

Portrait of Confusion: Science, the Bible, and the Christian Academy

By Micahel W. Kelley

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I.

Two books to appear recently, published under the auspices of the Calvin Center for Christian Scholarship, provide ample evidence of the corroding influence of modern humanistic unbelief that is sweeping the contemporary Christian college: *Science Held Hostage* : (what pompous nonsense!) *What's Wrong with Creation Science AND Evolutionism* and *Portraits of Creation: Biblical and Scientific Perspectives on the World's Formation* (that there is anything in it on the “world's formation” that can be remotely called “Biblical” is a claim that can be made only on the basis of an ingenious chicanery!).

Written by-and-large by Calvin College and Seminary faculty (or, ex-faculty) under the leadership of Howard J. Van Till, both provide monumental testimony to an imperious ambition by academic elites to lead the untutored and naive Christian student from a narrow-minded servility to Scripture to the promised land of *scientific* enlightenment. Each book might have appeared to offer us an array of claims, facts and supposedly incontrovertible data which are presumably the privileged arcana of scientists in every area of their expertise. In fact, neither is really a book about science on the level of mundane discovery. The purpose of the various authors is not to offer the reader an excursion through a variety of fields of factual scientific research and investigation. Instead, each proposes to argue for *a vision of science as such* as an *epistemological* enterprise which, as they claim, possesses an authority to which even Scripture must submit if it is to retain the least respect among thinking men. In other words, the purpose is to present a *philosophy* of science—a type and concept of knowledge in general - and then to declare it to be the interpretive epistemological starting-point for all thought, truth, and understanding concerning man and his world. It is a viewpoint, however, that will unavoidably conflict with Scripture. That is, it will necessarily contradict what God's Word-revelation says about man and his world, as well as what man knows and can

expect to know both of himself and the world he lives in.

The central issue to emerge from these two books, although cleverly disguised by the authors, is whose *word* is to be believed—man's or God's. That is, whose word should have interpretive epistemological authority in the explanation of man and his world, Scripture (God) or science (man)? While much of what each book wishes to say concerning the Scripture-science dispute would appear to be restricted to two particular areas of God's Word, namely, its teaching concerning the creation and the flood, they are in truth assaults on the credibility of God's Word in its entirety. *Science*, as most honest people are readily aware, is hardly likely to declare itself independent of, and interpretatively authoritative over, Scripture at one place and not do so at every place. If God did not accomplish what, and how, His Word says He did *in one part*—and science today is certain that He did not—then can we be certain that God's actions, as recorded anywhere in Scripture, are to be believed? It is simply nonsense to think that if one is prepared to deny that, based upon the alleged authority of science, the words of Scripture mean precisely what they say in one place, that one can therefore trust what Scripture says at any place? If any one thing cited as an act of God must first pass the test of scientific verifiability before it can be made intelligible, let alone acceptable, to the modern mind, then everything which He is said to have done will eventually be required to meet the same test. If the language of Scripture, which anyone with a modicum of ability could possibly read or understand, cannot be trusted to be accurate and veracious because, when it is thought to conflict with the so-called insights of science, it is said to convey *religious* meaning in mythological garb, how is anyone to know for certain that everything upon which Scripture speaks is not so much fantasy as well? In other words, how do we know that *all* that we believed was the truth of Scripture is not merely some outer layer of mythological or pseudo-poetical verbiage? These questions, and others like them, betoken the sorts of difficulties which the essays in these books raise, but do not bother to answer.

The book's authors want to appear to be Christian and believers in the Bible for the most part, but do not accept the literal Scriptural account concerning the origin of the world and man, nor that the world was at one time completely destroyed by a universal flood. They claim, instead, that science, as propounded by modern secular man, has discovered the true explanation of these events and that what the Scriptures say are not to have any validity for science. More to the point, Scripture's language is not meant to provide us with knowledge at all, merely some sort of *religious* meaning, something of some supposedly spiritual value, in accordance with the psychological needs of a personal and subjective faith. Since Scripture represents the communication of primitive men who had no real knowledge of the facts of nature or the methods of science, it must be decoded, especially if it presumes to speak of matters that necessarily conflict with modern science and its obviously superior understanding of the formative and regulative principles of nature. When it purports to address the reader with how all things came into existence or with the claim that great cataclysmic events occurred that encompassed the whole world when the so-called evidences of modern science ostensibly contradict such notions, then Scripture must be seen as talking in the language of mytho-poetry for entirely *religious* purposes. On the other hand, true knowledge is what science alone provides without any

dependence upon Scripture.

The authors of these works *rationalize* the statements of Scripture to accord with science and, at the same time, claim to defer to Scripture on other *religious* matters. To accomplish this they set up a dichotomy between what the language *says* and what it *means*. This enables them to say, for example, that on the question of the world's *formation*, science alone is infallible, whereas when the concern is to answer the question of the world's *origins*, we may piously profess to accept Scripture's *religious* explanation. Never mind that Scripture itself not only asserts *that* God created the world (origins) but also explains *how* He formed it and over what period of time. Based upon the controlling assumption of scientific explanations, they peremptorily dismiss the language of the *how* (says) as erroneous, but meanwhile profess to accept the Scriptural interpretation (meaning) *that* God somehow *created* all things. But to profess to believe in the *that* of the Scriptural account, while eliminating the *how* as mere myth is, quite simply, arbitrary. In truth, they do not believe Scripture at all. If one cannot accept what Scripture says about the formation of the universe, why should one be compelled to believe what it may possibly *mean* about the origin of it? Why ought we even to assume that formation and origin belong to different categories of thought? In the modern scientific depiction of the formative processes of the universe, in which the author's do believe, there is no need for a concept of origins that derives from an alien religious source to complete the epistemological suppositions upon which its explanation of formation is founded. It is a mere pretension of these authors to say that origins pertains to religion, whereas formation is something science alone can discover. Modern secular men can and do reject any view which sees the cosmos as anything other than self-caused, whether he speaks of origin or formation. For them the origin of the cosmos is as much a scientific *fact* as its formation. If one is unwilling to yield his mind to *everything* on which Scripture authoritatively speaks, in the ordinary meaning or the language presented, it is a mere pretense to allege that one accepts *anything* it has to say. The issue *in toto* is God's Word or man's—they have chosen man's.

At best, these works represent the confessional statements of the authors' belief in the inerrancy of the scientific enterprise concerning how the world came to exist in its present form, and their disbelief in how the Bible describes the same. At worst, they contain the elaborate *obiter dicta* of a distinct “philosophy of science”, fortified throughout by a very large dose of *folk theology*, designed to convey to susceptible minds the colossal impression that unless we wish to commit a *sacrificium intellectus* we had better bow in humility before *sacred* science. The high priests have spoken!

At the root of any philosophical perspective lies, consciously or unconsciously, a philosophy of man. Any assertion that man claims to be able to make about his world is *ipso facto* an assertion about man himself. The authors of these works make universal pronouncements about what it is in man's power to know. At no point, however, do they provide a Christian (i.e., Biblical!) view of man, so that a Christian view of *knowing* can be seen to rest at the basis, and provide the starting-point, of their analyses. That would require starting with Scripture, and this they will not do. They peremptorily assert that

what a Christian is required to accept or reject in the matter of human knowledge is to be defined by the world of humanistic philosophy. They claim, then, that all men, including Christians, must submit to a dualistic principle on all questions of knowledge. After the thinking of Kant, the realm of phenomena is the realm of science and man's sole authority on questions of knowledge and truth; whereas the noumenal realm is the realm of religion (or theology). Christians may take what the Bible says seriously and meaningfully as relevant to subjective and personal concerns but not what it says or may appear to say about the nature of the development or working of the physical cosmos. Such a philosophical perspective is a claim to delimit the revelation of God and to declare that where science speaks there God must perforce remain silent! In the end, any claim to possess epistemological sovereignty is the claim to possess metaphysical sovereignty. If man asserts sovereignty in the matter of knowing, he will declare himself lord over the realm of the being which he claims to know. And if man declares himself sovereign in the *phenomenal* realm he will indirectly declare himself sovereign in that other, *noumenal* realm as well, even if the sovereignty he exercises there is only negative. That is, he will claim to possess final say as to what in the matter of religion he will permit to have as a voice in the affairs of life (including knowledge). Such a claim is never the product of science *per se*; it is the philosophical presupposition of the man who purports to be doing science. Although these authors pretend to divide science from religion and limit each to its own inviolable territory, by the very fact that they make universal negative assertions about what God's revelation is allowed to say about the phenomenal realm, they declare the authority of man's word to be the final court of appeal not only for *science*, but for *religion* as well. Thus, even in the domain of *theology* one may not say anything truly unless one has first been epistemologically purified at the altar of science!

Both books appear to be the combined thinking of several authors, which is doubtless so. Yet, when it comes to an articulation of the central ideological position of all these essays one writer, and one writer alone, stands out as the definitive voice—Howard Van Till. As for clarifying the essential *philosophical* position, he is the principle spokesman. Others, though they may provide a community of support, add nothing whatever to the fundamental thesis enunciated by Van Till. He is the leading voice, they are the backup performers. Naturally, it is Van Till's contributing essays that deserve the most attention.

What is more, Van Till articulates not only the creedal position by which they all profess to think and carry on as scientists; he, at the same time, defines the *theological* position which is alone acceptable to the modern and sophisticated scientific mind. Although one might have supposed that in the essay by Stek, the token theologian in the group, the theological position would have been delineated, such is not the case. Stek provides nothing but the supposed confirmation for an ideological viewpoint already determined elsewhere. He is nothing more than a yes-man. Not only is the scientific philosophy determined by Van Till, but the theological one as well. Stek is merely useful for giving the sop of respectability from the professional theological community. His vaunted opinions are no more based upon Scripture than Van Till's, the ideological chairman among this coterie of biblical nay-sayers.

II.

A popular slogan has emerged in recent years as a clever defense against the susceptibleness to unenlightened objections of this philosophically revamped Scriptural message. It reduces to the following quip: “After all, the Bible is not a scientific treatise!” This crafty line is uttered repeatedly by the Van Till legions in the colleges and seminaries, and echoed by their camp followers in the churches and various lay circles. It is voiced with all the assurance of the refined dilettante. It is the alpha and omega of the modern *philosophaster*, evoked with all the linguistic ritual of magic and incantation. For the urbane philosophe, whose airs of certitude outweigh his compunction to doubt, it has become a heuristic device of the first order. For him it resolves every issue, concludes every argument, settles every dispute. He wears it around his mind like a carapace designed to ward off the ignorant and contemptible clamor that rises up from the unlearned barbarians who are condemned to dwell beyond the pale of the citadel of the rational elites.

Indeed, for those who believe forthrightly that the unprejudiced mind of man is the ultimate starting-point in the interpretation of *all* that exists (God, the World, and Man's experience all included!), depicting the issue by means of this type of sophistry is altogether advantageous. In the first place, it puts the Bible-thumper, unless he is happy to be deemed an idiot, singularly on the defensive. After all, what normally intelligent soul would wish to deny that the Bible is not a textbook on science—if by science is meant such matters as the study of atomic particles or molecular changes, mechanical processes or the conversion of energy into work, the properties of electricity or the nature of gravitational forces on bodies in space (we could add mathematics, chemical and biological processes, and literally hundreds of other such fields of study). But, then, this is not really to the point, for, secondly, the reason the problem is constructed this way is in order to set limitations on what Scripture may be permitted to say to the man who engages in the enterprise of science. It is in order to declare the field of science off-limits to Scripture, so that the scientist need not have to bother with statements of Scripture that interfere or fail to comport with, especially, a study of the cosmos that man is certain he can truly know solely by reason of his own inherent intellectual resources. It is in order to confine Scripture and its content to *religion*, while science is set free to pursue *truth*. It is a clever, and subtle, way to make God's absolute word dependent on man's word. It is a shrewd formula that enables man's interpretive word to acquire an independent authority, thereby liberating man from the necessity to interpret himself and all things in the light of God's authoritative and prior interpretation.

The motive behind this desire to place science in independence from Scripture does not derive from science properly understood. It has its origins in man's first refusal, at Satan's prompting, to submit in complete obedience to God's word alone. It is a deeply ensconced religious quest on man's part to be his own god and therefore his own authoritative interpreter of what is true and what is false. Science is undoubtedly a powerful means to accomplish that end. Those who claim science to be an independent source of knowledge

and truth must also claim it to be an infallible source, for there is no authority in what is *not* infallible. And while the attempt is made piously to separate science from religion (i.e., from Scripture!) there cannot be two sources of infallible authority. If men can have true knowledge in independence of Scripture, which is to say independently of God, then Scripture ceases to have authority in any sense.

It is precisely this sort of cognitive epistemological dualism that lies at the root of the thinking of Van Till and company. As Van Till, in particular, is the ideological mouthpiece in these works, it is in his contributing essays where one meets with the strategic assumptions that undergird the epistemological theory in question. He is at great pains philosophically to insist on "the distinction between the scientific and religious domains of concern..."(S.H.H.p.10)

Here is the cardinal starting-point. Is it something he discovered in his observations of the planets and galaxies? He certainly did not imbibe this assumption from Scripture! He would be hard put *scientifically* to demonstrate its validity. Yet, it is the core philosophical assumption upon which he and his comrades take their stand. But there is still more. Another non-scientifically derived and pontificated assumption is added to the first one. It is that the "realm of science", unlike the "realm of religion", is a cognitive domain that possesses "inherent intelligibility".(p.20) What does Van Till mean by this? He means that "natural science is the investigation of what can be known from within the physical world itself, without reference to anything that is nonphysical."(p.19) Let no thought intrude of a God Who now, or at any time in the past, actively engages in running the *physical* universe, if by this we mean a denial of autonomous laws of operation and their epistemological control by man's mind exclusively. Nor should we assume that His word must define what a *fact* is or why or whether such a thing as science is even possible apart from the God Who created both the knower and the known and connected them together. Most of all, we should perish the thought that God ever made understanding the physical realm of things absolutely dependent on a true knowledge of God Himself and a careful obedience to His word-revelation as the moral-religious *sine qua non* for understanding anything!

If the "realm of science", that is, the dimension of physical reality, is inherently intelligible, how did it get that way? God could not be the responsible agent for making things to be intelligible because that would mean we would have to interpose something from the "realm of religion" onto that of science and physical nature that is entirely disallowed. Van Till accepts the assumption that the "realm of science" is intelligible simply by reason of the nature of things themselves and the fact of their existence. He accepts, then, the basic *humanistic* assumption that no God is necessary in order to give things their intelligibility, that whatever is intelligible to man is entirely the product of chance. Something, we don't know precisely what or how, within the nature of physical reality itself is totally responsible for the existence, meaning, and purpose it possesses, simply because man declares it so. Man, apparently, can have at least some aspect of his existence or experience in which no God need even be taken into consideration, let alone consciously acknowledged or morally obeyed. And if an aspect, why not the *whole* ? Who

is to say that apart from what is "inherently intelligible" anything beyond this realm need only be admitted by way of a limiting concept? Why pretend that a "realm of religion" is anything other than a failure on the part of man *exhaustively* to understand all that is inherently intelligible? Perhaps, the inherently intelligible is all there is? This is certainly accepted as true by non-Christian men. Why not for Van Till, et. al.?

The concept of science as a domain of "inherent intelligibility" is concocted to serve two interests for the man of science who finds science to be that word of interpretation in which he means to place his faith as over against God's word of interpretation. First of all, it is a concept that, in fact, has little to do with *objective* reality; it has mainly to do with man himself. Things are inherently intelligible because man is inherently God-like in intellect and rationality. If things possess "inherent intelligibility" it is because man is inherently intelligible himself and is the ultimate source of other things being intelligible. Physical nature is intelligible because man, and man *alone*, imparts intelligence to it. Without man all would be mute and without meaning. Man's logic or reason is the criterion of cognitive truth.

Of course, Van Till means to be clever in the way he defends these assumptions. He does not claim that every man's mind is a little independent world of truth and understanding. Rather, he stresses the fact of mankind as a unity and the fact of history as the background to the development of the race as a whole. Each man in himself is only potentially a universe of inherent intelligence. Nor did the race start out fully possessed of such character and ability. It is, instead, "by experience and reflection [that] the human race has come to view the physical world as intelligible..." (p.18) It is the assumption that mankind's "experience and reflection" is an absolute starting-point not simply for the knowledge of things outside of man, but for a proper knowledge of man himself. By starting from experience, one may proceed to define man apart from what Scripture (religion!) says. One may assume that man's experience is what it is, once again, by reason of the fact that it is and nothing more. Moreover, one may assume that man's experience has never undergone the sort of change that Scripture, in its depiction of the Fall of man, says it has. So one need not assume that man's experience and reflection is basically and entirely defective and, therefore, is altogether unreliable as a source of truth in any sense, cognitive or otherwise.

In the second place, a realm of religion is set apart from the realm of science not because thinking *per se* compels this distinction, but because Van Till, like humanistic men in general, wishes to prevent all unwarranted encroachments of *religion* on matters of *science*. It is not merely that they differ in the object of investigation, it is that science takes precedence over religion in all matters of knowledge and truth. Religion may only be permitted an entrance when science has finished its work. That work is possible only when it remains uncontaminated by religion. However, that work does not cease when it reaches the boundary of religion, but it is in constant process of pushing that boundary back. The more man knows the less need of religion. (After all science today, so it is claimed, has a more accurate grasp of the beginning and formation of the universe than is to be found in Scripture, and now knows with utter certainty that no flood, such as is

described there also, could possibly have occurred!) The danger that threatens always emerges from the side of religion. This is because religion possesses no inherent intelligibility. It is not cognitive in any sense, but is merely concerned with matters of “commitments”, “emotional interests” and “personal relationships”. Religion stands outside the domain of knowledge in any true sense. It is always a matter of “subjective” concern and is prejudiced by non-rational factors. For Van Till, religion is not something that is based on an *objective* authority. Only science possesses objective authority, namely, the consensus of the scientific community which is incapable of error. According to Van Till, this community arrives at this consensus by means of a study of “the relevant empirical data.”(p.34) This “data” is independent of religion or its concerns, and is therefore not disputed by what Scripture might happen to say that would contradict conclusions deduced from it. Once again this is an assertion about the mind of man engaged in cognitive endeavors. Data are “relevant” only when and if men decide that they are.

Van Till dismisses any notion which begins with the Biblical warrant that insists that man, because of a basic moral defect at the center of his being, is incapable of evaluating truly the data pertaining to any part of reality to which he happens to turn his attention. The Bible, after all, is religion. Not only does it have nothing to contribute to the cognitive activity of the scientific community, it is not even required to provide the moral criteria by which the scientific enterprise is to be carried out. Declares Van Till; “To be cognizant of the limited domain of science is a matter of competence; to know the boundary of that domain is a matter of integrity.” (p.144) Matters of “competence”, “integrity”, and “sound judgment” are all moral evaluations that are decided without reference to the word of God. Man is entirely capable of moral self-interpretation in independence of the authority of Scriptural revelation. The possession of these moral attributes is not in any way restricted by what Scripture defines as sin and depravity.

III.

To define the problem as one of science and religion, or science versus religion, is to lead the understanding down a false philosophical trail. It is false, because it is unBiblical. It is unBiblical because it reasons that man is capable of a correct interpretation of himself and his world prior to and independently of what God has said. That is, the real issue has to do with the priority of God's mind over man's mind in the interpretation of the world as a whole, including its physical dimension, man's place and experience in it, and whether or not man could know anything truly at all if he did not presuppose God's word-revelation as the starting-point of knowledge. That word-revelation declares three fundamental truths about man and his world to be essential to understanding both him and it: first, that man was created by God and made to be like God, only on a finite scale, and that he initially lived in a perfect world unaffected by corruption and death; that, secondly, man rebelled ethically against God and received as the consequence the punishment of death and dying, the latter being a simple way to describe the condition of complete depravity into which he was cast, including his intellect and reason, so that he ceased any longer to

think correctly either about himself or the world around him and least of all about God and matters of religion; and, that thirdly, in order to restore man to soundness of being and thinking (among other things) God instituted a program of redemption in which the agent in this restoration was none other than His Spirit whose regenerative powers alone could set men again on the pathway of truth and (cognitive) understanding about himself, the world (including physical nature), and God especially.

As a corollary of this Biblical teaching about man some essential points necessarily follow. Of these, some will bear on man *before* the Fall and others *after* the Fall.

In the first place, in the original creation situation man (in Adam) did not live in an environment in which *religion* and *science* were divided into separate and unconnected categories of thought. Nor was Adam simply bound to God in the matter of religion, but independent and autonomous so far as science was concerned. Science, in fact, far from its being an endeavor that Adam (Man) might have invented for himself, was an activity which in God's purpose He created for man in order that man might acquire a richer insight into the nature of the creation, and in this way increase in dominion over it. But to accomplish this man would be required to submit in complete ethical obedience to God's word-revelation. Man would have to conform his mind and intellect *religiously* to God's word-revelation if he expected to think correctly about himself, the world in general, and God in particular. God made a true knowledge of Himself the basis upon which man could hope to have true knowledge of anything. This knowledge of God included a correct understanding not only of God's *person* but also His *works*! The most essential work in this regard was the creation of the world and of man. This was a knowledge that man, *even before the Fall*, had to receive by way of *revelation*. Nothing in the nature of man's experience, neither within himself nor in the surrounding natural environment, could ever have informed him of the truth in this respect. Furthermore, this explanation of God as the Creator extended to the very method and pattern by which He acted—in other words, to the “formative process”. Adam accepted and believed that God created the world in six days and man from the dust of the ground. Nor did it enter his mind that the *facts* of nature would prove otherwise. It never occurred to him, initially at least, to set his mind over against God's, nor to see that what was true for religion was truth of a different kind than truth in the realm of nature and scientific cognition. For him, truth was a unit and essentially religious, including what he knew in the realm of nature, because his interpretative authority for truth *in any area* was God's word-revelation.

But, now, all this changed profoundly with the Fall of man into sin. In his rebellion against God's moral authority over him, man became perverted in his heart and his understanding was darkened. He no longer was willing to submit his thoughts to God's thoughts in order to be able to think correctly about himself, the world (cosmos), and God especially. This rebellion spread to every aspect of his nature, including his intellect and his capacity to reason. Instead of interpreting all things in the light of God's interpretation, man now wished to think of himself as an ultimate starting-point in the matter of knowledge and truth. Such *religious* contumacy is now deeply rooted in man the thinker and doer of science. Starting from himself he proclaims his own intellectual endeavors as

sound and absolute. In his cognitive procedure he will prove himself to be clever and cunning. He will shout and pontificate about *facts* and *data*. But all the while he does so with himself as the unquestioned and undisputed source of truth and error. The world was not created and formed in the way mentioned in Scripture. What God's word says is myth. In fact, there really is no word of God, but only man's culturally conditioned pious reflections on ineffable religious experiences. Scripture is nothing more than man's thinking about God, and his willingness to see natural processes as consequences of His actions. We moderns, especially since Galileo, Copernicus, Darwin, and Einstein, are not so *primitive*.

The modern non-Christian thinks of the mind of man as basically free from the corruption of sin and as an ultimate starting-point for knowledge. This outlook is one that is shared by Van Till and followers. Nor for Van Till and crew does any fundamental difference between man corrupted in Adam and man renewed in heart and mind by the regenerative power of God's Spirit enter into questions of knowledge, truth, and scientific cognition. Like Fallen men in general, they assume nature to be a realm sufficient unto itself, and the mind of man capable in itself—i.e., by reason of its own unimpaired native resources—of reading the facts of nature correctly. Contrary to Scripture, they are quite willing to accept that man can know nature correctly regardless whether or not man knows nature's God in any true sense at all. However, according to Scripture, when sin entered into man's character, he lost contact with the true God. At the same time, he lost contact in any correct epistemological sense with nature (himself included) as well. To assume that he can possibly understand nature in a true cosmological system of thought without having regained contact with the truth in God is altogether a denial of Biblical teaching. To claim that man can read the facts of nature properly if he has no true knowledge of nature's God is a thoroughly unBiblical assumption. And a realm of *religion* having to do with transcendent matters in distinction from a realm of *science* having to do with natural understanding, is not a product of Biblical thought, but is humanistic.

Sinful man, as a thinker and doer of science, is a great rationalist. As a rationalist, then, he believes it entirely possible intellectually to convert all factual existence into a nexus of *logical* relationships with himself at the center discharging absolute epistemological authority. That which proves incapable of being fitted into this logical nexus is simply dismissed from any and all fields of cognitive investigation. It is this ingrained rationalist assumption that induces Van Till to erect artificially a distinction between a domain of science where questions of cosmic *formation* may alone be legitimately dealt with, and a domain of religion where ultimate *origins* may be given consideration, so long as a belief about origins does not attempt to answer questions of natural processes and developments. In other words, on all matters of formation the nexus of logical relationships is indisputably in man's epistemological control, whereas when it concerns origins we have stepped beyond the boundary of factual existence and its logical nexus and are outside the range of inherent epistemological control. Since the first two chapters of Scripture present ideas over which man cannot achieve epistemological predominance, and since his own factual existence fits an altogether different nexus of logical explanations, it is simpler to reduce Scripture to the religious language of origins, and to

dismiss any claim that attempts to view it in the scientific language of formation.

Van Till, and those who share his outlook, are not in doubt that a Christian can have it both ways. Indeed, Christians must have it both ways! In truth, however, *both* ways reduces to *one* way. Science really takes priority over religion. It is just too much of an embarrassment, otherwise. Once one has worshipped the revelatory power and authority of science, no self-respecting intelligent person—Christians included—could possibly doubt its inerrancy and infallibility. This is not to suggest, according to Van Till, that individual scientists do not make mistakes. But even so, the “scientific community” eventually discovers the truth and its *word* acquires undisputed certainty and authority. Like the ancient mystery religions and their cult communities in which the inner circle of the elites alone possessed *Gnosis*, the modern veneration of the scientific community shares all the same pretensions of superior insight. In the Second Century Gnosticism developed as a freak combination of Christianity, Jewish and pagan speculation. It, too, believed it not only possible, but necessary, to unite Christianity with non-Christian ideas about man and the cosmos. However, in the end it completely devoured whatever was *Christian* in its system of thought. It was just one more pagan school of religion and pseudo-philosophy. What lay at the core of its system, that which it shared with ancient pagan thought in general as far back as it is possible to trace it and in whatever guise it presented itself, was the fundamental belief that man possessed an innate ability to understand and master the mysteries of the universe. It would bow to no authority but the mind of man. Today, as these two works by Van Till, et. al., make clear, the Gnosis of *scientism* has thoroughly penetrated the Christian academic world of thought.