



Scripture and Cosmology: Reading the Bible Between the Ancient World and Modern Science

By Kyle Greenwood

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Christians often claim to hold a biblical worldview. But what about a biblical cosmos view? From the beginning of Genesis we encounter a vaulted dome above the earth, a "firmament," like the ceiling of a planetarium. Elsewhere we read of the earth sitting on pillars. What does the dome of heaven have to do with deep space? Even when the biblical language is clearly poetic, it seems to be funded by a very different understanding of how the cosmos is put together. As Kyle Greenwood shows, the language of the Bible is also that of the ancient Near Eastern palace, temple and hearth. There was no other way of thinking or speaking of earth and sky or the sun, moon and stars. But when the psalmist looked at the heavens, the delicate fingerwork of God, it evoked wonder. Even today it is astronomy and cosmology that invoke our awe and point toward the depths of divine mystery. Greenwood helps us see how the best Christian thinkers have viewed the cosmos in light of Scripture?and grappled with new understandings as science has advanced from Aristotle to Copernicus to Galileo and the galaxies of deep space. It's a compelling story that both illuminates the text of Scripture and helps us find our own place in the tradition of faithful Christian thinking and interpretation.

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Scripture and Cosmology: Reading the Bible Between the Ancient World and Modern Science By Kyle Greenwood Bibliography

- Sales Rank: #1106472 in Books
- Brand: InterVarsity Press
- Published on: 2015-10-03
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 9.00" h x .70" w x 6.00" l, .55 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 251 pages

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Editorial Review

Review

"While, therefore, some readers may not agree with certain arguments or conclusions set forth in this work, Greenwood is nevertheless to be thanked for engaging and contributing to the issue in an exemplary thoughtful and irenic fashion. Also laudable is that the book is written with a high view of Scripture, reverently concerned that more care be taken to discern what the Scriptures actually teach and do not teach--lest faulty science be asserted which brings Scripture into ill repute, while straining the faith of the less-seasoned among God's people. Greenwood's tone is winsome and pastoral; rather than writing to refute the Bible's gainsayers, he has endeavored to help the challenged believer." - L. Michael Morales, *Themelios*

"*Scripture and Cosmology* is a welcome addition to the discussion [for how science and Scripture can coexist] that will prove engaging in both popular and academic contexts." - Eric J. Beck, *Expository Times*

"With good success, Greenwood has pursued the difficult task of addressing a topic from a multidisciplinary approach, so that *Scripture and Cosmology* forms something of an entry-level primer on the subject, reader-friendly both in terms of style and its condensed length. . . . Greenwood's tone is winsome and pastoral; rather than writing to refute the Bible's gainsayers, he has endeavored to help the challenged believer." (L. Michael Morales, *Themelios*, August 2016)

"Kyle Greenwood provides us with fascinating details of the ancient Near Eastern view of our universe. His thorough biblical analysis shows how this view permeates the Bible, giving us a better understanding of the message that God has for us in his Word. *Scripture and Cosmology* will be a vital resource for everyone seeking to understand the Scriptures." (Randy Isaac, executive director, American Scientific Affiliation)

"The Bible reveals God in ways that speak to all cultures, but does so from its human authors' own ancient cultures. Kyle Greenwood's *Scripture and Cosmology* explores one particular cross-cultural pressure point, the structure of the cosmos, by tracing this theme through the culture of the ancient Near East, the biblical writings and biblical interpreters who worked when early modern cosmological ideas were taking root. This example helpfully clarifies some of the difficulties Christians face as they seek God's revelation for today's culture." (Rob Barrett, The Colossian Forum)

"What does the universe look like? From the three-tiered cosmos of the ancient near eastern peoples, to the spheres of Aristotle, to the heliocentric model of Copernicus, to evolutionary biology, God's people have lived through thousands of years of change in the prevailing view of the universe. How have readers throughout history worked to take Scripture seriously in light of new scientific discoveries? Filled with rich historical and biblical detail and thorough scholarly references, this book shines the light of history on today's debates over Scripture and science." (Deborah Haarsma, president of BioLogos)

"A very thorough survey, from the ancient Near East as the setting of the Bible through the Christian West's use of the Bible in cosmological theories. And a very sensible closing chapter on the authority of Scripture and the issue of science, respecting the Bible for what it is and for what it is not. Even when we disagree on particular judgments along the way, we owe our thanks to Dr. Greenwood for this indispensable resource and for the friendly, learned and reverent tone throughout." (C. John Collins, professor of Old Testament,

Covenant Theological Seminary)

"Scientific discoveries have caused us to view the universe in completely different ways than the biblical writers. This book not only explains these differences but shows how Christians can understand them in theologically beneficial ways that enhance our readings of Scripture. Instead of being a threat to Christian belief, modern science can help us read the Bible better and deepen our appreciation of God's beauty. Because of modern science we will never again be able to read the Bible in the ways that ancient Christians did. Greenwood shows us the way forward by giving us a theologically rich reading of Scripture that embraces scientific advances. If Christianity is going to survive in the West, it must adopt the approach to reading the Bible that Greenwood offers us in this book." (Charles Halton, assistant professor in theology, Houston Baptist University)

"In the modern conversation about science and Scripture we can easily get the impression that throughout history Christian interpreters spoke with a clear and unanimous voice, upholding Scripture against science. This book not only gives us a clear understanding of the view of the cosmos found in the ancient world and in Scripture, it helps us see the many issues that biblical interpreters have struggled with throughout the centuries. It thus provides important information to help us sort through the issues that face us today." (John H. Walton, Wheaton College)

About the Author

Kyle Greenwood (PhD, Hebrew Union College) is associate professor of Old Testament and Hebrew at Colorado Christian University. He is serving as an editor for *Since the Beginning: Interpreting Genesis 1-2 Through the Ages* and contributed to books such as *The Ancient Near East: Historical Texts in Translation* and *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Historical Books*. He sits on the editorial board for the *Journal of the Evangelical Study of the Old Testament* and has written for several publications including *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* and *Journal of Ancient Near Eastern Religions*.

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