn believes they could run but not walk for long distances. But all monkeys and apes are quadrupeds. No fossil specimens, considered by evolutionists to be men, are connected by a series of intermediates to four-footed beasts. The supposed ancestors of men are way back in the early Pliocene, about ten million years earlier than the earliest man-like organisms.
6. Man, as evolutionists identify him, first appears in the early Pleistocene or very late Pliocene (about 2,000,000 years ago), recent strata, not in the Cretaceous (as Verduin writes)—a

difference of 70,000,00 years. The three-toed horse of the White River Badlands is considered Oligocene, and the saber-toothed tiger is Pleistocene.—Dr. Russel L. Mixer, professor of zoology, Wheaton College, Wheaton, Illinois.

In general this article shows some very good insights into certain historical problems in the relation of Christianity and science, into the theological concepts about creation, and into some of the pertinent problems about exegesis. Its basic thesis that the “dust” or “earth” out of which man was made could be *organic* dust rather than *inorganic* mud was proposed in the nineteenth century and is not particularly new. But the mentality that demands that all creation is instantaneous and that all notions of process in creation are concessions to evolution must be periodically challenged, lest it lead to a hardened orthodoxy that can be creative neither in its exegesis nor its relation to science.

The main strength of the paper is its attempt to preserve an open dialogue among evangelicals about creation and science and exegesis and theology, so that we do not prematurely settle on a position that might be indefensible in coming decades. For this reason the emphasis on creation as being *both* instantaneous and progressive, and on God’s activity as *both* transcendental and immanent, is to be well taken. The attempt to bring some creative imagination into the exegesis of Genesis 2 is also worthy.

Nevertheless, I find myself in fundamental disagreement with the paper. The *unstated* thesis seems to be that after all Genesis 1 and particularly 2 is a bit of science before science, of anthropology before scientific anthropology. In the nineteenth century Christian geologists found the geological column in Genesis 1. Thus we had geology before geology. But that thesis has been rather thoroughly exploded. Verduin’s paper seems to me to be a subtle reassertion of this now discredited thesis.

My thesis is twofold: (1) We must bring into focus *all* the biblical passages that refer to creation to develop a *totally* biblical doctrine of creation and not restrict our vision to Genesis 1 and 2. This has been ably stated by Clau Westerman in *Der Schöpfungsbericht vom Anfang der Bibel*. This applies to man as well as to the cosmos. And (2) we must learn to radically rethink creation as a Hebrew would think it and not as we in the twentieth century would think it. Siegfried Herrmann’s article, “*Die Naturlehredes Schöpfungsberichtes*” (*Theologische Literaturzeitung*, June, 1961) is such an attempt, as in Martin Giersch’s *Es Werde: Entwicklungslehre und Schöpfungsvericht*. There is also Barth’s massive attempt to recover the really biblical doctrine of creation (though unfortunately corrupted with too much allegorical exegesis) in *Church Dogmatics*, III/I. I am sorry to limit my references to German and Swiss sources, but I think these men are outthinking us at this point. Verduin does not interact with this kind of material; but I think a truly biblical and truly theological notion of creation is going to come from these circles, and not from the surreptitious notion in American orthodox and fundamentalist circles that Genesis 1 is only revelation or inspired if it in some way anticipates

modern science.—Dr. Bernard Ramm, professor of systematic theology and Christian apologetics, California Baptist Theological Seminary, Covina, California.

When a short article discusses a broad subject, the author does not have enough space to make himself fully explicit. For this reason it is hard to understand precisely what Dr. Verduin's position is, and therefore criticism may turn out to be misapprehension.

That God immanently controls natural processes is entirely acceptable; but that the verb "create" refers to such control and formation of plants and animals is a bit of Hebrew grammar that the author does not quite establish.

However, if *bara* can refer to process and formation, so that one can properly say that man creates, why does the author deny that animals create too? Bees create honey. The fact that man also *invents* is not a good reason for excluding the process bees use from the concept of formation, if process is equated with creation.

A more important point is whether the Lord even "starts from scratch." If the power to create is God's image in man, and if man does not start from scratch, is it clear that God creates *ex nihilo*? The wording of the article seems to suggest that God does not. If this be so, then God works on an eternal and independent matter, and there is no *bara* at all.

Again, when the author makes man continuous with the lower animal world and also continuous with the still lower inorganic world, are we to assume that he intends to teach that a continuous process produced life from the inanimate? The author should be allowed more space to make himself clear.

Toward the end of the article, the tone changes. The author notes the extremely sparse evidence in favor of the evolution of man from animals. The implications go in the direction of theistic, the irruptive, the immediate creation *ex nihilo* of *bara*.

During the Darwin celebrations of 1959-60, I served as devil's advocate on a panel. The zoologist had given an enthusiastic account of total, atheistic evolution from atom to man. Then I referred to the multiple gaps in the fossil remains of plants. Earlier these gaps were explained away by the arrested development of geology. When more excavations were made, it was said, the gaps would be filled. But now the geological strata are well represented all the way down, and the gaps remain. To my surprise, the gentleman who has been so enthusiastic for total evolution replied, Yes, the botanical evidence for evolution is nil.—Dr. Gordon H. Clark, professor of philosophy, Butler University, Indianapolis, Indiana.

Leonard Verduin's thesis is that the Genesis depiction of man's creation from "the dust of the ground" (2:7) is "poetic circularity" and hence does not necessarily exclude a dependence on lower forms but rather presupposes that God specially endowed an animal with rational-moral-spiritual qualities.

1. Even if we regard the passage as poetry, the biblical account itself nowhere associates "from the dust" (cf. "unto dust shall thou return," Gen. 3:19) with an animal derivation. Is

not the meaning more precisely suggested by Jesus' emphasis that "ye are from beneath; I am from above: ye are of this world; I am not of this world" (John 8:23; cf. v. 42)? (Cf. "The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is the Lord from heaven." I Cor. 15:47; cf. John 3:31.)

2. The Apostle Paul not only reasserts the Genesis emphasis on graded orders of existence but also specifically contrasts the flesh of man with that of the beasts so as to suggest their essential difference: "All flesh is not the same flesh; but there is one kind of flesh of men, another flesh of beasts..." (I Cor. 15:39).
3. Both the incarnation of God in Christ and the final resurrection of the dead imply the uniqueness of the human body.
4. In the divine creation of Eve as a helpmate for Adam there is no intimation of animal derivation, but the creation of Eve is related to Adam's own nature in distinction from that of the brutes (Gen. 2:21).
5. The Genesis account specifically details the ingredients that qualify human nature in distinction from the animals: (1) the *imago Dei*, that is, a rational-moral-spiritual ability with which man is divinely endowed at the outset of his existence; (2) a physical constitution distinctively intermeshed with this psychic experience, in view of man's special destiny in history (the crown of God's creation) and in eternity. The narrative does not rule out the possibility of God's use and transformation of a prior animal form; but it does not specifically assert this, nor can it be held actually to imply it. No such "implication" was found in the passage by exegetes until after the rise of evolutionary theory.
6. Mr Verduin proposes no internal criterion for distinguishing aspects of the Genesis account that are to be taken poetically from those that are to be taken literally, so that the introduction of this device would seem to render uncertain the sense of the entire creation narrative.—Dr. Carl F. H. Henry, editor.