

Biblical Reasons to Doubt the Creation Days Were 24-Hour Periods

By Justin Taylor

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וְשָׁמַיִם:	אָרֶץ		אֱלֹהִים	
heavens	and	earth	God	

R. C. Sproul, who drafted the original Chicago Statement of Biblical Inerrancy, once said, “When people ask me how old the earth is, I tell them I don’t know—because I don’t.”

Contrary to what is often implied or claimed by young-earth creationists, the Bible nowhere directly teaches the age of the earth.

Rather, it is a deduction from a combination of beliefs, such as (1) Genesis 1:1 is not the actual act of creation but rather a summary of

or title over Genesis 1:2-2:3; (2) the creation week of Genesis 1:2-2:3 is referring to the act of creation itself; (3) each “day” (Heb. *yom*) of the creation week is referring to an 24-hour period of time (reinforced by the statement in Exodus 20:11); (4) an old-earth geology would necessarily entail macroevolution, hominids, and animal death before the Fall—each of which contradicts what Scripture tells us; and (5) the approximate age of the earth can be reconstructed backward from the genealogical time-markers in Genesis.

These five points may all be true, but I think it’s helpful to understand that the question “how old is the earth?” is not something directly answered in Scripture but rather deduced from these and other points.

It is commonly suggested that this is such a “plain reading” of Scripture—so obviously clear and true—that the only people who doubt it are those who have been influenced by Charles Darwin and his neo-Darwinian successors. The claim is often made that no one doubted this reading until after Darwin. (This just isn’t true—from ancient rabbis to Augustine to B. B. Warfield—but that’s another post for another time.)

So it may come as a surprise to some contemporary conservatives that some of the great stalwarts of the faith were not convinced of this interpretation.

- Augustine, writing in the early fifth century, noted, “What kind of days these were it is extremely difficult, or perhaps impossible, to determine” (*City of God* 11.7).
- J. Gresham Machen (1881-1937), author of the 20th century’s best critique of theological liberalism, wrote, “It is certainly not necessary to think that the six days spoken of in that first chapter of the Bible are intended to be six days of twenty four hours each.”

- Old Testament scholar Edward J. Young (1907-1968), an eloquent defender of inerrancy, said that regarding the length of the creation days, “That is a question which is difficult to answer. Indications are not lacking that they may have been longer than the days we now know, but the Scripture itself does not speak as clearly as one might like.”
- Theologian Carl F. H. Henry (1913-2003), one of the most important theologians in the second half of the twentieth century and a defender of Scriptural clarity and authority, argued that “Faith in an inerrant Bible does not rest on the recency or antiquity of the earth. . . . The Bible does not require belief in six literal 24-hour creation days on the basis of Genesis 1-2. . . . it is gratuitous to insist that twenty-four-hour days are involved or intended.”
- Old Testament scholar and Hebrew linguist Gleason Archer (1916-2004), a strong advocate for inerrancy, wrote “On the basis of internal evidence, it is this writer’s conviction that *yôm* in Genesis could not have been intended by the Hebrew author to mean a literal twenty-four-hour day.”

I want to suggest there are some good, textual reasons—in the creation account itself—for questioning the exegesis that insists on the days as strict 24-hour periods. Am I as certain of this as I am of the resurrection of Christ? Definitely not. But in some segments of the church, I fear that we’ve built an exegetical “fence around the Torah,” fearful that if we question any aspect of young-earth dogmatics we have opened the gate to liberalism. The defenders of inerrancy above show that this is not the case. And a passion for *sola Scriptura* provides us with the humility and willingness to go back to the text again to see if these things are so.

What follows are brief sketches of biblical reasons to doubt young-earth exegesis.

1. Genesis 1:1 Describes the Actual Act of Creation Out of Nothing and Is Not a Title or a Summary

Genesis 1:1 tells us that “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.”

This is not a title or a summary of the narrative that follows. Rather, it is a *background statement* that describes how the universe came to be.

In Genesis 1:1, “created” is in the perfect tense, and when a perfect verb is used at the beginning of a unit in Hebrew narrative, it usually functions to describe an event that precedes the main storyline (see Gen. 16:1, 22:1, 24:1 for comparison).

Furthermore, the Hebrew conjunction at the beginning of Genesis 1:2 supports this reading.

If Genesis 1:1 is merely a title or a summary, then Genesis does not teach creation out of nothing. But I think Genesis 1:1 is describing the actual act of God creating “heaven and earth” (a merism for the universe, indicating totality—like “high and low,” “east and west,” “near and far,” “rising up and sitting down,” “seen and unseen”). Genesis 1:1 describes the creation of everything “visible and invisible” (Col. 1:16), with Genesis 1:2ff. focusing upon the “visible.”

After the act of creation in Genesis 1:1, the main point of the narrative (in Gen. 1:3-2:3) seems to be the making and preparation of the earth for its inhabitants, with a highly patterned structure of forming and filling.

Location, Formation, Division	Inhabitants, Filling, Multiplication
1. Light and dark	4. Lights of day and night
2. Sea and sky	5. Fish and birds
3. Land of earth	6. Animals and humans

2. The Earth, Darkness, and Water Are Created Before “The First Day”

In Genesis 1:1, God creates the “heavens and the earth.” (In Joel 3:15-16 we see that “heavens” encompasses the sun, the moon, and the stars.) Then in Genesis 1:2 we are told that this earth that was created is without form and void, that darkness covers the waters, and that the Spirit is hovering over it.

If Genesis 1:1 is *not* the act of creation, then where do the earth, the darkness, and the waters come from that are referred to in Genesis 1:2 *before* God’s first fiat? Further, if the sun is created in day four (Gen. 1:16), why do we have light already appearing in Genesis 1:3?

It helps to remember that in Hebrew there are distinct words for *create* and *make*. When the Hebrew construction *let there be* is used in the phrase “*Let your steadfast love . . . be upon us*” (Ps. 33:22; cf. Ps. 90:17; Ps. 119:76), this obviously isn’t a request for God’s love to *begin* to exist, but rather to *function* in a certain way. Similarly, if the sun, moon, stars, and lights were *created* in Genesis 1:1, then they were *made* or *appointed* for a particular function in Genesis 1:13, 14, 16—namely, to mark the set time for worship on man’s calendar.

3. The Seventh “Day” Is Not 24 Hours Long

In Genesis 2:2-3 where we are told that “on the seventh day [*yom*] God finished his work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day [*yom*] from all his work that he had done. So God blessed the seventh day [*yom*] and made it holy, because on it God rested from all his work that he had done in creation.” The question we have to ask here is: was God’s creation “rest” limited to a 24-hour period? On the contrary, Psalm 95 and Hebrews 4 teach that God’s Sabbath rest “remains” and that we can enter into it or be prevented from entering it.

Miles Van Pelt observes:

In Exod 20:11, the command for the people of God to remember the Sabbath day is grounded in God’s pattern of work and rest during the creation week. The people of God are to work for six solar days (Exod 20:9) and then rest on the seventh solar day (Exod 20:10). If, therefore, it can be maintained that God’s seventh day rest in Gen 2 extends beyond the scope of a single solar day, then the correspondence between the “day” of God’s rest and our “day” of

observance would be analogical, not identical. In other words, if day seven is an unending day, still in progress, then our weekly recognition of that day is not temporally identical. As such, there is no reason to maintain that the same could not be true for the previous six days, especially if the internal, exegetical evidence from Genesis 1 and 2 supports this reality.

4. The “Day” of Genesis 2:4 Cannot Be 24 Hours Long

After using “the seventh day” in an analogical way (i.e., similar to but not identical with a 24-hour day), we read in the very next verse, Genesis 2:4: “These are the generations of the heavens and the earth when they were created, in the day [*yom*] that the LORD God made the earth and the heavens.”

The precise meaning of this is debated. But what seems clear, if we believe the Bible does not contradict itself, is that this (singular) “day”—in which the creation events (plural “generations”) occur—cannot refer to a single 24-hour period. In fact, it does not seem to correspond to any one of the creation week days, but is either a reference to the act of creation itself (Gen. 1:1) or an umbrella reference to the lengthier process of forming and fitting the inhabitable earth (Gen. 2:2ff). In either case, this use of *yom* presents a puzzle for those who insist that “young-earth” exegesis is the only interpretation that takes the opening chapters of Genesis “literally.”

Defenders of the 24-hour view acknowledge that *yom* can mean more than a single calendar day but often insist that “[numbered] *yom*” (e.g., “first day”) always, without exception, refers to a 24-hour day in the Hebrew Bible. This is not true, however. Not only does the rest of the canon tell us that the “seventh day” is not 24 hours, but Hosea 6:2 (“third day”) seems to be used in an analogical way that does not refer to a precise 24-hour time period.

5. The Explanation of Genesis 2:5-7 Assumes More Than an Ordinary Calendar Day

In his article “Because It Had Rained” (part 1 and part 2), Mark Futato of Reformed Theological Seminary explains the logic of Genesis 2:5-7 and shows its role in OT covenantal theology.

Futato sees in this passage a twofold problem, a twofold reason, and a twofold solution.

Problem	No wild vegetation	No cultivated vegetation
Reason	No rain	No cultivator
Solution	God sent rain clouds	God formed a cultivator

The twofold problem?

1. No wild vegetation had appeared in the land.
2. No cultivated grains had yet sprung up.

The twofold reason for this problem?

1. The Lord God had not sent rain on the land.
2. There was no man to cultivate the ground.

The twofold solution to this problem?

1. God caused rain clouds to rise up from the earth and water the whole surface of the ground.
2. The Lord God formed the man.

Note the reason why there were no shrubs or small plants in the Garden: because “it had not yet rained.” The *explanation* for this lack of vegetation which is attributed to *ordinary providence*. But if the sixth day is a 24-hour period, this explanation would make little sense. The very wording of the text presupposes seasons and rain cycles and a lengthier passage of time during this “day [yom]” that God formed man. This doesn’t mean that it refers to thousands of years, or hundreds of years. It just means that it’s very doubtful it means a 24-hour period.

So What Does God Mean by “Days” in Genesis 1?

Let’s go back to the “seventh day.” On the seventh day, according to Exodus 31:17, God “rested and was refreshed.” Why would an omnipotent and inexhaustible God need to be “refreshed”? It’s the same Hebrew word used for getting your breath back after running a long race (Ex. 23:2; 2 Sam. 16:14). The reason it is not improper to say that God was refreshed is the same reason it’s not improper to say that God breathes, hovers, is like a potter, gardens, searches, asks questions, comes down, etc.—all images of God used in Genesis. God’s revelation to us is *analogical* (neither entirely identical nor entirely dissimilar) and *anthropomorphic* (accommodated and communicated from our perspective in terms we can understand).

So when God refers to “days,” does he want us to mentally substitute the word “eons” or “ages”? No.

Does he want us to think of precise units of time, marked by 24 exact hours as the earth makes a rotation on its axis? No.

Does he want us to think of the Hebrew workday? Yes, in an analogical and anthropomorphic sense. Just as the “seventh day” makes us think of an ordinary calendar day (even though it isn’t technically a 24-hour period), so the other “six days” are meant to be read in the same way.

This is what the great Reformed theologian Herman Bavinck (1854-1921) believed: “The creation days are the workdays of God. By a labor, resumed and renewed six times, he prepared the whole earth.”

This is also what the Presbyterian theologian W.G.T. Shedd (1820-1894) advocated:

The seven days of the human week are copies of the seven days of the divine week. The “sun-divided days” are images of the “God-divided days.”

This agrees with the biblical representation generally. The human is the copy of the divine, not the divine of the human. Human fatherhood and sonship are finite copies of the Trinitarian fatherhood and sonship. Human justice, benevolence, holiness, mercy, etc., are imitations of corresponding divine qualities.

The reason given for man’s rest upon the seventh solar day is that God rested upon the seventh creative day (Ex. 20:11). But this does not prove that the divine rest was only twenty-four hours in duration any more than the fact that human sonship is a copy of the divine proves that the latter is sexual.

Augustine (the most influential theologian in the Western Church) believed something similar, as did Franz Delitzsch (perhaps the great Christian Hebraist). It was the most common view among the late 19th century and early 20th century conservative Dutch theologians.

God is portrayed as a workman going through his workweek, working during the day and resting for the night. Then on his Sabbath, he enjoys a full and refreshing rest. Our days are *like* God’s workdays, but not identical to them.

How long were God’s workdays? The Bible doesn’t say. But I see no reason to insist that they were only 24 hours long.

For more on this interpretation, see C. John Collins, *Genesis 1-4: A Linguistic, Literary, and Theological Commentary* (P&R) and Vern Poythress, *Redeeming Science: A God-centered Approach* (Crossway).

I would also recommend John Lennox *Seven Days That Divide the World: The Beginning According to Genesis and Science* (Zondervan, 2011). Lennox is professor of mathematics and a fellow in the philosophy of science at Oxford University. In the lecture below, delivered at Socrates in the City (at the Union Club in New York City on January 31, 2013), he provides an accessible overview of his arguments:

For short and helpful resources on this, see Vern Poythress’s booklets, *Christian Interpretations of Genesis 1* and *Did Adam Exist?* Also, it looks like the new book by Kenneth Keathley and Mark Rooker may now be the best introduction to the issues of creation and evolution in a concise and accessible yet thorough manner: *40 Questions About Creation and Evolution* (Kregel, 2014).

For a couple of good models of Reformed believers discussing these issues with charity and care (instead of with rancor), I'd recommend Keith Matthison's free ebook, *A Reformed Approach to Science and Scripture* (originally a blog series) and the PCA's Report of the Creation Study Committee.

Finally, here is my endorsement for an important new book:

If I had the power to require every Christian parent, pastor, and professor to read two books on creation and evolution—ideally alongside their mature children, parishioners, and students—it would be *40 Questions about Creation and Evolution* (by Kenneth Keathley and Mark Rooker) along with the book you are now holding in your hands, *Controversy of the Ages: Why Christians Should Not Divide Over the Age of the Earth*.

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DOES BELIEVING IN INERRANCY REQUIRE ONE TO BELIEVE IN YOUNG EARTH CREATIONISM?

by Norman L. Geisler

The age of the earth is a hotly debated issue among evangelicals. Old Earthers believe, like most scientists, that the universe is billions of years old. Young Earthers, measure the age of the universe in terms of thousands of years. The debate is not new, but the insistence by some Young Earthers that belief in the inerrancy of the Bible demands a Young Earth position is relatively new.

The Biblical Status of the Young Earth View

In order to establish the Young Earth view, one must demonstrate that there are (1) no time gaps in the biblical record and that (2) the “days” of Genesis are six successive 24 hour days of creation.

Possible Gaps in Genesis

Unfortunately for Young Earthers, these two premises are difficult to establish for many reasons. (1) There could have been a gap of long periods of time before Genesis 1:1 (called Recent Creationism). (2) There could be a gap between Genesis 1:1 and 1:2 (called the Gap Theory with or without and intervening fall of Satan, as C. I. Scofield had it). (3) There could be long gaps between the six literal 24-hour days (Alternating Day-Age Theory). The point here is not to defend any one of these views, but it is to note that belief in an Old Earth is not incompatible in principle with belief in inerrancy and a literal interpretation of Genesis. (4) There are known gaps after Genesis. For example, Mathew 1:8 affirms that “Joram begat Uzziah.” But in 1 Chronicles 3:11-14 it mentions three missing generations between Joram and Uzziah. Likewise, Luke 3:35-36 lists one missing generation (Cainan) not mentioned in Genesis 11:20-24.

So, with demonstrable gaps in the genealogies, the “Closed-Chronology” view needed to support the strict Young Earth view is not there. This would mean that a Young Earth view of creation around 4000 B.C. would not be feasible. And once more gaps are admitted, then when does it cease to be a Young Earth views?

Evidence that the “Days” of Genesis May Involve more than Six 24-hour days of Creation

Not only is it possible that there are time gaps in Genesis 1, but there is also evidence that the “days” of Genesis are not 6 successive 24-hour days, called the Day-Age View (see Hugh Ross, *Creation and Time* and Don Stoner, *A New Look at an Old Earth*). Consider the following:

(1) First, the word “day” (Hb. *yom*) is not limited to a 24 hour day in the creation record. For instance, it is used of 12 hours of light or daytime (in Gen.1:4-5a).

(2) It is also used of a whole 24-hour day in Genesis 1:5b where it speaks day and night together as a “day.”

(3) Further, in Genesis 2:4 the word “day” is used of all six days of creation when it affirms: “These are the generations of the heavens and the earth when they were created in the day [*yom*] that the LORD God made them” (Gen. 2:4).

(4) What is more, on the “seventh day” God “rested” from His work of creation. But according to Hebrews 4:4-11, God is still resting, and we can enter into His Sabbath rest (v. 10). So, the seventh day of creation rest is still going on some 6000 plus years later (even by a Young Earth chronology).

(5) Further, there are biblical alternatives to the strongest argument for a 24-hour day. (a) For example, numbered series with the word “day” (as in Genesis 1) do not always refer to 24-hour days, as Hosea 6:1-2 shows. (b) Also, “evening and morning” sometimes refers to longer periods of time rather than 24 hours, as they do in the prophetic days of Daniel 8:14. (c) And the comparison with the work week in Exodus 20:11 need not be a minute-for-minute but a unit-for-unit comparison. Further, the seventh day is known to be longer than 24 hours (Heb. 4:4-11). So, why cannot the other days be longer too? (d) As for death before Adam, the Bible does not say that death of all life was a result of Adam’s sin. It only asserts that “death passed upon **all men**” because of Adam’s sin (Rom. 5:12, emphasis added), not on all plants and animals, though the whole creation was subject to “bondage to corruption” (Rom. 8:21).

(6) Others like Hermon Ridderbos (*Is There a Conflict Between Genesis 1 and Natural Science?*) took the “days” of Genesis as a Literary Framework for the great creative events of the past. Still others (Bernard Ramm, *The Christian View of Science and Scripture*) considered the “days” of Genesis to be six 24 hour days of *revelation* (wherein God revealed what he had done in the ancient past to the writer of Genesis) but not literal days of *creation*. Again, the point here is not to defend these views but to point out that there are alternatives to a Young Earth View, most of which are not incompatible in principle with a belief in the inerrancy of Scripture.

(7) The Relative Time View claims the Earth is both young and old, depending on how it is measured. Gerard Schroeder, a Jewish physicist (in *Genesis and the Big Bang*), argued that measured by God’s time when He created the universe it was only six literal days of creation. But measured by our time, the creation of the universe is billions of years old.

(8) *The Apparent Age View* proposes that the universe just looks old, even though it is young. The book by Philip Henry Gosse was titled *Omphalos* (1857), meaning navel, proposing that Adam had a navel, even though he was created as an adult. Likewise, on this view the first tree would have had rings in them the day they were created.

If there is evidence for Gaps in Genesis and longer period of time involved in the six day of Genesis, then the Young Earth view fails to convincingly support its two pillars. At a minimum it leaves room for reasonable doubt. In view of this, one can ask why is it that many still cling to the Young Earth view with such tenacity.

A Theological Assumption

For some the belief in a Young Earth seems to be based on a kind of intuition or faith in God's omnipotence. It reasons that if God is all powerful, then certainly He would not have taken millions of years to make the earth. However, by *reduction ad absurdum*, one could ask why God did not create it in six minutes or six second rather than six days? If He is all-powerful and can make something from nothing, then why did He not create the whole thing lock-stock-and barrel instantaneously!

The Evolutionary Fear

Many Young Earthers seemed to be afraid to grant long periods of time for fear that it may help support an evolutionary conclusion. However, this is unnecessary for two reasons. First, time as such does not help evolution. Dropping red, white, and blue confetti from an airplane a thousand feet above the ground will not produce an American flag in one's yard. And going up to ten thousand feet (and giving it more time to fall) will not help. Time as such does not organize things into complex designs; it further randomizes the material. It takes an intelligent cause to form it into an American flag. Further, separating God's supernatural acts of revelation to Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, and the prophets by many hundreds of years does not make them less supernatural. It just makes his revelation progressive over a period of time. The same could be true of God's acts of creation, if they were separated by long periods of time.

Second, there are plenty of other problems with macro-evolution for it does not explain (without an intervening intelligent cause) how (a) something can come from nothing; b) how non life cannot come from life; c) how non-consciousness can produce consciousness, and d) how non-rational beings can produce rational beings. Longer periods of time as such do not overcome any of these problems; it takes intelligent intervention to do it.

As we have seen, both premise of the Young Earth View are open to serous objections. There is no air-tight case for a Young Earth from a biblical point of view. So, while it may be compatible with inerrancy, nonetheless, inerrancy does not necessitate a belief in a Young Earth.

The Historical Status of the Young Earth Theory

Historically, the Young Earth View has never garnered an important, let alone a crucial role in the history of the Church. It was known to the early Church Fathers (see St. Augustine, *City of God* 11.6), but it was never made an essential doctrine, let alone given a special status.

First of all, Young Earth creationism was never given a creedal status in the early Church. It does not appear in any early creeds or in any other widely accepted creed in the history of Christendom.

Second, it was not granted an important doctrinal status by the historic Fundamentalist (c. 1900). That is, it was not accepted or embraced by the Old Princetonians B. B. Warfield, Charles Hodge, or J. Gresham Machen.

Third, Young Earth creationism is notably absent in the famous four volume series (1910-1915) *The Fundamentals: A Testimony to the Truth* edited by R. A. Torrey and C. C. Dixon. In fact, not a single article in this landmark set defends the Young Earth Creationism view. Indeed, all the articles on science and Scripture were written by scholars favorable to an Old Earth view.

Fourth, the founders and framers of the contemporary inerrancy movement (ICBI) of the 1970 and 80s explicitly rejected the Young Earth view as being essential to belief in inerrancy. They discussed it and voted against making it a part of what they believed inerrancy entailed, even though they believed in the “literal” historical-grammatical view of interpreting the Bible, a literal Adam, and the historicity of the early chapters of Genesis. Given this history of the Young Earth view, one is surprised at the zeal by which some Young Earthers are making their position a virtual test for evangelical orthodoxy

If the Young Earth view is true, then so be it. Let the biblical and scientific evidence be mustered to demonstrate it. Meanwhile, to make it a tacit test for orthodoxy will serve to undermine the faith of many who so closely tie it to orthodoxy that they will have to throw out the baby with the bathwater, should they ever become convinced the earth is Old. One should never tie his faith to how old the earth is.

Even if the Young Earth view were true, it would not thereby earn it a position in the Christian Creed or the equivalent. That is another matter altogether reserved for truth that are essential to the Gospel (see Geisler and Rhodes, *Conviction without Compromise*). There are many minor Christian doctrines that have not earned creedal status along with *The Apostles’ Creed* which declares of creation only that “I believe in God, the Father Almighty, *the Creator of heaven and earth*” (emphasis added) and nothing about how long ago it happened.

Some Concluding Comments

After seriously pondering these questions for over a half century, my conclusions are: (1) The Young Earth view is not one of the Fundamentals of the Faith. (2) It is not a test for orthodoxy. (3) It is not a condition of salvation. (4) It is not a test of Christian fellowship. (5) It is not an issue over which the body of Christ should divide. (6) It is not a hill on which we should die. (7) The fact of *creation* is more important than the *time* of creation. (8) There are more important doctrines on which we should focus (like the inerrancy of the Bible, the deity of Christ, the Trinity, and the death and resurrection of Christ, and His literal Second Coming. As Repertus Meldenius (d. 1651) put it: “In essentials, unity; in non-essentials, liberty, and in all

things charity.” And by all counts, the age of the earth is not one of the essentials of the Christian Faith.

Dr. Norman Geisler, PhD, was a prolific author, veteran professor, speaker, lecturer, traveler, philosopher, apologist, evangelist, and theologian. He was certainly one of the greatest defenders of the reliability, inspiration, infallibility, and inerrancy of the Bible in the late 20th and early 21st centuries. Dr. Geisler authored or co-authored over 100 books and hundreds of articles. He taught theology, philosophy, and classical Christian apologetics on the undergraduate and graduate level for over 50 years and served as a professor at some of the finest seminaries in the United States, including Trinity Evangelical Seminary, Dallas Theological Seminary, Veritas International University, and Southern Evangelical Seminary.

Formless and Void: Gap Theory Creationism

By Tom McIver

There are three major types of creationism espoused by fundamentalist antievolutionists, each with variants, plus a few less popular types. Of the three major types, "strict" young-Earth Flood geology creation is the best known—indeed, it is often assumed that all creationists are of this type. This type aims to employ the most literal and direct interpretation of Genesis, and the strictest fundamentalists tend to insist upon it: fiat *ex nihilo* ("out of nothing") creation in six, twenty-four-hour days about six thousand or so years ago. *Creationism* is often assumed to mean young-Earth *ex nihilo* creation because, in this time of resurgent fundamentalism, the most prominent and effective creationist efforts—those of the Institute for Creation Research, the Creation Research Society, the Creation-Science Research Center, the Bible-Science Association, and others—all insist upon young-Earth creationism.

It takes, however, an extremely stubborn faith to maintain belief in strict young-Earth creation in the face of the overwhelming—and still increasing—scientific evidence of the great age of Earth and the universe (not to mention the difficulty of interpreting all geology in terms of a single, recent flood). Because of the obvious difficulties of the extreme young-Earth Flood geology position, many creationists hold one of the two other main positions: "day-age" or "gap theory" creationism. These allow the faithful to maintain belief in supernatural creation and the falsity of evolution but also allow for indefinitely long ages—either during (in between) the six days of creation or before. Each also involves critical compromises with the plainest, most literal reading of the Bible in order to force scripture into concordance with scientific evidence regarding the age of Earth.

"Day-age" creationism takes a simple approach: the six "days" of creation were not literal twenty-four-hour days but, rather, long ages. There are various means of reconciling this interpretation with the biblical account which need not concern us here. The advantages of this interpretation are obvious: each creation "day" can be made as long as necessary, and the successive appearance of forms of life in the fossil record millions of years apart presents no problem—as long as these can all be interpreted as occurring in the same order as the sequence of events described in the six "days" of Genesis. (And this latter point does involve some stubborn difficulties. To mention only two: plants are created on the third day, although the sun is not created until the following "day"—millions of years later; and birds, as well as fish, are created on the fifth day, before land animals—in direct contradiction to the fossil record.)

The "gap theory," also known as the "ruin-restitution" theory, preserves the literal, recent six twenty-four-hour-day creation but assumes that the vast ages so well attested to by science occurred *prior* to this set of events. In other words, Earth—and life—was created *before* the creation week of Genesis. This exegesis is accomplished by postulating a tremendous "gap" between the very first two verses of Genesis, into which go all the geological ages:

[Genesis 1:1] In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.

[Gap]

[Genesis 1:2] And the earth was ["became"] without form, and void; . . .

The universe—heaven and Earth—was originally ("in the beginning") created aeons ago; life flourished for millions or billions of years. But this world (perhaps just Earth and not the entire universe) grew to be evil, and God destroyed it in a gigantic cataclysm. Earth became "without form and void" as a result of this destruction. (Gap theorists hold that the verb in the second verse is more accurately translated as *became* or *had become* rather than as *was*. The familiar six-day creation—a re-creation really—then followed, mere thousands of years ago, upon the ruin and chaos of this ancient former world.

Gap theory advocates, by this maneuver, are able to reconcile the scientific evidence for an old Earth and universe and for life itself. They, just as much as the young-Earth creationists, reject evolution; to them, the re-creation six thousand or so years ago was not entirely *ex nihilo* (although humans may have been created out of nothing) but was certainly by divine fiat. Therefore, although they differ markedly from "strict" creationists regarding the age of Earth, their antievolution attitudes and arguments are virtually identical.

Two Genesis Creation Accounts

The gap theory, incidentally, has nothing to do with the fact that there are two conflicting creation accounts in Genesis. Because gap theory creationism has received little attention compared to young-Earth creationism, and because its proponents tend to use the same anti-evolution arguments anyway, many critics of creationism are not aware of its existence or are confused about what it claims. The two founders of the British anti-creationist group, Association for the Protection of Evolution (APE), for instance, erroneously reported in *Nature* that the gap theory "proposes that geology happened sometime between the Fall of Adam and the Flood" (Howgate and Lewis, 1984, p. 703). The editor of the *Secular Humanist Bulletin* mistook the gap theory for an attempt to reconcile the two creation accounts of Genesis, as did Michael Cavanaugh in his otherwise excellent sociological study of creationism (Franczyk, 1986; Cavanaugh, 1983, 169n.).

This may be a common misconception. According to gap theorists, both creation accounts—Genesis 1:1 through 2:3 and Genesis 2:4 through 3:24—concern the re-creation. I know of only two works which claim that the two Genesis creation accounts actually refer to two separate creations.

The first is A. J. Ferris's *The Conflict of Science and Religion*, in which the author writes that some races of humankind—Negroes, Mongols, and the like—were created first, in the first chapter of Genesis (to which he gives a day-age interpretation). Ferris's second chapter concerns the creation of Adam and the Adamic race. Adam's son Cain interbred with the pre-Adamic coloreds; their offspring are the Latin and Teuton races. (Later, Ham also interbred with the pre-Adamic line.) The purity of the Adamic race was maintained through Shem's line (Israel) and through Japheth (the Slavs). Ferris argues that the judgment of the Flood was upon Seth's

line only—that it was a regional, not worldwide, flood, which the pre Adamite races survived. The Association of the Covenant People, the British Columbia based publisher of Ferris's book, preaches Nordic-Celtic supremacy and British-Israelism (the doctrine that the British and Americans are the true descendants of the Lost Tribes of Israel) in its journal *Identity*.

The second work is E. K. V. Pearce's *Who Was Adam?* (1969; cited in Pun, 1982, p. 267). Pearce suggests that there were two Adams: the Adam of the first Genesis creation account lived in the Old Stone Age; the Adam of Genesis 2 in the New Stone Age. (Pun, by the way, opts for "progressive creationism" or variations of the day-age theory, with intermittent or overlapping "days.")

The standard way in which the two creation accounts of Genesis are reconciled, by both young-Earth and gap-theory creationists, is by considering the first account as narrated from God's perspective—the creation of the whole cosmos—while the second has a narrower focus on the creation of humankind, from the perspective of Adam. (This, of course, does not eliminate the obvious conflicts between the two, but that is another story. Suffice it to say that the first creation story was composed around the time of the Babylonian captivity and reflects much of the Mesopotamian myth and cosmogony to which the Hebrews were then exposed. The second creation story was composed several hundred years earlier in the time of the Solomonic Empire and reflects a somewhat nostalgic concern with the Hebrews' nomadic pastoralist traditions and myths. See, Hyers, 1984.)

The editor of the *Secular Humanist Bulletin* thus confused chapters (Genesis 1 and 2) with verses (Genesis 1:1 and 1:2). He also felt that belief in a gap, with destruction and re-creation by God, was so odd that few could actually believe in it. This may also be a common misconception. Odd it may be, but the gap theory was—and still is—widely believed. Though it is true that the age of Earth and the possibility or impossibility of a pre-Adamic era does not greatly concern most lay anti-evolutionists who merely insist on divine creation and denunciation of evolution, such matters are of enormous concern to the leaders and thinkers of the creationist movement. The young-Earth "strict" creationists devote much space and energy to refutations of the gap theory (and also the day-age theory) as an unbiblical, nonliteralist concession to evolutionary science—the first step on the road to compromise and surrender. Gap theorists and day-age believers, in turn, attack the young-Earth arguments with considerable ferocity.

Young-Earth, gap, and day-age proponents may all use the same anti-evolution arguments, and many of their followers may not care about the subtle differences in doctrine, but all see the rival creationist theories as very nearly as dangerous as evolution. Young-earthers think that the gap theory leads to heresy, apostasy, and eventual surrender to evolution; gap theorists think that to insist upon a recent *ex nihilo* creation is so unscientific that it threatens to make the whole idea of creation seem ridiculous and unworthy of consideration.

Origin of the Gap Theory

The gap theory became increasingly attractive during the end of the eighteenth century and first half of the nineteenth century, as the new scientific discipline of geology made it increasingly obvious that Earth was far older than a straightforward, literal interpretation of Genesis and the Bible-based Flood geology would allow. The gap theory provided an attractive escape from this dilemma, allowing religious geologists to preserve both their faith in the Bible and in the new authority of science, which, according to the doctrine of natural theology, was now considered a second revelation—God's word in nature as well as in scripture. The two revelations could not contradict each other; some means of reconciliation had to be found. (Another popular approach was simply to denounce science, and geology in particular, as being atheistic and impious. But most geologists of this era were good Christian believers who were convinced that God's truth was discoverable in nature.)

The agony of this dilemma is clearly seen in Philip Henry Gosse's *Omphalos: An Attempt to Untie the Geological Knot*, published just two years before Darwin's *Origin of Species*. A member of the fundamentalist Plymouth Brethren as well as a very competent naturalist, Gosse was torn between the obviously conflicting evidence of geology and the Bible. He cut this Gordian knot by his ingenious suggestion that Earth, including its geological strata and fossils, was created with the appearance of age, just as Adam was created as an adult, fully formed, with a belly button ("omphalos"). A functioning Earth would look mature—ancient even—the moment it was created. Gosse's triumphant and heartfelt suggestion met with ridicule from all sides. Fundamentalists condemned its conciliatory attitude toward scientific theories of the age of Earth. Creationists today, however, are often forced to concede "creation with appearance of age" for refractory evidence, although they are somewhat embarrassed by Gosse's bold application of this principle to its logical extreme.

The gap theory proved to be a much more popular reconciliation of Genesis with geology; in fact, it proved to be an almost irresistible temptation. In a scholarly appraisal of creationist theories, Bernard Ramm, an evangelical, wrote:

The gap theory has become the standard interpretation throughout hyper-orthodoxy, appearing in an endless stream of books, booklets, Bible studies, and periodical articles. In fact, it has become so sacrosanct with some that to question it is equivalent to tampering with Sacred Scripture or to manifest modernistic leanings. [1954, p. 135]

The gap theory may not be the "standard" creationist interpretation today—Ramm was writing a few years prior to the reemergence of young-Earth Flood geology creationism in the 1960s—but it is still surprisingly popular.

Arthur C. Custance, a Canadian physiologist with a doctorate in anthropology and author of the well-known *Doorway Papers* series on creation and Christian evidences, wrote a privately published book, *Without Form and Void* (1970), arguing for the gap theory. This book is considered the strongest and most able defense of the gap theory available. Custance, who also has a master's degree in oriental languages, makes a valiant attempt to demonstrate the validity of gap theory biblical exegesis by analysis of the Hebrew, Greek, and Latin versions and study of other Bible passages claimed to support this interpretation. He also claims that belief

in the gap theory antedated the aforementioned conflict engendered by the discovery of geological ages—that the ancient Bible commentators and church fathers endorsed it and that it is, in fact, the orthodox view rather than a desperate maneuver to avoid the inescapable dilemma posed by the rising science of geology.

Weston Fields responded just as vigorously to Custance a few years later in his book *Unformed and Unfilled: A Critique of the Gap Theory* (1976). Fields exhaustively refuted all of Custance's gap theory arguments and added the standard creation-science evidence for a young Earth. Fields denied Custance's claim of early support for the gap theory, arguing that some of the ancient commentators perhaps supposed there was an interval between Genesis 1:1 and 1:2 but that none of them ever posited a gap of vast ages with a "ruin-and-reconstruction" scenario. Among these early gap theory proponents claimed by Custance and refuted by Fields are the English poet Caedmon about 650, King Edgar of England in the tenth century, Episcopius of Holland in the seventeenth century, and commentaries in the *Zohar* (Book of Light), a collection of Jewish cabalistic and mystical traditions supposedly dating from the second century but which Fields notes is probably a medieval forgery. According to Fields, the first genuine statements of the gap theory were proposed in 1776 by J. C. Rosenmuller and in 1791 by J. A. Dathe.

Gap Theorists Before Darwin

It was definitely Thomas Chalmers, a divinity professor at the University of Edinburgh, who popularized the gap theory. He first lectured on it in 1814 and attributed it to Episcopius:

My own opinion, as published in 1814, is that it [Genesis 1:1] forms no part of the first day—but refers to a period of indefinite antiquity when God created the worlds out of nothing. The commencement of the first day's work I hold to be the moving of God's Spirit upon the face of the waters. We can allow geology the amplest time . . . without infringing even on the literalities of the Mosaic record. . . . [Bixler, 1986, pp. 86-87]

Chalmers was greatly admired and extremely influential. He founded the Free Church of Scotland, was well respected for his work with the poor, and wrote one of the famous *Bridgewater Treatises* (a series by some of the best British scientists and clerics devoted to natural theology and proof of God's design in his creation), as well as other books on natural theology. The gap theory became a respectable means of reconciliation due in large part to Chalmers' prestigious advocacy. He may well be the actual inventor of the gap theory as well, at least in the form in which it is known today.

William Buckland, another Bridgewater author, fell back on the gap theory after retreating from his earlier, more extreme catastrophist position. The first geology professor at Oxford, Buckland had argued in *Reliquiae Diluvianae* that the worldwide Flood had left much evidence in the upper geological strata; later, he acknowledged that Agassiz's new glacial theory fit the evidence better and gave up even his modified Flood geology. For geologists such as Buckland, the gap theory was often a means of retaining—or at least professing to retain—belief in the

Bible as God's literal word while proceeding with the business of discovering Earth's actual history through scientific investigation.

John Bird Sumner, archbishop of Canterbury, also urged reconciliation of geology and scripture. In his *Treatise on the Records of Creation* (1816), he argued that Moses, speaking to a pre-scientific audience, simplified his account of creation and related only the last of a whole series of creations; the six-day creation was the rearrangement of the wreckage of previous worlds. Sumner was a "liberal." In the years before Darwin's theory of evolution, the more open-minded scientists and thinkers tended to opt for the gap theory rather than orthodox, literal young-Earth creationism; it was thus often part of a relatively liberal view of "reconciliation" between Genesis and geology.

Other prominent gap theory advocates in the first half of the nineteenth century included W. D. Conybeare, coauthor of *Outlines of the Geology of England and Wales* (1822); Sharon Turner, whose *Sacred History of the World* (1833) interpreted the gap theory to children and went through many editions; John Harris (*The Pre Adamite Earth*, 1846; *Primeval Man*, 1849); Edward Hitchcock (*The Connection Between Geology and the Mosaic Account of Creation*, 1836; *The Historical and Geological Deluges Compared*, 1837; *The Religion of Geology*, 1854); and J. H. Kurtz, whom Ramm says "defends the gap theory in a most sane and reserved exposition" in *The Bible and Astronomy* (1853), although Kurtz also praised the "revelatory" theory of creationism (Millhauser, 1959, mentions several of these people).

Some gap theorists, such as W. Mullinger Higgins (*Mosaical and Mineral Geologies Compared*, 1833), denounced geologists as infidels attacking God. Anton Westermeyer, in *The Old Testament Vindicated from Modern Infidel Objections*, elaborated on gap theory theology. The German believed that generations of creatures of the original creation succumbed to Satan's corruption and became demons. During the six-day re-creation, God destroyed these demons or drove them from their original habitat; they, in turn, "tried to frustrate God's plan of creation and exert all that remained to them of might and power to hinder or at least to mar the new creation." The creatures of which we have fossil remains were the result: "the horrible and destructive monsters, these caricatures and distortions of creation" (White, 1955).

John Pye Smith, in *On the Relations Between the Holy Scriptures and Some Parts of Geological Science* (1852, popularly known as *Scripture and Geology*), followed the lead of liberal geologists who had abandoned the theory of a worldwide flood and tried to reconcile geology with the Bible by devising his own cosmogony. He proposed that the six-day creation, like the Flood, was regional rather than worldwide—God had flooded and laid waste to a certain area, then reorganized and restored it as Eden to be humankind's dwelling place some six thousand years ago. (The original creation had occurred ages before.) This strange scheme had few followers, but, according to Millhauser, it was praised by scientists such as William Whewell, Adam Sedgwick, Baden Powell, and Sir John Herschel.

Gap Theorists After Darwin

Before Darwin's theory of evolution, gap theory creationism was generally a relatively liberal doctrine because it injected the immense ages required by the new science of geology into the framework of Genesis. After Darwin, it continued to serve as a means of providing great ages for geology, but its flat denial of evolution now rendered it simply an old-Earth version of conservative religious opposition to evolution.

"If it was Chalmers who first vigorously advocated [the gap theory] in modern times," says Ramm, "it was the work of G. H. Pember which canonized it" (Ramm, 1954, p. 135). Pember's book, *Earth's Earliest Ages*, was originally published in 1876; there since have been editions by several publishers up to 1975. Pember cautions that God has not revealed to humans how to interpret geology; for this, we must rely upon geologists. The Bible does indicate that God did not create Earth in chaos; if it had been "without form and void," this could only have been the result of Satan's rebellion and the destruction of the former world by God before Genesis 1:3.

It is thus clear that the second verse of Genesis describes the earth as a ruin; but there is no hint of the time which elapsed between creation and this ruin. Age after age may have rolled away, and it was probably during their course that the strata of the earth's crust were gradually developed. Hence we see that geological attacks upon the Scriptures are altogether wide of the mark, are a mere beating of the air. There is room for any length of time between the first and second verses of the Bible. And again; since we have no inspired account of the geological formations, we are at liberty to believe that they were developed just in the order in which we find them. The whole process took place in preadamite times, in connection, perhaps, with another race of beings, and, consequently, does not at present concern us. [1975, p. 32]

We see, then, that God created the heavens and the earth perfect and beautiful in their beginning, and that at some subsequent period, how remote we cannot tell, the earth had passed into a state of utter desolation, and was void of all life. Not merely had its fruitful places become a wilderness, and all its cities been broken down; but the very light of its sun had been withdrawn; all the moisture of its atmosphere had sunk upon its surface; and the vast deep, to which God had set bounds that are never transgressed save when wrath has gone forth from Him, had burst those limits; so that the ruined planet, covered above its very mountain tops with the black flood of destruction, was rolling through space in a horror of great darkness. [1975, p. 34]

"But what could have occasioned so terrific a catastrophe?" continues Pember. Why would God have destroyed his own handiwork?

Fossils "clearly show" that disease, ferocity, death, and slaughter were rampant in this former world. This is proof it was a different creation, since the Bible declares that no evil or death entered into our world until Adam sinned. So it must have been a gigantic accumulation of sin in the former world which caused its hideous destruction. Pember then reconstructs, from imaginative interpretation of various apocalyptic Bible passages, the drama of Satan's rebellion and his sin-stained preAdamic rule. God created a perfect and beautiful world, fit for habitation and not chaos (Isaiah 45:18). He created Satan as the fairest and wisest of his creatures and

placed him in "Eden" (Ezekiel 28:13)—an Eden similar to that in which Adam was later created but even more like the apocalyptic New Jerusalem. Pride corrupted Satan, and he rebelled.

Pember distinguishes between corrupted "angels" who joined Satan's rebellion, and "demons," the spirits of the sinful pre-Adamite creatures who walked Earth in ages past. If there was a pre-Adamite race of creatures or beings, where are their fossils? Pember offers several suggestions: God might have zapped or rotted them; they might have been swallowed up by the Earth; or, most likely, they may be entombed at the bottom of the abyss, where their spirits are still imprisoned. In *Genesis in Harmony With Itself and Science* (1899), George Rapkin discussed the pre-Adamite races, identifying the antediluvian Nephilim ("giants") of Genesis 6:4 with surviving aboriginal pre-Adamites. Except for the gap, he followed the strict literal interpretation: the Flood and Ussher's chronology for the re-creation.

Early Twentieth-Century Gap Theorists

The gap theory got a tremendous boost when Cyrus Scofield endorsed it in the notes of his famous reference bible. Published in 1909 by Oxford, with an expanded edition in 1917, the *Scofield Reference Bible* had an enormous influence in defining and propagating the doctrines of the rising fundamentalist movement. Scofield legitimized as well the doctrine of "dispensationalism"—the view that God operated and interacted with humankind differently in clearly demarcated dispensations or historical periods, establishing different covenants. Scofield also stressed premillennialism—the view that Christ will return to rule on Earth at the beginning of the millennium. Thrashed out at various Bible conferences around the turn of the century, dispensationalist premillennialism, along with the doctrine of the rapture, became a key fundamentalist doctrine, due in large part to Scofield's popularization, and is still an important doctrine among very many fundamentalists today.

The *Scofield Reference Bible*, perhaps the most widely distributed annotated Bible in the English-speaking world, gave the gap theory great prestige. In his note to Genesis 1:1, Scofield states that the "first creative act refers to the dateless past and gives scope for all the geologic ages." Referring to the third day of the "new creation," when God commanded Earth to "bring forth" vegetation, Scofield asserts that seeds probably survived the catastrophic judgment of Genesis 1:2 and were allowed to grow again in the newly reconstituted earth:

It was *animal* life which perished, the traces of which remain as fossils. Relegate fossils to the primitive creation, and no conflict of science with the Genesis cosmogony remains.

Like Pember, Scofield cites Isaiah and Ezekiel and also Jeremiah 4:23-26 to support the idea of the ancient pre-Adamic creation.

In the *New Scofield Reference Bible*, a 1967 revised edition, and in the 1984 NIV Scofield Bible, the gap theory is somewhat downplayed; the supporting comments are relegated mostly to Isaiah rather than Genesis, where it is mentioned only as a possible interpretation. The older editions remain quite popular with fundamentalists.

Watchman Nee, a Chinese theologian, argued strongly for the gap theory in a series of "Meditations on Genesis," published from 1925 through 1927. These have been issued as *The Mystery of Creation* (1981), an English translation in book form. Nee follows Pember closely (he also cites Chalmers); his work is a very readable summary of Pember's classic interpretation. Nee openly professes his attitude toward claims of science which may conflict with his interpretation of the Bible:

If both Genesis and geology are before us, what we follow must be Genesis and not geology because God is behind Genesis. If Genesis and geology differ, the error must be on the side of geology, for the authority of the Bible is beyond questioning. [1981, p. 2]

That taken care of, he proceeds to assure us that Genesis, when correctly interpreted—that is, the gap theory—does not conflict with geology in the slightest.

Nee states that 2 Peter 3:5-7 refers to the pre-Adamic world, its destruction by flood, and the present creation. Strict creationists insist that a straightforward reading of this passage clearly shows this to be Noah's Flood, not some pre-Adamic cataclysm. Indeed, John Whitcomb, coauthor with Henry Morris of *The Genesis Flood* (the book largely responsible for the revival of Flood geology and young-Earth creationism), entitled his sequel *The World That Perished*, quoting 2 Peter 3:6. (This chapter of 2 Peter is a rich source of "proofs" for various and conflicting schools of creationism. The verses just before those quoted by Nee refer to "scoffers" during the last days who do not believe God ever destroyed the world or could do so in the future; many creationists like to think it also alludes to uniformitarian evolutionists. The verse immediately following, which says that "one day is with the Lord as a thousand years," is the best available scriptural evidence for day-age creationism. And the coming of the Lord "as a thief in the night," two verses later, followed by the destruction of Earth, is cited by pretribulation premillennialists as support of the secret rapture of the faithful.)

The major gap theory advocate during the time of the *Scopes* trial and for some years afterward was Harry Rimmer, a flamboyant creationist proselytizer. Rimmer, a Presbyterian minister, and George McCready Price, a Seventh-day Adventist, were the most influential creation "scientists" of that period. (Price was a strict young-Earth creationist who reinvented Flood geology, setting the stage for its popular revival following Whitcomb and Morris's *Genesis Flood*.) Rimmer operated a one-man "research science bureau" during the 1920s, wrote several anti-evolution books, and promoted creationism with great effectiveness in lectures and public debates. He offered one thousand dollars for proof of any scientific error in the Bible and was brought to court in 1939 by a claimant; the presiding judge ruled in Rimmer's favor (Rimmer, 1956).

Besides debating evolutionists, which was child's play to Rimmer, he engaged in a friendly but profound public debate with day-age creationist William Bell Riley in 1929. Riley, a Baptist minister, founded the World's Christian Fundamentals Association, a leading fundamentalist organization, and was himself an indefatigable crusader against evolution.

Rimmer's *The Theory of Evolution and the Facts of Science* (1935), *The Harmony of Science and Scripture* (1936), and *Modern Science and the Genesis Record* (1937) were leading statements

of Bible science during this period. Although he campaigned vigorously for the gap theory, Rimmer also paid deference to Price's Flood geology (1936, pp. 238-242), apparently not noticing any contradiction between explaining geology and paleontology in terms of Noah's Flood and as a preAdamic creation. Rimmer tried to maintain a liberal interpretation of Noah's Flood; he also interpreted the re-creation as six literal twenty-four-hour days and gave literal interpretations of Jonah and the whale and of Joshua's long day (citing Totten's 1890 "proof").

Arno Gaebelin, one of Scofield's consulting editors and the influential editor of the premillennialist journal *Our Hope*, argued for the gap theory in *The Conflict of the Ages* (1933). He devoted a chapter to Satan's pre-Adamic reign and traced the hideous modern evils of atheism, evolution, the Illuminati conspiracy, and Bolshevism back to this rebellion against God. (The 1983 edition, revised by D. Rausch, deleted several pages concerning the infamous "Protocols of the Elders of Zion," which Gaebelin thought might have originated with apostate communist Jews. Rausch notes that Gaebelin editorialized strongly against Hitler's persecution of the Jews and eventually repudiated the "Protocols." He expressed shock that anti-Semitic right-wing extremists endorsed Gaebelin's book.)

L. Allen Higley, a professor of chemistry and geology at Wheaton College, defended the gap theory, as well as a literal six-day re-creation afterward, in *Science and Truth* (1940). In 1935, the directors of the short-lived Religion and Science Association chose Higley, who had a Ph.D., as their first president. The founders intended the association to be a young-Earth Flood geology group and considered the gap theory to be "utter foolishness, both Biblically and scientifically"; apparently, they thought they could convince Higley to change his mind about it. But, as Morris ruefully notes, Higley remained committed, and his book was "surely one of the strongest expositions of the gap theory ever published" (Morris, 1984, p. 115). Morris, who strenuously opposes the gap theory and all old-Earth creationist models, points out that Wheaton awarded Rimmer an honorary doctorate and that its president was a day-age advocate.

But Morris himself—founder and president of the Institute for Creation Research, key figure in the popular re-emergence of creationism, leading theoretician of "creation science," and vigorous proponent of strict young-Earth Flood geology—once succumbed to the gap theory. His first book, *That You Might Believe*, published in 1946 when he was twenty-eight, advocated the gap theory in its first edition. In lectures to friendly audiences, Morris now demurely remarks that this edition is, blessedly, unavailable. (Morris's all-time bestseller, this book, in all its various editions and revisions, reemerged in 1951 as *The Bible and Modern Science* and in 1986 as *Science and the Bible*.)

Paul Johnson, in *Creation (Epiphany Studies in the Scriptures Vol. II)* (1938), specifically denied the standard gap theory in arguing against Bullinger's account of stellar origins but held that there was a long period prior to the six creation days. God set matter (gases) in motion in Genesis 1:1; this uninhabitable primeval chaos then gradually condensed and cooled. Johnson specifies that each creation "day" was seven thousand years long.

Johnson devoted considerable space to a fascinating presentation of the "canopy theory," which was first proposed by Isaac Newton Vail in 1874. In the long period before the six creation "days," Earth acquired seven annular layers—rings or canopies—discharged by the molten earth and suspended above its surface. Each of these canopy layers was composed of different substances and separated by gases and steam, with the heavier materials in the lower layers. At the end of each creation day-age, the lowermost layer collapsed. The collapse of the first six canopy layers produced the six geological strata which Johnson asserts were deposited worldwide. He saw "irrefutable and factual proof" in the six neat layers of the Grand Canyon, each several hundred feet thick (1938, pp. 319-323). The seventh and lightest canopy was composed of water, the cause of Noah's Flood when it collapsed. Many strict creationists today include a water canopy model (either liquid, vapor, or ice) in their creation science to account for Noah's Flood and the fabulous antediluvian conditions (extreme longevity, worldwide Edenic "greenhouse" climate), but these Flood geology versions are but single canopies which fell one time only.

The Laymen's Home Missionary Movement of Chester Springs, Pennsylvania, which distributes Johnson's book, repeats his unusual cosmogony in tracts such as "The Bible vs. Evolution" and "The Evolution Theory Examined"—although without attribution. The latter tract quotes a few fairly recent scientific authorities, and the casual reader cannot know that most of the scientific absurdities are taken from Johnson's 1938 book.

The canopy theory was further developed by Carl Theodore Schwarze, a professor of civil engineering at New York University and a member of the Plymouth Brethren, in *The Harmony of Science and the Bible* (1942) and *The Marvel of Earth's Canopies* (1957). Schwarze argued that the canopy was lofted up following an atomic explosion (Satan had been foolishly dabbling in atomic research in pre-Adamic times). This blast was the event described by Genesis 1:2; the future destruction in 2 Peter 3:10 will also be an atomic explosion (1957, pp. 12-13, 57). As a result of this pre-Adamic explosion, water was sent up first beyond the stratosphere, where it turned to ice and formed an oblate spherical canopy miles thick. Dirt and dust settled back to the surface to form the geological strata, but the ice-lens remained, causing the pre-Flood greenhouse effect and serving as the source of water for the Flood.

This ice canopy was shattered, causing its collapse, by the creation and ejection of the moon from the Pacific basin, which also caused the Mid-Atlantic rift and the destruction of Atlantis (1957, pp. 31-32). Fermentation was impossible under canopy conditions; Noah got drunk after the Flood because he was unaware that his grape juice had changed (Johnson also used this example). Schwarze, like strict creationist canopy advocates today, assured his readers that this marvelous canopy will be restored at the millennium.

Current Gap Theorists

Why We Believe in Creation Not in Evolution (1959; now in its eighth edition) by Fred John Meldau, editor of *Christian Victory* magazine, is a compendium of examples of design in nature, marvelous animal and plant adaptations, and scientific quotes. Near the end of the book, Meldau mentions that there have been "two or more overwhelming Deluges in the history of

our earth." One such geologically cataclysmic event was Noah's Flood; another was the tremendous upheaval "implied" in Genesis 1:2 (1974, p. 309). Humankind was created six thousand to eight thousand years ago.

A great many people have been exposed to the gap theory through the efforts of Herbert W. Armstrong. Over eight million free copies of his magazine, *The Plain Truth*, have been distributed each month (circulation has dipped somewhat since his death in 1986); books and pamphlets are also given away free; and his show, "The World Tomorrow," is broadcast widely on radio and television. In 1926, at the age of thirty-four, Armstrong's successful advertising business collapsed, and he plunged into an intensive search for truth, provoked by his wife's assertion that Sunday was not the true day of worship and by doubts about evolution. Armstrong was convinced that he—and he alone—discovered the truth. He founded the Worldwide Church of God, began *Plain Truth* in 1934, and founded Ambassador College in 1947 in Pasadena, California (with branch campuses in Texas and England).

Armstrong was not a strict fundamentalist—indeed, fundamentalists consider him to have been a heretical cult leader. He denied key fundamentalist doctrines such as the trinity, the reality of hell, the immortality of the soul, and Sunday worship—and espoused a version of British-Israelism (that Britons and Americans are the true descendants of the lost tribes of Israel, God's chosen people). In contrast to strict fundamentalists who stress the "perspicuity" of the Bible in addition to its inerrancy, Armstrong viewed the Bible as a great mystery or puzzle not intended to be decoded until now, when God revealed to him its secrets. Armstrong's book, *Mystery of the Ages*, published just before his death, was later serialized in *The Plain Truth*. In it, Armstrong reveals the Bible's hidden messages.

Not one to credit apostate predecessors, Armstrong declares that his gap theory interpretation is a "surprising truth . . . unrecognized by religion, by science and by higher education" (1985, p. 63). Stoutly anti-evolutionist since his initial Bible studies, Armstrong advocated the gap theory for decades; for instance, his 1959 booklet *Did God Create a Devil?* is still in print. He gives the standard gap theory arguments and refers to the same Bible passages as supporting Satan's pre-Adamic fall and reign—without, however, acknowledging other gap theorists. He allows for an Earth that is millions or billions (even "trillions") of years old with the recreation "approximately 6,000 years ago."

Mystery of the Ages contains many sections describing the gap theory. Most issues of *The Plain Truth* contain at least references to it. Frequent *Plain Truth* anti-evolution articles profess to be against both evolution and "creationism" that is, "fundamentalist groups . . . called scientific creationists" (see, for instance, "Evolutionists and Creationists Are At It Again!" Elliot, 1983). This declared opposition to both evolution and "creationism" results from Armstrong's gap theory position; "creationists" are called to task for believing in Flood geology and a young Earth. (It is also a reflection of Armstrong's claim to sole possession of the truth.) The anti-evolution arguments in these articles and in booklets with titles such as "A Theory for the Birds," "A Whale of a Tale," and "A Fishy Story About an Unproved Theory" (mostly written or coauthored by Armstrong's son, Garner Ted before their final schism) are exactly the same as those of the "creationists."

A. G. Tilney, a schoolmaster and pastor in England, wrote over a hundred pamphlets for the Evolution Protest Movement (now called the Creation Science Movement), one of the major British creationist organizations. A linguist by training, his EPM pamphlets covered a wide range of topics and included most of the standard anti-evolution arguments. Founded in 1932, EPM included many old-Earth creationists; however, young-Earthers now predominate. Tilney was a gap theory supporter, although his EPM pamphlets dealt only with attacks on evolution. In 1970, he published a book, *Without Form and Void*, presumably concerning the gap theory (Munday, 1986, p. 42).

L. Merson Davies was "the only geologist about whom I have ever heard or read," says Henry Morris, "who gave any credence to the gap theory" (1984, pp. 107-108). Davies was a paleontologist (specializing in foraminifera), a member of several scientific royal societies, a lieutenant-colonel, and an active member of the Evolution Protest Movement. In *The Bible and Modern Science* (1953), he argued both for the gap theory and for geological effects of the Flood. With another EPM member, Douglas Dewar, he engaged prominent geneticist J. B. S. Haldane in published debates on evolution.

M. R. DeHaan, a medical doctor, became very well known through his radio Bible class broadcasts. (His son, Richard, now does the broadcasts.) DeHaan's book, *Genesis and Evolution* (1962) is whole-heartedly creationist. It promotes the gap theory and insists on a literal six-day re-creation. DeHaan summarizes the standard gap theory arguments and announces that various geological strata provide clear evidence of "a great cataclysmic convulsion of the earth in the dateless past." He adds one new twist by asserting that the water-covered chaos of Genesis 1:2 must have been frozen, causing the Ice Age, since the sun had not yet been created.

Fossils and the Word of God (1964) by Walter Galusha is one of the more amusing creationist books. Galusha proposes a modified gap theory, adding a creation. The first creation was followed by a catastrophe. The first people, fossil cavemen and cavewomen, inhabited the second creation; then, there was a second catastrophe. Adam and Eve were created in the third creation, six thousand years ago, and Noah's Flood destroyed that world in 2310 BCE. (Noah could talk to the animals, and they helped him build the ark.) Galusha advocates a crystal (ice) canopy. Since there were no carnivores in Eden, he suggests that boa constrictors may have swallowed watermelons. The antediluvians had electricity but not internal combustion engines. God divided humankind into four colors, says Galusha (1964, p. 108), and he "wants it to remain this way. But the devil," warns Galusha, "will try to get them to unite and in this way defeat God's purpose."

Charles C. Ryrie is a professor at Dallas Theological Seminary and obtained his doctorate from the University of Edinburgh. He rejects Ussher's chronology but insists that humankind is a recent creation. In his book *You Mean the Bible Teaches That?* (1974), he admits that Genesis 1:1-2 "may cover an interminably long period of time"—that is, the gap theory. However, he also permits a day-age interpretation and for good measure throws in the effects of the worldwide Flood and creation with appearance of age (pp. 121-122). Ryrie also wrote the tract

"We Believe in Creation" (1967), stating the official position of the Dallas Theological Seminary faculty—again, allowing for either gap theory or day-age creationism.

A pamphlet by the International Christian Crusade of Toronto, entitled *A Biblical Cosmology* (1976), argues against both evolution and the young-Earth creationist interpretation, presenting in its stead the gap theory. Ussher's chronology is defended as valid for events since the re-creation. The pamphlet cautions that, although there have been six thousand-year periods so far, the seventh—the coming millennium—may not begin exactly in the year 2000. John R. Howitt, a Canadian psychiatrist and hospital superintendent, was the unlisted author of this and earlier ICC pamphlets, including the enormously influential booklet, *Evolution: "Science Falsely So-called,"* which converted Duane Gish to creationism. The gap theory is not mentioned in these other ICC publications.

The Jehovah's Witnesses are a proselytizing millennialist sect numbering about half a million. They are officially anti-evolutionist. Their 1967 book *Did Man Get Here By Evolution or By Creation?* has been published in thirteen languages, and at least eighteen million copies have been distributed. Written in a plain, earnest style, this book is packed with anti-evolution quotes (many out of context) from popular and scientific sources and is attractively illustrated. The Witnesses assert that humans were created about six thousand years ago but allow for a day-age interpretation of the six days of creation. They also specifically allow for a gap theory interpretation as well, stating that billions of years may have elapsed before the six creation days (1967, p. 97). They also believe that a worldwide Flood and the water canopy had significant effects on geology and dating.

The Jehovah's Witnesses came out with a new book in 1985, *Life—How Did It Get Here? By Evolution or By Creation?* (an updated version of their 1967 classic). This book is richly illustrated with photographs and color pictures and includes many of the more recent anti-evolution quotes (for example, Hitching and Bethell). As before, both the day-age view and the gap theory are endorsed (1985, p. 26).

Reuben Katter, after a career in business and religious college administration, wrote a couple of books "reconciling the theological and scientific viewpoints of the creation of the universe" which were published by Theotes-Logos Research, apparently Katter's one-man group. In *The History of Creation and Origin of the Species: A Scientific Theological Viewpoint* (1967; revised and updated in 1984) and in *Creationism: The Scientific Evidence of Creator Plan and Purpose for Mankind in His Universe* (1979), Katter reveals God's colossal plan for the future and explains how the entire history of the world and of life was part of this divine conception. These intricate and bizarre Bible science treatises are derived from fundamentalist creation science but are clearly stamped with Katter's idiosyncratic hermit-scientist approach.

According to Katter, Earth was created about twenty or so billion years ago. Katter accepts the standard geological timetable but interprets these ages as God's carefully prepared stages. Katter's chronology is summarized in *The History of Creation and Origin of the Species* (1984, pp. 118-119). Earth was then under Lucifer's management; he turned to evil, however, and became Satan. Beginning about 20,000 BCE, Earth was subjected to a period of four ice ages,

ending about 8,000 BCE with the worldwide catastrophe which God precipitated by shifting Earth's axis. (2 Peter 3:6 refers to this catastrophe but not to Noah's Flood.) God re-created the world six to eight thousand years ago as described in Genesis. Katter accepts the traditional date of October 23, 4004 BCE, for Adam's creation. Noah's Flood occurred on Halloween in 2348 BCE. Katter includes detailed information about the dispensational scheme of history exhibited and prophesied in the Great Pyramid and other evidence from prophecy and Bible numerology. The pyramid predicts "3000 AD as the time of the Great White Throne Judgment" (1984, p. 36). Katter rounds off his treatise by explaining the twelve vast energy systems and dimensional levels of the cosmos, proposing a new atomic force along the way.

Another gap theory defense is the introductory essay by S. G. Posey in John O. Scott's strange book, *The Four Most Glorious Events in Human History: Or The Refutation of Evolution*. Posey, who deplores the "parading" of atheistic evolution on television, asserts that the false evolutionary assumptions resulted from the mistranslation of Genesis 1:2 (the word *was* should be *became*) in the King James Bible. Posey, a Southern Baptist, proclaims the standard gap theory sequence. Price (1982) cites R. B. Thieme's *Creation, Chaos, and Restoration* (1973) as also presenting the standard gap theory view.

J. Vernon McGee, a radio evangelist since 1941, has presented the gap theory in his "Thru the Bible Radio" program, which is broadcast in all fifty states and across six continents. The messages collected in *Genesis—Volume 1* (1975) contain his gap theory defense, which follows the standard scenario of Satan's pre-Adamic reign. This book, which preserves the chatty style of his broadcasts, ridicules science and repeats many anti-evolution quotes and arguments. McGee, who recommends the *Scofield Reference Bible*, also praises the creation scientists of the Institute for Creation Research and endorses the Paluxy Cretaceous mantracks, the worldwide Flood, and a literal six-day re-creation. He mentions the pre-Flood canopy but feels that there was still no excuse for Noah's drunkenness.

The popular PTL television network founded by Jim Bakker apparently endorses the gap theory. It is taught in two volumes of Corvin's *Home Bible Study Course* (1976) published by PTL (Bixler, 1986, 87n).

Duane Thurman adopts a calm and very reasonable-sounding tone in *How to Think About Evolution and Other Bible-Science Controversies* (1978), stressing the need for critical evaluation of arguments and fallacies and discussing at length scientific method and proper interpretation of evidence. He chides both creationist and evolutionist extremists for relying upon unfair arguments and faulty logic. Thurman, an Oral Roberts University biology professor with a Berkeley doctorate in botany, barely betrays his discreet preference for the gap theory in presenting the various creationist theories.

Inspired by Armstrong and acknowledging the assistance of his Ambassador College faculty, William F. Dankenbring has written several books espousing gap theory creationism. *The First Genesis: The Saga of Creation vs. Evolution* (1975) covers the standard creation-science arguments, including tales of Noah's ark. The 1979 edition includes a foreword by NASA's Wernher von Braun. "Evolutionists often lump all Creationists in the same bag," complains

Dankenbring, "not realizing there are broad and vast differences of thought among Creationists about Creation itself" (1979, p. 3). Namely, there are young-Earth creationists and gap theory (and other) creationists. Dankenbring suggests that the Neanderthals were surviving remnants of the pre-Adamic biblical Nephilim.

Dankenbring's *The Creation Book for Children* (1976) also includes a foreword by Von Braun and presents the gap theory to youngsters. *Beyond Star Wars* (1978) carries this blurb, referring to Satan's pre-Adamic rebellion:

Star Wars really happened! Long ago great battles raged in the universe. A great war caused vast destruction throughout the cosmos and upon the earth. Super beings battled for control of the universe, space, and time.

Subjects covered include Joshua's long day (caused by a comet disturbing the Earth's rotation), the lost continent of Atlantis (Dankenbring relies here upon Velikovsky), maps of the ancient sea kings, the Great Pyramid (Pharaoh Cheops was Job; the Great Pyramid was a memorial to the Flood), the Tower of Babel, frozen mammoths, and surviving Neanderthals.

Joel and Jane French continue this theme with *War Beyond the Stars: Angelic Encounters* (1979). Joel French, a staff engineer with a NASA contractor, is with the NASA chapter of the Full Gospel Business Men Fellowship International in Houston, Texas, and has "shared testimony" with astronaut T. Stafford. Their book concerns the heavenly war following the rebellion of Lucifer and one-third of the angels. Humans were created later where the dethroned Satan had once ruled. In other words, gap theory. The Frenches are particularly concerned with UFOs, which are supernatural space vehicles, either godly or satanic. Ezekiel's "chariots of fire" were flying saucers. UFOs have figured in recent conflicts; they skirmished on both sides of the Israeli Six-Day War. Hitler was a satanically inspired genius—but there was also godly intervention in World War II, such as at Dunkirk. A mysterious stranger—really the Archangel Michael—appeared at Nazi general staff meetings and persuaded the fiendishly clever German high command to adopt bad strategy decisions, providentially affecting the outcome of the war.

Benny Hinn, the Israeli-born, Canadian-bred televangelist of Orlando Christian Center in Orlando, Florida, also exploits the Star Wars motif in *War in the Heavens* (1984). This book gives a thoroughly standard gap theory presentation, though Hinn is far more concerned with Satan and his demons than with geology or biology. Hinn received the Holy Spirit while attending meetings of faith-healer Kathryn Kuhlman and was miraculously cured of stuttering when he accepted the calling of the Lord to preach. Hinn, like most gap theorists, believes that demons are the disembodied former inhabitants of the pre-Adamic world; it is because of this condition that they desperately seek to possess our human bodies. Satan's fallen angels are not demons. Satan was cast out of the third heaven; he and his fallen angels still inhabit the second heaven (though "he visits here a lot"). Most demons are imprisoned in the abyss, one of the five underworlds; relatively few demons are loose on Earth. The hell of Tartarus, another of the underworlds, holds those fallen angels who have "left their own habitation." Hinn explains that these are the "sons of God" who, leaving the second heaven, cohabited with women (the

"daughters of men") in Genesis 6; their offspring were the wicked giants ("nephilim") of the days before the Flood.

Kenneth Hagin, a well-known author, televangelist, and head of RHEMA Bible Church (also known as Kenneth Hagin Ministries), includes the gap theory in his 1983 booklet, *The Origin and Operation of Demons* (volume one of his four-volume Satan, Demons, and Demon Possession series). Hagin is concerned with the same themes as Hinn: the "wicked spirits in the heavenlies"; their abodes in the various heavens; their natures, history, and classification. Like Hinn, Hagin was miraculously cured; he was "almost totally paralyzed and completely bedfast from a deformed heart and incurable blood disease" when he answered the Lord's call. Hagin has the useful ability to "discern what kinds of spirits are in a locality"; there are ever so many, and most are evil. He believes that the only logical explanation for all these spirits is the pre-Adamic creation of the gap theory. They were members of Satan's pre-Adamic kingdom on Earth.

Don Wardell, in *God Created* (1984), argues against young-Earth creationism and Flood geology. His gap theory presentation contains many of the usual arguments in simplified form; he suggests, however, that some plants and animals—seeds and "living fossils"—survived the darkness and flood of Genesis 1:2 into the six-day restoration and re-creation (1984, pp. 17, 56-57).

Ronald Wlodyga is another follower of Armstrong. He thanks Dankenbring, his publisher, as well, for helping him with his book *The Ultimate Source of All Super Natural Phenomena* (1981). The theme is that believers in the supernatural, the occult, astrology, and parapsychology foolishly think that these phenomena come from God. Wlodyga holds that they actually emanate from a dangerous and false messiah. Evolution, an "impossible fairy tale," cannot accept the reality of the spirit world. The forces behind the occult are very real, however, and are trying to deceive us. Wlodyga, like Armstrong, traces the descent of the true church—those few persecuted believers who kept alive the flame of correct worship—back to the Waldenses, Cathars, Puritans, and like groups. The Shroud of Turin is a satanic deception, as are false practices such as celebration of Christmas (Santa=Satan). Wlodyga discusses Hitler's demon-possession at some length. Satan's preAdamic rebellion—the gap theory—merits a whole section.

It's Science Fiction—It's a Fraud (1984) by Reginald Daly is a contentious book advocating the gap, theory and disputing the young-Earth creationism of Morris, the Creation Research Society, and their ilk. The destruction of the "world that then was" by flood in 2 Peter refers to the pre-Adamic catastrophe, not to Noah's Flood. The cover sets the book's tone:

Evolution is a quasi-religion camouflaged as "science." It's unconstitutional to use our taxes to brainwash students with irreligious, one-side-only. [sic]

The recently defrocked televangelist Jimmy Swaggart of Baton Rouge, Louisiana, regularly denounces evolution, presenting in its place the gap theory. Swaggart is a fire-breathing, spirit-filled, old-time Pentecostal preacher who plays his vast audiences as skillfully and effectively as

he plays his gospel piano. (He learned to play on the same keyboard as his first cousin, pioneer rock 'n roller Jerry Lee Lewis, and claims to have sold more gospel albums than any other artist.) Swaggart has been seen by far more people than, say, Jerry Falwell; his weekly crusade broadcast, once seen by over sixteen million viewers every month (according to a Nielson survey taken prior to his sex scandal), was second only to Pat Robertson's "700 Club" among religious shows. Sneeringly contemptuous of academicians, scientists, and intellectuals, Swaggart nevertheless betrays a bitterness and envy regarding the powerful authority of science in modern society, grasping naively at any pseudoscientific Bible science rumor or tall tale that promises to undermine the validity of evolution or to prove the inerrancy of the Bible (McIver, 1986).

Besides frequent exposure in his televised crusade sermons, Swaggart presents the gap theory in an audio cassette set, *The Pre Adamic Creation and Evolution*. The entire first half of this three-tape set is devoted to a presentation and defense of the gap theory. In addition to dwelling lovingly on Satan's sinful pre-Adamic reign, Swaggart emphasizes the necessity of allowing vast ages since the original creation. Geologists are "probably correct" in their claims, and, as he admits, "the evolutionist would beat your head in if you try to think that this earth is only six thousand years old." The second half of the set consists of scathing ridicule of evolution (although it lacks the spell-binding exhortative oratory of his live audience crusades), including many quips and quotes from no less an authority than William Jennings Bryan.

New Variations

Though not a gap theory supporter, R. Russell Bixler deserves mention here. His version of creationism likewise stems from a realization of the problem of the first three verses of Genesis. Bixler heads Christian television station WCPB in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, and was an organizer and sponsor of the 1986 International Conference on Creationism in Pittsburgh, the theme of which was "The Age of the Earth." His book *Earth, Fire, and Sea: The Untold Drama of Creation* (1986) came off the press just in time for that conference, which was clearly dominated by young-Earth creationists. From careful study of the Hebrew texts of the Old Testament, Jewish traditional sources, and ancient commentaries, Bixler concludes that the doctrine of *ex nihilo* creation—the very battle-cry of most creationists—is a spurious, nonliteral interpretation and, in fact, a gnostic "heresy."

Bixler favors a translation making Genesis 1:1 a dependent clause: "In the beginning of God's creating the heavens and the earth—the earth being a formless waste . . ." (1986, p. 28). The Bible says God did not create the Earth a chaos (Isaiah 45:18). Gap theorists insert billions of years between these verses; Bixler, however, solves the problem differently—in a way that may be closer to the actual intent of the ancient Hebrews. He declares that chaos existed *before* the first verse of Genesis. God may have created it originally, but the Bible does not speak of this. Genesis begins with chaos already in existence. Referring to Job, Psalms, and other scriptures, Bixler argues that chaos was under the control of evil and destructive entities. God's work during the six days of creation involved immense effort—actual "warfare" against this evil, which resisted mightily. The waters of the deep (the abyss) and the darkness are forcibly restrained. During the Flood, God allowed the waters of the deep and the waters above the

firmament to revert temporarily to their former untamed state. Bixler equates the waters above the firmament with the water (vapor) canopy.

The titanic struggle between God and the evil chaos during creation week is unabashed dualism, as Bixler openly admits: "Certainly the Bible is dualistic!" (1986, p. 133). Bixler is fully aware that his exegesis makes Genesis more like pagan cosmogonies than the later Christian *ex nihilo* interpretations. He professes not to worry; Satan often counterfeits God's truth. Bixler also denies the doctrine of dispensationalism, asserting that God operates now just as he has since creation. He creates wine out of water and heals blind eyes just as he created Earth from chaos.

Inspired by Velikovsky and especially by Donald Patten, who wrote a foreword to *Earth, Fire, and Sea*, Bixler proposes that creation was a cosmic catastrophe: the approach of an ice planet or comet to the fiery proto-Earth chaos. The first four days of creation involved extraterrestrial catastrophes. Appealing again to pagan cosmologies, Bixler suggests that the lesser light appointed to rule the night was Saturn (1986, p. 175). A later cosmic cataclysm provoked the Flood and the Ice Age and restructured the solar system, producing our moon.

Bixler dismisses the gap theory as an ad hoc "concordistic" attempt to harmonize the *ex nihilo* interpretation with accumulating evidence for an old Earth. He praises Fields' exegesis as "almost flawless" (except for his refusal to critically examine *creatio ex nihilo*) and cites many of the early commentators claimed to be proto-gap theorists by Custance and others, giving a more plausible rendering of their ideas as referring to pre-existent chaos. Bixler submits that his exegesis eliminates the vexing conflict between young-Earth and old-Earth dating claims, confessing that there is strong evidence for both. His model then proclaims the six-day creation of Genesis occurred just a few thousand years ago but the preexistent Earth—in chaos—is billions of years old.

The authoritative *Unger's Bible Handbook*, respected by fundamentalists, similarly proposes a "pre-Genesis gap" while rejecting the standard gap theory. Merrill Unger, who calls his proposal a "re-creation revelation" theory, also includes it in his *Bible Dictionary*:

Gen. 1:1-2 does not describe primeval creation *ex nihilo* but a much later refashioning of judgment-ridden earth in preparation for a new order of creation—man. The six days that follow are *recreation* [*sic*], revealed to man in six literal days.[1957, p. 226]

Old-Earth creationist John Clayton advocates another variant—what his young-Earth critics call a modified gap theory. Clayton, an Indiana high school teacher with geological training, presents a popular creation science lecture series which is also available in film and video. In *The Source: Eternal Design or Infinite Accident?* (1976), a book aimed at students, Clayton attacks recent creation as well as evolution. He argues that the Genesis order of creation is the same as the geological record (reinterpreting some of the Bible terms) but also maintains that there were long ages before the six days of creation. However, he denies the standard gap theory, pointing out that there is no evidence for the global destruction it posits (1976, pp. 136-137). He proposes that the first few verses of Genesis precede by long ages the six-day creation

and that, during the six-day creation, God created humankind *ex nihilo* but also made use of materials and life forms created in earlier ages which had developed through these ages into an ecosystem able to support humans and the other new forms. Clayton's hybrid scheme thus allows for some day-age interpretation and also, perhaps, some theistic evolution in addition to its modified gap theory.

Conclusion

The most thorough refutations of the gap theory come from rival creationists. They point out the absurdity of supposing that billions of years exist between the crack, as it were, of the first two verses of Genesis, which is a straightforward account of creation. They see no support anywhere in the Bible for such a notion. The alleged scriptural evidences for the gap theory do not concern these immense missing ages. Rather, they refer to Satan's rebellion and fall; as to when this occurred, the Bible is not at all clear. The apocalyptic passages used as evidence are about events of the then contemporary age or allusions to the future coming of the antichrist or, in mythic fashion, to both simultaneously.

The gap theory was first proposed as an attempt to harmonize a "literal" reading of the Bible with the new evidence from geology regarding the great age of Earth. Claims that there were gap theory proponents prior to the rise of modern geology probably distort the intent of these early writers and commentators, though they may have believed in a preexistent chaos or a period of preparation before the six-day creation. Originally a concordistic theory accepting the new truths of geology and paleontology while preserving the eternal truth of the Bible, the gap theory later became subject to elaborate theological speculation. Satan was given reign over this immense pre-Adamic period by gap theorists, and they further populated this pre-Adamic world with his fallen angels and demons. Despite the intense and much-publicized efforts of young-Earth creationists, the gap theory remains quite popular today and is widely preached.



Question: "How do beliefs about creation impact the rest of theology?"

Answer: The creation/evolution debate has been raging for years. To many, it seems like two opponents yelling at each other with no one really listening. The vitriol has increased to the point where each side reflexively dismisses the other—evolutionists dismiss creationists as completely ignoring science, and creationists accuse evolutionists of engaging in all sorts of Machiavellian conspiracies to silence their side. This is not to dismiss the arguments of either side as being hyperbolic but simply to point out that there is precious little honest dialogue going on in this verbal war.

Because of the difficulty of sorting out the truth, many Christians relegate the creation/evolution debate to the status of a secondary issue that does not relate to how one becomes right with God through the gospel of Jesus Christ. For the most part, this line of thinking is correct. We can get so caught up in this debate that we lose our focus from the main issue: the spread of the gospel. However, as with many other “secondary” issues, what one believes regarding creation plays a role in how one views theology in general and the gospel in particular. More to the point, *how* one views creation has a major impact on the rest of their theological views.

Regarding the doctrine of creation, there are several views within Christianity:

1. Literal 24x6 creation – God created all there is in six 24-hour days.
2. Day-Age view – The creation events occurred as depicted in Genesis 1, but instead of six 24-hour days, the “days” of creation represent indeterminate, finite periods of time.
3. The Framework view – The days of Genesis 1 represent a theological framework within which to narrate the creation of all things.

Throughout most of church history, up until the last 150 years, the 24x6 view of creation was the most commonly held view within the church. Not all Christians held to this view, and not all who did were committed to it. However, there is no question that this has been the dominant interpretation of Genesis for most of Christian history. We don't want to believe something simply because it's traditional and historical, including the 24x6 view of creation; rather, we want to believe a doctrine because it's supported by the text of Scripture.

In this particular case, many conservative theologians believe that the 24x6 view also has the strongest exegetical support from the text. First and foremost, it's the natural view one gets from simply reading the text. Additionally, there are other points, such as the way the seven-day pattern set forth during creation week is the pattern for our calendar week (Exodus 20:8–11).

Since the advent of modern science, the 24x6 view of creation has been increasingly abandoned by Christians. The primary reason for this rejection is the fact that the 24x6 view of creation necessitates a “young earth” age of the universe (anywhere from 6,000 to 30,000 years), and the prevailing scientific view is that the universe is billions of years old. The Day-Age view (sometimes called progressive creationism) is an attempt to reconcile the Genesis creation account with an “old

earth" view of the age of the universe.

Please note that the Day-Age view still posits that God created all things and it still rejects atheistic (naturalistic) evolution. Nor should the Day-Age view be confused with "theistic evolution," the view that macroevolution is true but, instead of being guided by blind chance, was guided by the hand of God. Day-Age proponents see themselves as reconciling the biblical account with science. Its opponents see this view as a slippery slope to rejecting the veracity of God's Word.

Because many Christians view the creation/evolution debate as of secondary importance, there is usually little or no concern over the theological implications of how one interprets the Bible's view of creation. In truth, however, what one believes regarding creation is crucial because it goes to the issue of the inerrancy, trustworthiness, and authority of Scripture. Of primary importance is *why* a person chooses a particular view, in light of the Word of God. Believing that the Bible is inspired and inerrant but not literal in the first two chapters of Genesis is one thing. Believing that the Bible is simply wrong or cannot be trusted is another. In other words, the key issue when it comes to one's view of creation is how that view relates to the authority and reliability of the Bible.

If the Bible can't be trusted in the first two chapters, what makes it trustworthy throughout the rest of the book? Typically, critics of the Bible focus their attacks on the first eleven chapters of Genesis, in particular the creation account. The question is, why do they target this part of Scripture? The first eleven chapters of Genesis set the stage for the rest of the biblical story. You can't understand the unfolding narrative of Scripture without Genesis 1–11. There is so much foundational material in these chapters for the rest of the Bible—e.g., creation, the fall, sin, the certainty of judgment, the necessity of a Savior, and the introduction of the gospel. To ignore these foundational doctrines would render the rest of the Bible as unintelligible and irrelevant.

Yet critics of the Bible want to treat these opening chapters of Genesis as ancient Hebrew myth rather than primeval history. The truth of the matter is that, compared to the creation stories of other cultures, the Genesis account—even in its most literal interpretation—reads more like history than myth. In most ancient literature, creation is seen as a struggle between the gods. Most creation myths portray the culture in question as the center of the religious universe. The Genesis account, while sharing many similarities with other creation stories, differs in that it portrays God as the sole Sovereign over creation (not one among many gods) and mankind as the pinnacle of His creation, serving as His stewards over creation.

To be sure, there are unanswered questions with the Genesis account, such as the exact date of creation. Nor are there many details about the specific means or methods God might have used. This, of course, is why there are debates about the different biblically compatible creation accounts. The purpose of the Genesis account isn't to give a complete historical account that would pass muster with modern-day historians. The Genesis account was a pre-history of the Jewish people as they were preparing to enter the Promised Land; they needed to know who they were and from where they came.

Another thing to note is that much of Christian theology is based on the historical accuracy of the Genesis account. The concept of marriage comes right out of the creation account (Genesis 2:24) and is referenced by Jesus in all three Synoptic Gospels. Our Lord Himself acknowledges that man was created male and female "from the beginning of creation" (Matthew 19:4). These statements, to be comprehensible, rely on the historical accuracy of the Genesis creation account. Most importantly, the doctrine of salvation depends on the existence of a literal person named Adam. Twice in the Pauline Epistles (Romans 5 and 1 Corinthians 15), Paul links our salvation in Christ

with our identification in Adam. In 1 Corinthians 15:21–22, we read, “For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man. For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive.” The entire human race is in a fallen state by virtue of being “in Adam” through natural birth. In similar manner, those whom God has chosen for salvation are saved by virtue of being “in Christ” through spiritual birth. The in Adam/in Christ distinction is crucial to a proper understanding of Christian soteriology, and this distinction makes no sense if there were no literal Adam from whom all humanity descended.

Paul argues in a similar vein in Romans 5:12–21. But what makes this passage unique is that it explicitly says, “Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned” (Romans 5:12). This verse is the linchpin in the argument for total depravity (the “first plank” in the Calvinist platform), and, like the 1 Corinthians passage, it depends on a literal Adam for it to make any kind of sense. Without a literal Adam, there is no literal sin and no need for a literal Savior.

Despite what position one takes on the doctrine of creation, at least one point is clear and not open to debate within Christianity: God created the heavens and the earth (Genesis 1:1). While we at Got Questions believe the 24x6 view possesses the strongest biblical argument, there are other views offering valid interpretations within the sphere of Christian orthodoxy.

We need to stress that the Bible does not (either explicitly or implicitly) teach an atheistic or “Darwinian” view of our origins. Therefore, to state that the creation/evolution debate is not important is to have a low view of Scripture. It *does* matter, particularly because *how* we approach the Bible with respect to origins speaks to how we will approach it everywhere else. If we cannot trust the Bible when it speaks on the matter of creation, why should we trust it to speak on salvation? Logically, what we believe regarding creation is important to the rest of our theology.

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Question: "Is there any evidence for young earth creationism?"

Answer: Interpreting evidence is a somewhat subjective process because evidence can always be viewed from multiple vantage points. Police detectives examine crime scenes to determine the most likely perpetrators of the crimes. Sometimes the evidence seems to point in one direction only to later be proved to have been pointing in a different direction all along. Evidence rarely has only one possible explanation.

Old earth creationists examine the cosmological and geological data and conclude that the universe is billions of years old. Young earth creationists admit that the earth and the universe appear to be billions of years old but contend that the data is being misinterpreted.

Most young earth creationists believe that God created the earth and the universe with the appearance of age, much like Adam and Eve were created as adults. If a doctor had examined Adam and Eve on the second day of their existence, the doctor would have said they were decades old even though they were only created the previous day. Similarly, God created the universe and earth so that it could sustain life from the moment He created it. Therefore, it gives the appearance of having aged billions of years even though it is only thousands of years old. So, all the cosmology, geology, and other sciences that uncover evidence for billions of years are in fact pointing to the appearance of age that resulted from God creating a mature and stable universe capable of harboring life.

Most old earth creationists reject the "appearance of age" argument and see it as unnecessary, even deceptive. Why would God create something that appears to be old when it is in fact young? Further, there are many phenomena in the universe with origins seemingly unexplainable other than by allowing for billions of years, and they are unnecessary to harbor life. The old earth creationists say that, if everything in the universe seems to point to billions of years, it should be accepted that the universe is billions of years old.

Both sides examine and interpret the same data. Young earth creationists see anything that points to billions of years as evidence for God creating the universe with the appearance of age or as examples of the scientific community misinterpreting the data. Old earth creationists see everything that points to billions of years as evidence that the universe is actually billions of years old.

So, whether it is continental erosion, subterranean fluid pressure, global cooling, lunar recession, helium diffusion, radiometric dating, the geological column, the big bang theory, redshift, distant starlight, etc., both young earth and old earth creationists believe they can explain the evidence in such a way that supports their viewpoint and/or refutes the other side.

Is there evidence for young earth creationism? Possibly. Is there evidence for old earth creationism? Possibly. It all depends on which viewpoint is correct. In reality, *all* of the evidence points in the direction of the truth of how long ago God created the universe. It is a matter of us interpreting the data correctly.

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Question: "What does the Bible say about creation vs. evolution?"

Answer: It is not the purpose of this answer to present a scientific argument in the creation vs. evolution debate. The purpose of this article is to explain why, according to the Bible, the creation vs. evolution debate even exists in its present form. Romans 1:25 declares, "They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator—who is forever praised. Amen."

A key factor in the state of the creation vs. evolution debate is that the majority of scientists who believe in evolution are also atheists or agnostics. There are some who hold a form of theistic evolution. Others take a deistic view of God, believing He exists but is not involved in the world, and everything proceeds along an uninterrupted, natural course. Many genuinely and honestly look at the data and arrive at the conclusion that evolution better fits the data. However, the dominant narrative in this discussion is that evolution is, somehow, incompatible with both the Bible and faith in God.

It's important to realize that some scientists who hold to belief in evolution also believe in God and the Bible without seeing one or the other as contradictory. However, the vast majority of evolutionary scientists hold that life evolved entirely without any intervention of a higher being. Modern theories of evolution, in practice, are almost entirely a naturalistic science.

There are spiritual drivers behind some of these positions. For atheism to be true, there must be an alternate explanation—other than a Creator—for how the universe and life came into existence. Although belief in some form of evolution predates Charles Darwin, he was the first to develop a plausible, natural source for the process of evolution: natural selection. Darwin once identified himself as a Christian, but, as a result of some tragedies that took place in his life, he later renounced the Christian faith and the existence of God.

Darwin's goal was not to disprove God's existence, nor did he see his theory as doing so. Unfortunately, that is how his ideas have been promoted by those looking to enable atheism. One reason many believers today resist modern evolutionary theory is that it so often comes packaged with a forced, atheistic worldview. Evolutionary scientists likely would not admit that their goal is to give an alternate explanation of the origins of life and thereby to give a foundation for atheism. And yet, according to the Bible, that is one reason the theory of evolution is approached in the way we see today.

The Bible tells us, "The fool says in his heart, 'There is no God'" (Psalm 14:1; 53:1). The Bible also proclaims that people are without excuse for not believing in a Creator God. "For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—His eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse" (Romans 1:20). According to the Bible, anyone who denies the existence of God is a fool. Foolishness does not imply a lack of intelligence. By necessity, evolutionary scientists are brilliant intellectually. Foolishness indicates an inability to properly apply knowledge. Proverbs 1:7 tells us, "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and discipline."

Atheists who support evolution frequently mock creation and/or intelligent design as unscientific and not worthy of scientific examination. In order for something to be considered a "science," they argue, it must be "naturalistic." Creation, by definition, is beyond the rules of the natural world. Since God cannot be tested, so the argument goes, creation and/or intelligent design cannot be considered science.

Strictly speaking, evolution cannot be observed or tested any more or less than intelligent design, but that does not seem to be an issue with non-believing evolutionists. As a result, all data is filtered through the preconceived, presupposed, and pre-accepted worldview of naturalism, without alternate explanations being considered.

Neither the origin of the universe nor the origin of life can be directly tested or observed. Both creation and evolution require a level of faith to be accepted. We cannot go back in time to observe the origin of the universe or of life in the universe. Those who adamantly reject creation do so on grounds that would logically force them to reject evolution as well.

If creation is true, then there is a Creator to whom we are accountable. Evolution, as often presented today, is an enabler for atheism. Evolution gives atheists a basis for explaining how life developed apart from a Creator God. As such, modern theories of evolution serve as a substitute "creation story" for the religion of atheism.

The Bible is clear: God is the Creator. Any interpretation of science that attempts to remove God from involvement with origins is incompatible with Scripture.

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Question: "What does the Bible say about dinosaurs? Are there dinosaurs in the Bible?"

Answer: The topic of dinosaurs in the Bible is part of a larger ongoing debate within the Christian community over the age of the earth, the proper interpretation of Genesis, and how to interpret the physical evidences we find all around us. Those who believe in an older age for the earth tend to agree that the Bible does not mention dinosaurs, because, according to their paradigm, dinosaurs died out millions of years before the first man ever walked the earth. The men who wrote the Bible could not have seen living dinosaurs.

Those who believe in a younger age for the earth tend to agree that the Bible does mention dinosaurs, though it never actually uses the word "dinosaur." Instead, it uses the Hebrew word *tanniyn*, which is translated a few different ways in our English Bibles. Sometimes it's "sea monster," and sometimes it's "serpent." It is most commonly translated "dragon." The *tanniyn* appear to have been some sort of giant reptile. These creatures are mentioned nearly thirty times in the Old Testament and were found both on land and in the water.

In addition to mentioning these giant reptiles, the Bible describes a couple of creatures in such a way that some scholars believe the writers may have been describing dinosaurs. The behemoth is said to be the mightiest of all God's creatures, a giant whose tail is likened to a cedar tree (Job 40:15). Some scholars have tried to identify the behemoth as either an elephant or a hippopotamus. Others point out that elephants and hippopotamuses have very thin tails, nothing comparable to a cedar tree. Dinosaurs like the brachiosaurus and the diplodocus, on the other hand, had huge tails which could easily be compared to a cedar tree.

Nearly every ancient civilization has some sort of art depicting giant reptilian creatures. Petroglyphs, artifacts, and even little clay figurines found in North America resemble modern depictions of dinosaurs. Rock carvings in South America depict men riding diplodocus-like creatures and, amazingly, bear the familiar images of triceratops-like, pterodactyl-like, and tyrannosaurus rex-like creatures. Roman mosaics, Mayan pottery, and Babylonian city walls all testify to man's trans-cultural, geographically unbounded fascination with these creatures. Sober accounts like those of Marco Polo's *Il Milione* mingle with fantastic tales of treasure-hoarding beasts. In addition to the substantial amount of anthropic and historical evidences for the coexistence of dinosaurs and man, there are physical evidences, like the fossilized footprints of humans and dinosaurs found together at places in North America and West-Central Asia.

So, are there dinosaurs in the Bible? The matter is far from settled. It depends on how you interpret the available evidences and how you view the world around you. If the Bible is interpreted literally, a young earth interpretation will result, and the idea that dinosaurs and man coexisted can be accepted. If dinosaurs and human beings coexisted, what happened to the dinosaurs? While the Bible does not discuss the issue, dinosaurs likely died out sometime after the flood due to a combination of dramatic environmental shifts and the fact that they were relentlessly hunted to extinction by man.

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Question: "What is the Day-Age Theory?"

Answer: Although Moses wrote the book of Genesis approximately 3,400 years ago, it has been in just the last few centuries when serious debate over the nature and date of the original creation has developed. Consequently, there are now several creation theories, one of which is the Day-Age Theory. In short, this is a belief that the “days” spoken of in the first chapter of Genesis are sequential periods and not literal, 24-hour days. Each day, therefore, is thought to represent a much longer, albeit undefined, period of time, such as a million or more years. This is rooted in an effort to harmonize our understanding of the Bible with what appears to be overwhelming scientific evidence of an “old” earth.

Science has a habit of disproving interpretations of certain views, but it has never contradicted anything explicitly taught in the Bible. God’s Word is our supreme source of truth, but that does not mean everything it says is easy to understand or immediately clear (see 2 Peter 3:16; Colossians 1:26). It’s important to point out that Day-Age theorists are not attempting to remove God. Some alternative views, such as atheistic evolution, do just that. Rather, Day-Age Theory seeks to harmonize faithful interpretation of the Bible with a modern understanding of science.

Needless to say, any approach to interpreting the Bible should be handled with caution. One consequence of questioning the fundamental truths of the book of Genesis is the temptation to re-interpret any doctrine that does not agree with our preferences. However, preference is not a valid reason to reject the inerrancy of the Word of God. At the same time, suggesting a different interpretation is not at all the same thing as questioning the inspiration of the Bible.

Adherents of Day-Age Theory often point out that the word used for “day” in Hebrew, *yom*, sometimes refers to a period of time that is longer than a literal, 24-hour day. In fact, this happens in the creation account itself, in Genesis 2:4. There, the entire explanation is described as “the account of the heavens and the earth when they were created, in the day that the LORD God made earth and heaven” (NASB). This is also seen in God’s warning in Genesis 2:17, where He warns that man will die “in the day” he eats from the tree.

Each day in the first chapter of Genesis is described as having an evening and a morning. Indeed, these two words—*evening* and *morning*—are used extensively in the Old Testament, and in most circumstances they refer to normal days. Speaking from the perspective of language, opponents of Day-Age Theory note that, if Moses wanted to convey a longer period of time, he could have used clear terms such as *olam* or *qedem* in place of *yom*. Day-Age proponents, in response, note that this does not change the possibility of a symbolic use of *yom*, especially since it’s clearly used symbolically in those very passages by Moses.

Another reason given for a metaphorical “day” as postulated by the Day-Age Theory is that the sun was not created until day four. Given this, how could there have been conventional, 24-hour days (i.e., day and night) before day four? Opponents of the Day-Age Theory would contend that, technically, the sun itself is not needed for a day and night. What is needed is light and a rotating Earth. The “evening and morning” indicates a rotating Earth, and, as far as light is concerned, God’s very first command was “Let there be light,” and there was light (Genesis 1:3), prior to there

being a sun. Separating the light from the darkness was the very first thing our Creator did.

A major sticking point for some Christians about Day-Age Theory is the implication that disease, suffering, and death must have existed before the fall of man. Careless application of Day-Age Theory could possibly contradict the concept of the fall of man and, by extension, the doctrine of the atonement. Scripture clearly indicates that “sin entered the world through one man [Adam], and death through sin” (Romans 5:12). Day-Age creationists would agree there was no *human* death prior to Adam’s sin. They note the primary effects of the fall were relational and spiritual and did not result in immediate fatality to Adam or Eve. In other words, it is entirely reasonable to suggest that some kind of death existed in the world—but not necessarily in man—prior to the fall.

As with many such issues, the Bible is not especially clear about the exact nature of creation. There are arguments and evidence for many different views, though not all of these are truly biblical. The Day-Age Theory, in and of itself, is like any other *possible* interpretation of the Word of God. It has strengths and weaknesses and should be treated with cautious deliberation.

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Question: "Why are there two different Creation accounts in Genesis chapters 1-2?"

Answer: Genesis 1:1 says, "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth." Later, in Genesis 2:4, it seems that a second, different story of creation begins. The idea of two differing creation accounts is a common misinterpretation of these two passages which, in fact, describe the same creation event. They do not disagree as to the order in which things were created and do not contradict one another. Genesis 1 describes the "six days of creation" (and a seventh day of rest), Genesis 2 covers only one day of that creation week—the sixth day—and there is no contradiction.

In Genesis 2, the author steps back in the temporal sequence to the sixth day, when God made man. In the first chapter, the author of Genesis presents the creation of man on the sixth day as the culmination or high point of creation. Then, in the second chapter, the author gives greater detail regarding the creation of man.

There are two primary claims of contradictions between Genesis chapters 1-2. The first is in regard to plant life. Genesis 1:11 records God creating vegetation on the third day. Genesis 2:5 states that prior to the creation of man "no shrub of the field had yet appeared on the earth and no plant of the field had yet sprung up, for the LORD God had not sent rain on the earth and there was no man to work the ground." So, which is it? Did God create vegetation on the third day before He created man (Genesis 1), or after He created man (Genesis 2)? The Hebrew words for "vegetation" are different in the two passages. Genesis 1:11 uses a term that refers to vegetation in general. Genesis 2:5 uses a more specific term that refers to vegetation that requires agriculture, i.e., a person to tend it, a gardener. The passages do not contradict. Genesis 1:11 speaks of God creating vegetation, and Genesis 2:5 speaks of God not causing "farmable" vegetation to grow until after He created man.

The second claimed contradiction is in regard to animal life. Genesis 1:24-25 records God creating animal life on the sixth day, before He created man. Genesis 2:19, in some translations, seems to record God creating the animals after He had created man. However, a good and plausible translation of Genesis 2:19-20 reads, "Now the LORD God had formed out of the ground all the beasts of the field and all the birds of the air. He brought them to the man to see what he would name them, and whatever the man called each living creature, that was its name. So the man gave names to all the livestock, the birds of the air and all the beasts of the field." The text does not say that God created man, then created the animals, and then brought the animals to the man. Rather, the text says, "Now the LORD God had [already] created all the animals." There is no contradiction. On the sixth day, God created the animals, then created man, and then brought the animals to the man, allowing the man to name the animals.

By considering the two creation accounts individually and then reconciling them, we see that God describes the sequence of creation in Genesis 1, then clarifies its most important details, especially of the sixth day, in Genesis 2. There is no contradiction here, merely a common literary device describing an event from the general to the specific.

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