

Age of the Earth

Jeff Smelser

Text: Genesis 1

Introduction:

- I. The Bible seems to indicate that creation occurred not much more than 6000 or 7000 years ago.
 - A. Jesus seemed to take the Biblical account of the creation of male and female literally, and He placed it at “the beginning of creation.” (Mark 10:6).
 - B. Paul seemed to take the Biblical account of the creation of male and female, as well as the account of the first sin, literally (1 Cor. 11:8-9; 1 Tim. 2:13-14).
 - C. The genealogies in Genesis 5 and 11 seem to be given, at least in part, with a view to providing a complete record of the passing of time and generations from Creation to Abraham.
 1. Otherwise, what is the reason not only for listing every generation from Adam to Abraham, but also for giving the lifespan of each generation, and especially what is the purpose of giving the age of each father at the time of the birth of his son?
 2. Against this, it is noted that the genealogies in the Bible skip generations.
 - a. E.g., Matthew 1 skips generations (e.g. the genealogy goes from Joram to Uzziah, skipping Ahaziah, Joash, Amaziah).
 - b. Hugh Ross reckons that Biblical genealogies may skip most of human history:
 - 1) “Comparative analysis of overlapping genealogies throughout the Bible suggests that they may range anywhere from about 90 percent complete at best to about 10 percent complete at worst.” [Ross, 55]
 - 2) We are told superciliously that “father of” can mean “ancestor of,” that “beget” can be used not only with reference to an immediate son but also with reference to future generations, and that “son” can mean descendent, and in view of the aforementioned skipped generations, we should assume these meanings in Gen. 5 and 11.
 3. But the cited omissions of generations are obvious, and are not in the part of the record that is in question.
 - a. Among those who believe Abraham was a historical figure, there is not much doubt that he lived about 4000 years ago, give or take a couple of hundred years.
 - b. The time wherein some suppose enormous gaps might be placed is the time from creation to Abraham.
 - c. But, advocates of gaps in genealogies as a means of allowing for an old earth point to the well-known and quantifiable omissions during the divided kingdom period (after Abraham) for evidence that generations are sometimes skipped.
 - d. Then, with a quick allusion to the Cainan mentioned in Luke 3:36 [See below, I.C.6], they assert that naturally we can assume there are large gaps in the genealogy prior to Abraham as well.

4. Furthermore, the wording of the genealogies in Gen. 5 and 11 is not such as to permit us to suppose “*became the father of*” means “*became the ancestor of,*” such that generations are intentionally omitted.
 - a. Consider the wording: *So and So* lived x years and became the father of *Son*, then *So and So* lived y years after he became the father of *Son* and had other sons and daughters, so all the days of *So and So* are $x + y$ years, and he died.
 - b. Contrast this specification of the year of *So and so*’s life when the child in question was born and the number of years *So and so* lived thereafter with the more cursory and less detailed phrase, “Jehoshaphat begat Joram and Joram begat Uzziah.”
5. The omissions in Matthew 1 seem to have some literary or mnemonic purpose connected with the contrivance of three groups of fourteen (1:17).
6. The genealogy in Luke 3 does add Cainan (variously spelled as Kainan or Kainam) between Arphaxad and Shelah, a generation missing from the Hebrew text of Gen. 11.
 - a. This is offered as evidence that even the genealogy in Gen. 11 skips generations.
 - b. However, the Septuagint includes Cainan in Gen. 11.
 - 1) The LXX reading of Gen. 11:12-14: Καὶ ἔζησεν Ἀρφαξὰδ ἑκατὸν τριάκοντα πέντε ἔτη καὶ ἐγέννησεν τὸν **Καινᾶν**. καὶ ἔζησεν Ἀρφαξὰδ μετὰ τὸ γεννηθῆσαι αὐτὸν τὸν **Καινᾶν** ἔτη τετρακόσια τριάκοντα καὶ ἐγέννησεν υἱοὺς καὶ θυγατέρας καὶ ἀπέθανεν. Καὶ ἔζησεν **Καινᾶν** ἑκατὸν τριάκοντα ἔτη καὶ ἐγέννησεν τὸν Σαλα. καὶ ἔζησεν **Καινᾶν** μετὰ τὸ γεννηθῆσαι αὐτὸν τὸν Σαλα ἔτη τετρακόσια τριάκοντα καὶ ἐγέννησεν υἱοὺς καὶ θυγατέρας καὶ ἀπέθανεν. Καὶ ἔζησεν Σαλα ἑκατὸν τριάκοντα ἔτη καὶ ἐγέννησεν τὸν Εβερ.
 - 2) An English translation of the LXX reading of Gen. 11:12-14: *And Arphaxad lived 135 years and begat **Kainan**. And after begetting **Kainan**, Arphaxad lived 430 years and begat sons and daughters and he died. And **Kainan** lived 130 years and begat Shela. And after begetting Shela **Kainan** lived 330 years and begat sons and daughters and he died. And Shela lived 130 years and begat Eber.*
 - c. Cainan is also included in the genealogy at 1 Chronicles 1 according to Codex Alexandrinus and most of the minuscules.
 - 1) Cainan is not included at 1 Chron. 1 in Vaticanus, but the text there is significantly abbreviated as compared with either the Hebrew text or most of the other Greek witnesses.
 - 2) In Sinaiticus, the first several chapters of 1 Chronicles are mostly missing.
 - d. While it is puzzling that Cainan is included in the ancient Greek text at both Gen. 11 and 1 Chron. 1, but is missing from the Hebrew text in both passages, the omission of Cainan in the Hebrew text (or the inclusion in the LXX) seems to be a matter of transcription rather than an indication of how we should understand “became the father of.”

II. Science would seem to suggest the universe, including the earth, is billions of years old.

-
- A. Geological Formations
 - B. Radiometric Dating Techniques
 - C. The Existence of “Fossil Fuels”
 - D. Star Light
- III. This discrepancy is to be attributed to the fact that how God created everything, in how much time, and even how long ago he did so, are philosophical questions, not scientific questions.
- A. Interpretations of Genesis 1 that allow for an old earth became popular in the 19th century as a result of scientific findings in geology and the publication of Darwin’s *On The Origin of Species*.
 - 1. This is well illustrated in Morton Smith’s history of Creation doctrine in the American Presbyterian church. [Smith, 1-39]
 - 2. Robert Milligan exemplifies the candor of most Old Earth Creationists, Progressive Creationists, etc. when with no reticence he classified his own view along with “several other modes of *reconciling the known facts of geology with the Mosaic cosmogony*” [Milligan, 25, n., emph. mine, JS]
 - 3. Bernard Ramm wrote, “The central problem is this: If we accept the divine inspiration of Holy Scripture, what are we to think of the relationship between the story geologists tell and the one the Bible tells?” [Ramm, 172].
 - B. But science, specifically empirical science, is the body of knowledge based on what man can observe, knowledge man can obtain through his five senses.
 - 1. We fault scientists for building into their investigations the assumption that there must be a naturalistic explanation for any and every phenomenon.
 - a. And to be sure, we *should* fault them for that assumption.
 - b. In making such an assumption, they will necessarily arrive at a false conclusion in any instance where the explanation is not naturalistic.
 - 2. However, just as surely as they ought to recognize that there may be, indeed *must* be, some non-naturalistic cause for some phenomena, we ought to understand that their discipline limits them to discovering explanations that are naturalistic.
 - C. We have compelling, rational, philosophical (not empirical) reasons for believing that creation was an act of God.
 - 1. But if it was an act of God, an act which we have not observed and cannot observe, then science will not be able to discover its means.
 - a. Empirical science cannot explain what is not empirical (*i.e.*, what cannot be tested by means of the five senses.)
 - b. Any attempt to explain creation in terms of processes which we have observed necessarily precludes a singular act of God whereby what is seen was not made out of things which appear.
 - c. Being outside of anything we have experienced or can observe, the story of creation can only be told by one who was there.
 - d. Ramm was wrong when he said, “The story of creation can only be told by the cooperative efforts of the theologian and the scientist.” [Ramm, 172]
-

-
- e. Science may be able to point to the absence of any viable naturalistic explanation.
 - 1) The best that empirical science can do is attest to the fact that man cannot observe any explanation for how things came into existence.
 - 2) Thus by affirming a negative, science can point the way to a philosophical explanation, some explanation that can be learned only by means of revelation.
 2. Empirical science cannot explain when God did what empirical science cannot prove God did.
 3. Concerning the origin of all things, rather than starting with science and letting that define for us the limitations of scripture or the nature of the creation narrative, we ought to start with an understanding of the limitations of science and then let scripture speak for itself.

Body:

I. Some Early Commentators Did Understand the 6 Days of Creation to be Symbolic.

- A. Philo was preoccupied with the mathematical properties and symbolic significance of the number 6.
 1. “He says that in six days the world was created, not that its Maker required a length of time for His work, for we must think of God as doing all things simultaneously, remembering that ‘all’ includes with the commands which He issues the thought behind them. Six days are mentioned because for the things coming into existence there was need of order. Order involves number, and among numbers by the laws of nature the most suitable to productivity is 6, for if we start with 1 it is the first perfect number, being equal to the product of its factors (*i.e.* 1 x 2 x 3), as well as made up of the sum of them (*i.e.* 1 + 2 + 3), its half being 3, its third part 2, its sixth part 1. We may say that it is in its nature both male and female, and is a result of the distinctive power of either. For among things that are it is the odd that is male, and the even female. Now of odd numbers 3 is the starting point, and of even numbers 2, and the product of these two is 6. For it was requisite that the world, being most perfect of all things that have come into existence, should be constituted in accordance with a perfect number, namely six, and, inasmuch as it was to have in itself beings that sprang from a coupling together, should receive the impress of a mixed number, namely the first in which odd and even were combined, one that should contain the essential principle both of the male that sows and of the female that receives the seed.” [Philo, *On the Creation*, iii (p. 13f)]
 2. Philo began his comments on Moses’ account of creation by observing that Moses “refrained from inventing myths himself or acquiescing in those composed by others.” [Philo, *On the Creation*, i (p. 7)]
 3. Philo did reckon the events of Genesis 2 to be outside of the 6 days of creation. [See below, II.E.4.b.5)]
- B. Clement of Alexandria
 1. Here again we see the idea that the whole of creation was accomplished at once, but related as if occurring over 6 days.
 2. “Nor was the creation of each signified by the voice, inasmuch as the creative work is said to have made them at once. For something must needs have been named first.

Wherefore those things were announced first, from which came those that were second, all things being originated together from one essence by one power. For the will of God was one, in one identity. And how could creation take place in time, seeing time was born along with things which exist.” [Stromata.6.16, *Gnostic Exposition of the Decalogue*]

C. Origen

1. He interpreted everything allegorically
2. Not surprisingly, he reckoned the 6 days in the same way.

D. Augustine

1. Augustine is sometimes erroneously cited in support of an old earth view.
 - a. The Wikipedia article on “Day-Age Creationism” (viewed 2/11/2011) included this misleading statement: “The Old-Earth figurative view can be traced back at least to Saint Augustine in the 5th Century...” [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Day-Age_Creationism]
 - b. In fact, Augustine believed the earth was less than 6000 years old in his day.
 - 1) “They are deceived, too, by those highly mendacious documents which profess to give the history of many thousand years, though, reckoning by the sacred writings, we find that not 6000 years have yet passed.” [Augustine, *City of God*, 12.10, p. 494]
 - 2) “Augustine here follows the chronology of Eusebius, who reckons 5611 years from the Creation to the taking of Rome by the Goths; adopting the Septuagint version of the patriarchal ages.” [Augustine, *City of God*, 12.10, p. 494, n. 3]
2. But Augustine did conclude that the creation account cannot be rightly understood if taken literally.
 - a. Augustine believed it did not literally span 6 days, but was accomplished all at once. (Lit. Gen. 5.6)
 - 1) Augustine allowed for progression after creation of the germ, [*Literal Meaning of Genesis* 5.22, 5.40-45, 6.10,18,29] such that even the “account of the man being molded from the mud of the earth, and a wife being formed for him from his side, does not belong to the creating of all things simultaneously and God resting when they were complete, but to that divine work which is continuing now through the ages as they unroll, at which *he is working until now* (Jn. 5:17)” [Augustine, *Literal Meaning of Genesis* 6.4]
 - 2) Augustine saw in Gen. 1:1 the creation of all things, and considered the subsequent account of 6 days to be a telling of the same thing in mystical terms to make use of the number 6:
 - a) “And, under these names heaven and earth, the whole creation is signified, either as divided into spiritual and material, which seems the more likely, or into the two great parts of the world in which all created things are contained, so that, first of all, the creation is presented in sum, and then its parts are enumerated according to the mystic number of the days.” [*City of God* 11.33, p.479]
 - b. Augustine relied heavily upon the statement in Sir. 18:1 (e.g., *Literal Meaning of Genesis* 4.52, 6.4) which in Greek says, ἔκτισεν τὰ πάντα κοινῇ (“he created all

things in common,” *i.e.*, all things share in having been created by God), but which Augustine read in Latin as *creavit omni simul*, “created all simultaneously.” [Lewis, 440]

3. There is a comparison to make between Augustine’s reasoning and that of people today.
 - a. Reasoning from what he thought he knew about the natural world, Augustine concluded that the creation account cannot be rightly understood if taken literally, and he supposed creation actually happened all at once.
 - b. Today, based on what man thinks he knows about the natural world, men conclude that the creation account cannot be rightly understood if taken literally, and conclude that the earth is 5 billion years old and that the earth’s topography and life upon it formed very gradually.
 - c. Augustine demonstrated a surprising knowledge of the natural world.
 - 1) Augustine displayed an understanding of the earth as a mass having a dark side and a light side, and while he thought of the sun as going around the earth, he understood the concept of one side being alternately light and dark and the other side being at all times the opposite.
 - 2) He also understood that sound is perceived as a result of “the impact of air on the sense organ.”
 - 3) He also understood something about light rays.
 - 4) Given such insights, maybe we are able to understand why he thought he knew enough about the natural world to evaluate and interpret the creation account using his understanding of science as his guide.
 - d. However, there were also things which he thought he understood, but did not.
 - 1) Augustine mentioned and dismissed one attempt to reconcile science with a literal understanding of the creation account partly on the basis of his belief that light rays emanate from the eye, and that we can draw those rays in to view near objects, and extend those rays farther out to see distant objects.
 - 2) Augustine mentioned and dismissed another attempt to reconcile science with a literal understanding of the creation account partly on the basis of his belief that the seas are everywhere level. (In fact, mean sea level in the Indian Ocean is about 100 meters lower than the world average whereas mean sea level around Iceland is about 60 meters higher than the world average.)
 - e. Augustine mistakenly thought that what they knew in his day was sufficient to judge with a critical eye the scientific credibility of the creation account as a literal account.
 - 1) They knew quite a bit in his day, but from our perspective, we can readily see they didn’t know enough.
 - 2) What will people 1500 years in the future (if the Lord has not yet returned) think of our attempts to rely on our knowledge as it stands today as a means of critically evaluating the scientific credibility of the creation account as a literal account?

II. Modern Attempts to Explain Genesis One in View of Prevailing Science

A. **Gap Theory** (Gap Prior to 1st Day)

1. "...as far as the grammar is concerned, the 'first day' of the account need not be the first day of the universe." [Collins, 139]
2. Some have argued that Genesis 1:1 should be, or can be, translated "In the beginning, when God created..." taking the verb *bara* (create) as a construct rather than as an absolute, and then construing "the earth was formless and void" (vs. 2) as the main, independent clause, thus suggesting this is a description of a previously existing state.
 - a. Regarding the absolute "God created" versus the dependent clause, "When God created," Hermann Gunkel says, "Both interpretations are possible although the first understanding seems simpler." [103]
 - 1) But Gunkel says, "In no case, however, is it permissible (because of the first construct) to understand [the heavens and the earth] as a description of the primordial, still chaotic world and to maintain that v 1 refers to the creation of the world as Chaos...so that v 2 then must describe the chaotic state of this first creation and only vv 3ff. describe the origination of the current ordered world." [103]
 - 2) Gunkel's point seems to be that whether verse 1 is an independent clause or a dependent clause, it is not referring to the creation of something prior to the creation described beginning in verse 3. In other words, Gunkel sees verse 1 as a statement of the creation that is further described in verses 3 and following. [103]
 - 3) Gunkel gives three reasons for this.
 - a) "Heaven and Earth" is "consistently the name of the current, organized world and cannot possibly be understood as the depiction of a chaotic primordial world." [103]
 - 1] But do Isaiah 65:71 and 2 Peter 3:13, if not also 2 Pt. 3:5-7, argue against this point?
 - b) "The world as Chaos is not called "heaven and earth" but "the earth (v 2)." [103]
 - c) "The notion of a creation of Chaos is intrinsically contradictory and odd, for Chaos is the world before the Creation." [103]
 - b. E. J. Young argued that the verb is absolute, and said, "The first verse of Genesis therefore stands as a simple declaration of the fact of absolute creation." [Young, 7]
 - 1) He specifically rejects Gunkel's assertion that either the dependent or independent interpretation is possible [Young, 3, n. 5]
 - 2) Young discusses this point at length on pages 1-7 of *Studies in Genesis One*.
3. Numerous notes in *The Scofield Reference Bible* support the idea that the earth existed for a long time prior to the 6 day creation.
 - a. In *The New Scofield Reference Bible*, such notes are found in connection with Gen. 1:1 ("Scripture gives no data for determining how long ago the universe was created" [p. 1, n. 2]), 1:2, 1:3, 1:5, 5:3, and 11:10.
 - b. An extensive *Scofield Reference Bible* note in connection with Is. 45:18 will be discussed below under "Gap Theory with Pre-Adamic Race," (II.B.1.d.1.)

-
4. Bruce Waltke also allows for the existence of the globe prior to the 6 days of creation.
 - a. But rather than seeing a gap between Gen. 1:1 and Gen. 1:3, Waltke, argues that “heavens and earth” in Gen. 1:1 is a hendiadys and that Gen. 1:1 is a summary statement of everything that follows in chapter one, and not a declaration of a creation of the globe and the atmosphere prior to the creation of light. [3f]
 - 1) James Jordan responds by appealing to Ezek. 1:22 and Rev. 4:6 as evidence of a “throne-heaven” that he thinks is alluded to in Gen. 1:7 in the mention of the waters above the firmament (Ezek. 1:22 mentions crystal, which Jordan takes as ice, which is water -- get it?)
 - 2) Jordan therefore concludes this throne-heaven must be the heaven of 1:1, hence no hendiadys. [39] (I’m not all that impressed with Jordan’s response to Waltke.)
 - b. In Waltke’s view, the details of creation begin with the globe existing and with no account of how it came to exist.
 - c. Waltke argues that as a telic verb, *bara* (“create”) in Gen. 1 cannot refer to an unfinished cosmos, but necessarily refers to the completed creation, and therefore Gen. 1:1 must be recognized as a summary statement. [Waltke, 4]
 - 1) Waltke might be right about Genesis 1:1 being a summary statement.
 - 2) But his argument seems a little pedantic to me.
 - a) Yes, “create” is a telic verb, but doesn’t its scope depend on what the speaker has in mind? That is, whatever the speaker has in mind is what is completed.
 - b) For example, if I *create* a sculpture of an imaginary creature, I can speak of the completion of the whole work -- “I created it.” But if I started my sculpture by forming a prehensile tail with an eyeball on the end, and if I want to talk particularly about that, can I not say, “I created a prehensile tail with an eyeball on the end,” and then go on to explain the rest of the sculpture?
 - d. Waltke concurs with Edmond Jacob in seeing verse 2 as a parenthetical description of the pre-existing condition of the earth.
 - 1) “Evidently we must regard Gen. 1.2 as a parenthesis which seeks to describe the condition before creation and 1.1 as the heading of the whole chapter.” [Jacob, 144, n. 2]
 - 2) But Waltke takes pains to acknowledge that the earth could not have been in this condition from eternity, and consents to the truth of Hebrews 11:3 (which is erroneously cited as Heb 1:5). [Waltke, 4]
 - e. Waltke concludes that “the age of the earth cannot be decided by this text and that one must commence one’s thinking about cosmic origins with chaotic waters already in existence.” [Waltke, 5]
 5. An alleged distinction between *bara* and *asah* plays a role in this debate.
 - a. Henry Morris argued that the word “create” (*bara*), used in Gen. 1:1, precludes the existence of heaven and earth prior to Genesis 1:1.
 - 1) *bara* is “used always only of the work of God.” [Morris, 40]
-

-
- 2) “Men can ‘make’ things or ‘form’ things but they cannot *create* things. God also can ‘make’ and ‘form’ things (Hebrew *asah* and *yatsar*, respectively)...The work of creation, however, is uniquely a work of God. The work of making and forming consists of organizing already existing materials into more complex systems, whereas the act of creation is that of speaking into existence something whose material had no previous existence, except in the mind and power of God.” [Morris, 40]
 - 3) “The use of the word ‘create’ here in Genesis 1:1 informs us that, at this point, the physical universe was spoken into existence by God. It had no existence prior to this primeval creative act of God.” [Morris, 40]
- b. On the other hand, that same alleged distinction is used to argue in favor of a Gap.
- 1) Robert Milligan saw a gap between Genesis 1:1 and 1:3, and pointed to that same distinction between *barah* and *asah* to identify a distinction between the *creation* of a pre-Adamic world and the *renovation* of creation during the six days.
 - 2) With reference to a pre-Adamic world, Milligan said, “That this was an absolute *creation* of matter, and not a mere renovation of something previously existing, is evident, from the context. For, 1. A mere change or renovation is ordinarily expressed by the word *ahsah*, and not by the word *bahrah*. 2. The beginning of the Adamic renovation is evidently described in the third verse of this chapter. 3. In Genesis ii, 3, both the words *bahrah* and *ahsah* are used: the former to describe creation absolute, as in Genesis i, 1, and the latter to describe the Adamic renovation as it is given and explained in Genesis i, 3-31.” [Milligan, 24]
 - 3) This distinction is urged in response to the argument against the Gap Theory made from Ex. 20:11.
 - a) Bert Thompson cites Ex. 20:11 and says, “Now think about it brethren: ‘For in six days Jehovah made the heavens, the earth, the sea, and all that in them is.’ Question: What does that leave out? That doesn’t leave anything out. That’s everything. That’s the sum total of creation -- all of it. That one verse is enough to demolish the gap theory in and of itself.” [Note: All quotations from Bert Thompson are from the video tape cited in the Bibliography]
 - b) But some argue that because the word used there is *asah*, and not *barah*, Ex. 20:11 is talking about the re-creation, or renovation, of the world.
 - 1] Thompson’s response is to argue that this would have Ex. 20:11 saying that *everything* was re-created, not only the things in the earth, but the earth itself.
 - 2] Thompson (possibly quoting Morris) says, “The phrase hooked on the end of the verse, ‘and all that in them is,’ should make it clear that the whole earth’s structure, not just the earth’s surface, is included in the entities that were made in the six days. If the gap theorist says that it means a remaking, do you understand what he’s saying in this text since it’s talking about all that in them is? That means God would have had to have destroyed the whole
-

earth, all the heavens, all the, everything total, and then reconstructed the whole.”

- c. Thompson responds to the alleged distinction between *barah* and *asah*, by arguing that *asah* and *barah* are used interchangeably.
 - 1) Although it is clear that Thompson is quoting Henry Morris, it’s not clear how much of the following is quoted from Morris and how much is Thompson’s own commentary. I was unable to find the source containing Morris’ own words. Therefore the following, quoted from Thompson, may not correctly distinguish between Thompson’s own commentary and his quotation from Morris.
 - 2) “Listen to Dr. Henry Morris’ statement: ‘The Hebrew words for create, *bara*, and make, *asah*, are very often used interchangeably...the fact that *barah* is used only three times in Genesis one -- verses one, twenty-one, and twenty-seven -- does not imply that the other creative acts in which *asah* is used, or some similar expression, were really only acts of restoration.’ For example, in Genesis 1:21, God created, that’s *barah*, the fishes and the birds, but in Genesis 1:25, he made, that’s *asah*, the animals and the creeping things. Then you come to verse 26 and verse 27...it says there he speaks of making, that’s *asah*, man in his own image. But the very next verse says he created him, that’s *barah*. Which did he do?...He did both, because the words are used interchangeably.” [Thompson video]

B. Gap Theory with Pre-Adamic Life

1. Some propose a pre-existing world wherein lived pre-historic creatures, and some would say an earlier race of hominids, that accounts for the fossil record, a world that was corrupted and destroyed, and thus “became” without form and void. The pre-Adamic fall of Satan is also included by some as part of this theory.
 - a. Thomas Chalmers, an early proponent of a pre-existing world, was adamant in defending the week of creation as consisting of six 24-hour days, but allowed for a prior world that had been destroyed.
 - 1) “We hold the week of the first chapter of Genesis to have been literally a week of miracles -- the period of a great creative interposition, during which by so many successive evolutions, the present economy was raised out of the wreck and materials of the one which had gone before it.” [Chalmers, *On Natural Theology*, 229f]
 - b. Arthur Custance wrote: “A fourth school, of which I count myself a member, holds that we simply do not know precisely how God ordered the world in geological times prior to man, whether by direct creative activity or by something akin to evolution. Those in this group believe, as I do, that something went wrong and a catastrophic judgment brought that older world to a disastrous end, leaving it ruined and desolate, as Genesis 1:2 describes it.. Then followed a re-creation at a tremendously accelerated rate over a period of six literal days...” [Custance, *Evolution or Creation*, 15f]
 - 1) Arthur Custance argued that Gen. 1:2 should be translated, “But the earth had become a ruin and a desolation...,” thus indicating that the earth had existed for some time before the six days of Creation. [Custance, “Hidden things of God’s Revelation” 277]

-
- a) Against this, Harbach says “the verb *hayah*, to be rendered ‘became,’ must be followed by the preposition *le*, which it is not in this verse. The only proper translation is *was*.” [Harbach, 6]
 - 2) Custance translated Gen. 1:1-2 as follows: “Originally God brought into being and set in perfect order the heavens and the earth. But the earth had become a ruin and a desolation: and a pall of darkness hung over this scene of disaster: and the Spirit of God moved mightily over the face of the waters.” [Custance, *Hidden Things*, 280]
 - 3) Custance supposed he found in the words translated “without form and void” evidence of a pre-Adamic judgment inasmuch as the Hebrew *tohu* “is used of something which has been laid waste (Isa. 24:10, 34:11; Jer. 4:23) or has become desert (Deut. 33:10).”
 - 4) He supposed he found further evidence to support his theory in noting that the words *tohu* and *bohu* are used together in only three places, Gen. 1:2, Jer. 4:23, and Is. 34:11, the latter two both depicting desolation resulting from a judgment of God. [Custance, *Time and Eternity*, 92f]
 - c. Robert Milligan imagined a thriving world prior to the six days of creation: “When this beginning was, or how long it occurred before the Adamic epoch, we have no means of ascertaining with any high degree of certainty. But geology makes it quite probable, if not indeed absolutely certain, that it occurred many ages previous to the historic period; and, moreover, that during these intervening ages, many distinct orders of vegetables and animals were created and destroyed at the beginning and close of each geological formation.” [Milligan, 24f]
 - d. Among dispensationalists, Pre-Adamism is popular, and is supported in notes in *The Scofield Reference Bible*.
 - 1) In a note on Is. 45:18, *The New Scofield Reference Bible* makes six points in favor of a Pre-Adamic world.
 - a) “Only the earth, not the universe, is said to have been ‘without form and void.’”
 - b) “The face of the earth bears the marks of a catastrophe.”
 - c) “The word ‘was’ may also be translated ‘became,’ ... ‘became without form and void.’”
 - d) *Tohu wabohu* “is used to describe a condition produced by divine judgment”
 - e) “Such a prehistoric divine judgment would throw some light on Satan’s fall...”
 - f) “This interpretation leaves room for an undetermined period of time between the original creation and divine judgment.”
 - 2) In the 1909 edition of *The Scofield Reference Bible*, the note on Gen. 1:2 said, “Jer. iv.23-26, Isa. 24.1 and xlv.18, clearly indicate that the earth had undergone a cataclysmic change as the result of a divine judgment. The face of the earth bears everywhere the marks of such a catastrophe. There are not wanting intimations which connect it with a previous testing and fall of angels. See Ezk. xxviii.12-15 and Isa. xiv.9-14, which certainly go beyond the kings of Tyre and Babylon.”
-

- e. Hugh Ross takes issue with the view promoted in *The Scofield Reference Bible* on several points and protests using the “Gap Theory” to describe his own view inasmuch as he believes the words of Genesis 1:2 “explain the ‘formless and empty’ state of early Earth.” [Ross, 26]. Nonetheless, he clearly advocates a world that existed prior to the 6 days of creation.
- 1) “We moderns bemoan the lack of specific information about dinosaurs and bipedal primates, among other things, but because these creatures went extinct before Adam and Eve came on the scene, and because they are not Adam and Eve’s progenitors... their mention (or lack of mention) makes no significant difference to the story’s development.” [Ross, 30].
 - 2) Ross’ pre-Adamic race was not created in the image of God [Ross, 53]
 - a) “Although bipedal, tool-using, large-brained primates roamed Earth for hundreds of thousands (perhaps a million) years, religious relics date back only about eight thousand to twenty-four thousand years. Thus, the anthropological date for the first spirit creatures agrees with the biblical date.” [Ross, 55. See similar statement on page 110]

C. Day-Age Theory, a.k.a. Progressive Creationism (6 Days = 6 Epochs)

1. Archer points to Gen. 2:4 where *yōm* (“day”) is used “to refer to the whole creative process just described in Genesis 1 as taking up six days” [Archer, 176]
 - a. Indisputably, the word *yōm*, like the English word “day,” can refer to an age as well as to a 24 hour period of time, or even a 12 hour period of time.
 - b. I would add that in 2:17 we ought to understand *yōm* to mean something other than a 24 hour period, rather than relying on the supposition that the penalty of death was spiritual rather than physical in order to avoid seeing failure of the promised penalty in the ensuing narrative.
2. Archer points to the account of creation in chapter 2 and questions how all of the things described prior to the creation of Eve could have been accomplished in a single day, “Who can imagine that all of these transactions could possibly have taken place in 120 minutes of the sixth day (or even within twenty-four hours, for that matter)?”
 - a. Jordan has a cute and sensible reply, “Well anyone can imagine it...”, and proceeds to sketch out a hypothetical schedule of events for the day, including a half hour lunch break and 28 minute nap at 3:00 p.m. before awaking to meet Eve, and wrapping everything up with “two and half hours to sunset” [Jordan, 47]
 - 1) Key to Jordan’s schedule is allowing that Adam named the animals by kinds, not every specific species as we know them today.
 - b. Against Archer and others, many argue that the Hebrew *yōm*, as used in Genesis one, must be understood to mean a literal, twenty-four hour day. Typical are the points made by Bert Thompson:
 - 1) “The Day age theory is false because whenever the Hebrew word *yōm* is preceded or accompanied in any way by a numeral in a non-prophetic passage, folks, it always means a 24 hour period of time. In fact, are you aware the Hebrew word *yōm* occurs over 100 times in the Old Testament with a number attached to it, that is an adjective, and in every instance the meaning of 24 hour day is conveyed, every one of them.” [Thompson video]
 - 2) This observation is not made only by young earth creationists.

-
- a) Rimmer: “when a definite number precedes or accompanies the word ‘yom,’ a solar day is intended.” [Rimmer, 22]
 - b) But when the question is asked, “Are the Days of Genesis literal days of twenty-four hours each, or are they periods of time?” Rimmer’s reply was “we do not know” and “we cannot know.” [Rimmer, 12]
 - 3) “Are you aware that whenever the word *yōm* is used in the plural, *yammim*, it always means a 24 hour period when used in a non-prophetical passage? In fact, when the word *days* appears in the plural, as it does over 700 times in the OT, it always refers to literal days. Thus in Exodus chapter 20 when the scripture says, ‘for in six’ -- there’s the number -- ‘days’ -- there’s the plural, God did it, that settles it.” [Thompson video]
 - 4) “The Hebrew phrase, notice it’s put after each one of the six creation days -- it was an evening and a morning, an evening and a morning, an evening and a morning, an evening and a morning -- that phrase, whenever it’s placed in the Old Testament text, as it is over 100 times in the Old Testament, in non-prophetical passages always means a 24 hour day, never an exception.” [Thompson video]
 - c. Thompson’s points remind me of the color commentator on Monday Night Football who says, “When Coach Jones is leading by 10 points or more in the 4th quarter and his running back has over 100 yards rushing, his record is 12 and 0.”
 - 1) That is not as remarkable as it sounds.
 - a) Give any team a running back with over 100 yards rushing in a particular game, and that team has a pretty good chance of winning the game. Throw in a 10 point lead with only 15 minutes to play, and the odds of winning are increased.
 - b) But it certainly doesn’t mean that some team can’t make a 4th quarter comeback against Coach Jones, scoring two touchdowns and handing Coach Jones a 12 and 1 record in such circumstances.
 - 2) As a generalization, Thompson’s point is valid. But just as the color commentator makes it sound as if it is a statistical certainty that Coach Jones’ team will win the game, Thompson’s comments about the Hebrew word *yōm* make it sound as if there is something unique about the way that word is used that necessitates our understanding 24 hour days.
 - 3) In fact, Hebrew is not unique in this respect. No doubt in most any language, and certainly in English, a word that can be used for discrete, well defined periods of time, or alternatively, for periods of time of unspecified length, generally means the former when numbered.
 - 4) That does not mean, however, that it is linguistically impossible for someone to use the word in the latter sense with a number.
 - 5) It would be conceivable that someone could use the word metaphorically and yet with a number: “My life can be divided into three days. The first day dawned with my birth into a loving family, and the sun set on that day with my parents’ death in a car accident. The second day dawned when I met my bride to be. Night fell on that day with her untimely death. The third day dawned when I realized my son needed a father and I quit drinking.”

- 6) What we can say is that whereas the foregoing example screams “metaphorical use of the word day” (“my life can be divided into three days”), there is nothing at all in Genesis one that would lead us to think *yom* is being used metaphorically. Nothing at all, that is, unless we come to the text with a presupposition that plant and animal life evolved slowly over a great period of time.
3. Collins responds to the argument that Ex. 20:11 indicates the creation days are literal, 24-hour days just as the work week is comprised of literal 24-hour days.
 - a. Ex. 20:11 “in no way sets up any identity between the length of our work-week and the length of God’s; instead, the whole operates on the principle of analogy: our work and rest are analogous to God’s.” [Collins, 142]
4. In addition to allowing for a world prior to the six day creation, Hugh Ross sees each of the six days as a long period of time.
 - a. Ross argues that the 7th day did not end, thus pointing us to the need to interpret each of the days of creation as a long period of time.
 - 1) He notes that the concluding refrain, “there was evening and there was morning,” is missing from the 7th day, and therefore the 7th day didn’t end.
 - a) He cites Ps. 95:7-11, John 5:16-18, Heb. 4:1-11 in support of this conclusion. [Ross, 64]
 - b) He also cites science in support of this conclusion, saying that subsequent to the time of Adam and Eve, the extinction rate outstrips the rate of introduction of new species. [Ross, 64]
 - 2) Since, in his view of things, the 7th day is longer than a twenty-four day, he thinks we should also understand the first 6 days to be longer than twenty-four hour days. [Ross, 65]
 - a) There is a logical flaw here. Ross’ initial evidence that the 7th day didn’t end was that it was *different* than the first six days inasmuch as the concluding refrain “there was evening and there was morning,” attached to each of the first six days, is missing from the 7th day.
 - b) So he begins his argument by saying the 7th day is different from the first 6, and concludes it by saying the first six days must be like the 7th. Oops!

D. Revelation Day Theory

1. The 6 Days are days of revelation during which in a vision or visions, day by day, Moses saw a portrayal of God’s creative work.
 - a. So J. H. Kurtz “Bible and Astronomy” 3rd ed. 1857
 - b. So P. J. Wiseman, “Creation Revealed in Six Days” 1948

E. Symbolic/Literary Device/Religious Myth Theory

1. The first chapter of Genesis “is properly regarded by modern Christians not as a literal record of what happened but as a way of expressing a present situation, an ever-present truth, by telling a story, a ‘religious myth’.” [Peacocke, 41]
2. Waltke: “the language of our creation narrative is figurative, anthropomorphic, not plain.” And quotes Stek, “What occurs in the arena of God’s actions can be storied

after the manner of human events, but accounts of ‘events’ in that arena are fundamentally different in kind from all forms of historiography.” [7]

3. Waltke is careful to avoid leaving the impression that Genesis 1 is a fiction.
 - a. “If one means by myth nothing more than a story that explains phenomena and experience, or a story about God/gods, or a story about him/them as working and having his/their being in this world among humans in the same mode as men speak and work, then Genesis 1 can be labeled ‘myth’ for it satisfies those definitions.” [6]
 - b. “In its popular sense, however, ‘myth’ has come to be identified with a fairy tale, imaginary and fantastic events that never happened...the narrator of Genesis 1 connects his account with real history, and so the designation, ‘myth,’ is best rejected.” [6]
4. Reasons urged in support of this interpretation include the following...
 - a. **Statements concerning the creation of light and of the two great lights are said to be false if construed literally.**
 - 1) Sir Isaac Newton (quoted as found): “As to Moses I do not think his description of the creation either Philosophical or feigned, but that he described realities in a language artificially adapted to the sense of the vulgar. Thus where he speaks of two great lights I suppose he means their apparent, not real greatness. So when he tells us God placed those lights in the firmament, he speaks I suppose of their apparent not of their real place, his business being not to correct the vulgar notions in matters philosophical {but} to adapt a description of the creation as handsomly as he could to the sense & capacity of the vulgar. So when he tells us of two great lights & the stars made the 4th day, I do not think their creation from beginning to end was done the fourth day nor in any one day of the creation nor that Moses mentions their creation as they were physiccally bodies in themselves some of them greater then this earth & perhaps habitable worlds, but only as they were lights to this earth, & therefore though their creation could not physically {be} assigned to any one day, yet being a part of the sensible creation which it was Moses’s design {to} describe & it being his design to describe things in order according to the succession of days allotting no more then one day to one thing, they were to be referred to some day or other & rather to the 4th day then any other if the air then first became clear enough for them to shine through it & so put on the appearance of lights in the firmament to enlighten the earth. ffor till then they could not properly be described under the notion of such lights, nor was their description under that notion to be deferred after they had that appearance though it may be the creation of some of them was not yet completed.” [Newton]
 - 2) Calvin acknowledging that the “star” known as Saturn is greater than the moon, explained, “Moses wrote in a popular style things which, without instruction, all ordinary persons, endued with common sense, are able to understand.” [Calvin, 86]
 - a) Had Moses “spoken of things generally unknown, the uneducated might have pleaded in excuse that such subjects were beyond their capacity.” [Calvin, 87]

-
- b) Harrison cites Calvin [134] as an example of a hermeneutical compromise intended to avoid seeing Moses as “expert in theological matters, but totally ignorant in the field of physical science,” a perception that would “impugn the whole authority of scripture.” [Harrison, 133]
 - 3) For my part, I’m not concerned with quibbles about reflective light vs. original light, nor about the small size of the moon. For practical purposes, the sun rules the day sky and the moon rules the night sky.
 - 4) Waltke sees a contradiction in chapter 1 in that he supposes there is an implication that the sun was created on day 1 and then it is stated that the sun was created (again?) on day 4. [Waltke, 7]
- b. **Contradictions are said to exist between the first and second accounts of creation if we regard them as literal chronologies.**
- 1) Conrad Hyers: “...the two Genesis accounts themselves, taken as chronologies, do not agree. In Genesis 2...Adam is created before plants and animals, and Eve after.” [Hyers, 99]
 - 2) Waltke sees the same problem [7]. And in fact this seeming contradiction is often noted in popular criticisms of the creation account.
 - 3) So also Meredith Kline, [“Space and Time in the Genesis Cosmogony,” *Perspectives on Science and Christian Faith*, 48:1 (March, 1996):2-15] referenced by Jordan, 52]
 - a) Jordan argues that there is not even a need to grant an appearance of a contradiction.
 - 1] “...on the third day, only two kinds of plants are said to shoot forth from the earth: grains and fruit trees. Nothing is said about any other plants” [14]
 - 2] Jordan actually finds the two accounts to be consistent: “...according to 2:5, the grain plants, though they existed, had not yet sprouted any grain, while according to 2:16, the fruit trees did already have fruit in them.” [14]
 - 4) Waltke points to Gen. 2:8-9 where we see trees planted and growing to maturity before the creation of woman, and sees this as arguing against a literal reading of chapter 1 with male and female created in one literal day. [7]
 - 5) It is worth noting that Philo addressed the question of the two different creation accounts and supposed that there were in fact two creations.
 - a) Philo considers the question, “Why are the beasts and birds now again created when their creation was announced earlier in the six-day (creation story)?” [Questions and Answers, 12]
 - b) Philo answers, “Perhaps those things which (were created) in the six days were incorporeal and were symbolically typical species of beasts and birds. But now were produced in actuality their likenesses, (sensible likenesses) of invisible things” [Questions and Answers, 12]
- c. **Numbers are used symbolically.**
-

-
- 1) “The use of numbers in ancient religious texts was usually numerological rather than numerical; that is, their symbolic value was more important than their secular value as counters.” [Hyers, 99]
 - a) Symbolically, the significance of 6 days of creation followed by a 7th day of rest correlates with and supports “the religious calendar and Sabbath observance.” [*Ibid.*]
 - 1] Hyers supposes that “if the Hebrews had had a five-day work week, the account would have read differently.” [*Ibid.*]
 - 2] Hyers thus makes the creation account dependent upon the later religious calendar rather than the other way around. Exodus 20:11 (pardon my literalistic reading) indicates the religious calendar was dependent upon the creation chronology.
 - a] Of course, God who is timeless, no doubt had in mind the religious calendar when he created the world in seven days.
 - b] But it is one thing to say, God intended a connection, and therefore he arranged a correlation, thus in a sense allowing that the creation chronology was a reflection of and based on the week God had in mind.
 - c] It’s another thing entirely to suppose the creation account is a mere symbolism, contrived after the fact to fit with existing religious practices in an effort to prop up the existing religious practices as being superior to other existing religious practices.
 - d] It is all well and good to recognize the symbolic import of events described in God’s revelation. But Hyers and others really seem to be starting from a perspective wherein the scriptures are man’s attempt to communicate about a Great God rather than a Great God’s attempt to communicate to man.
 - e] Confirmation that Hyers and those who share his perspective do indeed view scripture this way is seen in Hyers’ comparison of Genesis with “myths whose purpose is to legitimate cyclical time.” He sees the Genesis account as arising in the same way and for the same purpose as the Babylonian myth Enuma Elish (“of the primeval conquest of Tiamet by Marduk” [100]) which manifestly is of human, not divine, origin.
 - b) And further, it “employs to the full the symbolic meaning of the number seven was wholeness, plenitude, completion.” [Hyers, 99]
 - c) Hyers also sees the symbolic number 12 in the creation account.
 - 1] Noting the parallel sets of three days, “with the second set...populating the first: light and darkness (day one) are populated by the greater and lesser lights (four); firmament and waters (two) by birds and fish (five); earth and vegetation (three) by land animals and humans (six)” [99f] he sees 2 times 3 times 2.

- 2] Presumably, he has in mind 2 sets x 3 days/set = 6 days (so far so good). And then he has the first set of three being populated by 2 things, so he inexplicably takes 6 days and multiplies by 2 things (thus mixing units) and gets a meaningless 12. (I'm thinking math isn't his strong suit.) He might as well have thrown in another factor of two (morning and evening) and multiplied this by his twelve to get 24, the number of thrones in Rev. 4:4, and then he could have confirmed Jordan's thought that Genesis 1:1 is about a "throne-heaven" (See above, II.A.4.a.1).
- d. **The literary parallel between the First 3 days and Last 3 days is seen as evidence against taking the account as a literal chronology**
- 1) So Waltke, pp 5f.
 - 2) Keil denies the parallel, saying, "...if the creation of the fowls which fill the air answers to that of the firmament, the formation of the fish as the inhabitants of the waters ought to be assigned to the sixth day, and not to the fifth, as being parallel to the creation of the seas. The creation of the fish and fowl on the same day is an evident proof that a parallelism between the first three days of creation and the last three is not intended, and does not exist." [Keil, 38]
 - 3) Jordan also denies the parallel.
 - a) Claims 7 days form a chiasm, "1 and 7, 2 and 6, 3 and 5, and 4 in the center." [Jordan, 44].
 - b) Jordan's more extensive explanation is on pages 60-61 of his book.
- e. **Genre/Purpose argues against taking Genesis 1 as a literal, chronological account.**
- 1) The creation account in Genesis 1 is seen as a symbolic account intended to rebut the polytheistic ideas that surrounded Israel at a later date.
 - a) Hyers supposed the first chapter of Genesis comes from the same time period as "Deutero-Isaiah" (i.e., during the Babylonian captivity) [102f]
 - 1] "The critical question in the creation account of Genesis 1 was polytheism versus monotheism." [Hyers, 100]
 - a] "For most peoples in the ancient world the various regions of nature were divine. Sun, moon and stars were *gods*. There were sky gods and earth gods and water gods. There were gods of light and darkness, rivers and vegetation, animals and fertility." [101]
 - b] "In the light of this historical context it becomes clearer what Genesis 1 is undertaking and accomplishing: a radical and sweeping affirmation of monotheism vis-à-vis polytheism, syncretism and idolatry. Each day of creation takes on two principal categories of divinity in the pantheons of the day, and declares that these are not gods at all, but creatures....Each day dismisses an additional cluster of deities, arranged in a cosmological and symmetrical order." [Ibid.]

-
- 2] Hyers argues that “biblical literalism...*is modernistic.*” [97]
 - a] Hyers complains that modern students in the Western world “have difficulty in thinking, feeling and expressing themselves *symbolically*, being products of a “prosaic and pedantic mindset” that besets western culture as a result of “modern science” along with “technology, historiography and mathematics.” [96]
 - b] Let me offer an aside here: There is something to be said for an ability to communicate in and comprehend symbols, in life and especially in plumbing the depths of God’s word.
 - 1] Hyers tells the story of an interview with dancer Anna Pavlova following one of her performances.
 - 2] She was asked about the meaning of her dance, and she replied, “If I could say it, do you think I should have danced it?” [Hyers, 96]
 - 3] “Even if evolution is only a scientific theory of interpretation posing as fact, as the creationists argue, creationism is only a religious theory of biblical interpretation posing as biblical fact.” [Hyers, 98]
 - b) Waltke supposes the audience is Israel at Sinai. “Gen 1:1-2:3 was originally addressed to Israel in the Wilderness of Sinai c. 1400 B.C.”
 - 1] “Pagan mythologies about the creation ever threatened to annihilate Israel’s witness to ethical monotheism.” [Waltke, 2]
 - 2] “Their myths and rituals...symbolized the world and life view that animated their pagan cultures.” [*Ibid.*, 2f]
 - 3] “God’s revelation...revealed to Israel new and true symbols by which to live.”
 - 4] Waltke quotes Hyers to argue that the days of a creation were a symbolic method of presenting the God of Israel as the true God in contrast with the pagan deities by setting forth the realms associated with pagan deities (light, darkness, earth, vegetation, sun, moon, stars, animals, and man) as mere creatures. [*Ibid.* 3]
 - 5] Oddly, in response, Jordan argues against Mosaic authorship of Genesis! [Jordan, 34-36].
 - a] He suggests that Joseph wrote Genesis [36].
 - b] Jordan is a Calvinist and his surprising view is influenced by his Covenant Theology. [37]
 - 2) Specifically, an example of the Chaos motif
 - a) Waltke: “In sum, Genesis one represents the Heavenly King transforming the pre-existing chaos into the present cosmos.” [Waltke, 4]
 - b) As a rebuttal of rival chaos motif accounts
 - 1] “The Genesis story is in opposition to rival cosmogonic myths, for example, of Babylon, which postulated something other than God
-

(or the gods) out of which he (or they) shaped the world, and also gave accounts of the birth of the gods themselves. In Genesis 1:2 there is just possibly a hint (though this is disputed) of a possible ‘chaos’...” [Peacocke, 41f]

- 2] Various cosmogonic myths are seen as portraying a state prior to the creation of our world as “a state which we now like to call by its Hesiodic name Chaos... This state can only be described by negations. None of the things that make our world were there: neither heaven nor earth, neither grass nor sea, neither name nor fate... The beginning must be a kind of nothingness; but since it is the beginning of something it must have some part in being. Let us call it nothingness pregnant with being.” [Weizsäcker, 36]
- 3] “...the author of Genesis 1 knew [the Babylonian *Epic of Creation*] and despised it.” [Weizsäcker, 27]
- 4] Regarding Genesis 1, “Here, too, a *mythos*, a tale is told. We are still in the realm of mythology... Yet, how great is the difference!” [Weizsäcker, 45]
- 5] “The six days are precisely not naive mythology; they are a means of classification, precursors of Linnaeus’ system. No doubt the writer believed in them literally; who would not believe in his own system?” [Weizsäcker, 45]
- 6] “Some details of the Biblical report even seem to indicate a conscious polemic against the Babylonian myth.” [Weizsäcker, 46]
- 7] “If it is a work of scholarship, it belongs to theology. Its centre is God, not the world. It explains the world by telling how it was made by God.” [Weizsäcker, 46]
- 8] “Modern scholarship has found out that this first chapter of Genesis is to be ascribed to the so-called Priestly Code... There are good reasons for assuming that it was written down during the Babylonian captivity of the Jews, in the 6th century BC.... The text as we have it seems to have been written in knowledge of, and in opposition to the Babylonian myth.” [Weizsäcker, 46]
- 9] Weizsäcker sees Genesis 1 as a late and updated attempt to define the God of the Jews and contrasts it with the account that begins in 2:4, which he sees as a more primitive creation account and as having more in common with other cosmogonic myths. [Weizsäcker, 50]
- 10] While Weizsäcker can speak in seemingly reverent terms (“God is so highly exalted above the whole world,” “Everything in the world is God’s creature,” [Weizsäcker, 50f]) he is in fact describing a contrived portrayal of God which he supposes arose from man himself and evolved as a counterpoint to other contrived portrayals of the gods.

f. **And finally, we are told that acceptance of such a harmonization of science and scripture is necessary to seem credible.**

- 1) "...the attempt to harmonize the scientific data with a straightforward reading of Genesis is not credible, and as a result the Bible's message is rejected as a viable option in the marketplace of competing world and life views." [Waltke, 2]

III. A Philosophical Approach

A. Scientific dating techniques make at least one of two assumptions

1. Everything began "from scratch," i.e., igneous rocks had to come from lava, petroleum had to come from decaying organic matter, etc.
2. Everything has proceeded at a constant rate, i.e., natural processes have always progressed as we see them progressing today.

B. The believer cannot assume constant rate.

1. Five facts point to a sudden and dramatic change in the nature of the world and thus inform
 - a. Sudden geological change (Gen. 7:11)
 - b. Man and animals become carnivorous (Gen. 9:3)
 - c. Animals come to fear man (Gen. 9:2)
 - d. Atmospheric change [?] (Gen. 9:11-17)
 - e. Sudden change in life span
2. Peter speaks of the world before the flood as "the world that then was," and distinguishes it from "the heavens that now are, and the earth" (2 Peter 3:6-7). Given the dramatic changes that took place at the time of the flood as well as Peter's language, we cannot expect that natural processes which we see occurring now have always progressed in the same way and at the same rate as they do now.

C. The believer cannot assume everything began from scratch.

1. The whole account of creation is a picture of God creating a world fully functional and ready to be inhabited, and argues against the idea that everything started from scratch.
2. Which came first, the chicken or the egg?
 - a. The chicken, necessarily! If it were the egg, who would have sat on it?
 - b. The picture presented to us is of birds flying in the heavens and plants yielding fruit, and necessarily so. Or are we to suppose that seed eating birds would have to wait for the plants to mature before they would have a meal?
3. The picture presented to us of the creation of a woman is not that of a baby, who in 18 years would make a fine wife for Adam. It is a picture of a woman mature and ready to be a help suitable to the man.
4. Should we assume God was not equally aware that man would need rocks?
5. Should we assume that God had not thought about man needing petroleum reserves, or that God would not have provided such ready to be used?
6. Should we assume God would have created the stars in the hopes that after several thousand years, man would be able to see many of them?

- a. Or should we assume God knew man would need them for navigation, and that God would provide the light from them already visible?
 - b. And likewise should we assume that God would want man to see “the glory of God” and “the work of his hands”? (Psalm 19:1)
- D. Given the assumptions involved in scientific efforts to determine the age of the earth, and given the fact that one cannot accept those assumptions, if he has faith in what God’s word tells us, one who chooses to force an unnatural interpretation on the Bible in order to accommodate scientific findings needs to ask himself where his faith truly lies, in God’s revealed word or in man’s scientific learning?

Jeff Smelser
953 Churchtown Rd. Narvon, PA 17555
jeffsmelser@ntgreek.net

Selected Bibliography

- Archer, Gleason L., Jr. *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction*. Chicago:Moody Press, 1964.
- Augustine. *The City of God*, vol. 1, trans. Marcus Dods. Edinburgh:T&T Clark, 1871.
- _____. *The Works of Saint Augustine, Part I, vol. 13 On Genesis "The Literal Meaning of Genesis"*. Hyde Park NY:New City Press, 2002.
- Calvin, John. *Commentaries on The First Book of Moses Called Genesis*, vol. 1, transl. John King. Edinburgh:Calvin Translation society, 1867.
- Chalmers, Thomas. *The Works of Thomas Chalmers* vol. 1 "On Natural Theology". New York:Robert Carter, 1841.
- Clement of Alexandria. *Stromata*. <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/anf02.vi.iv.vi.xvi.html> .
- Collins, C. John. "Reading Genesis 1:1-2:3 as an Act of Communication: Discourse Analysis and Literal Interpretation," in *Did God Create in Six Days?* Joseph Pipa, Jr., and David Hall, eds. Southern Presbyterian Press: Taylors SC, The Covenant Foundation: Oak Ridge TN, 1999.
- Custance, Arthur C. *The Doorway Papers*, Vol. IV, "Evolution or Creation". Grand Rapids:Zondervan, 1976.
- _____. *The Doorway Papers*, Vol. VI, "Time and Eternity". Grand Rapids:Zondervan, 1977.
- _____. *The Doorway Papers*, Vol. VII, "Hidden Things of God's Revelation". Grand Rapids:Zondervan, Revised '76, copyright 1977.
- Gunkel, Hermann. *Genesis* transl. Mark E. Biddle. Macon, Georgia:Mercer University Press, 1997.
- Harbach, Robert C. *Studies in the Book of Genesis*. Grandville, Michigan:Reformed Free Publishing Association, 2001.
- Harrison, Peter. *The Bible, Protestantism, and the Rise of Natural Science*. Cambridge:Cambridge University Press, 1998.
- Hyers, Conrad. "Biblical Literalism: Constricting the Cosmic Dance," (pp 95-104) in *Is God a Creationist? The Religious Case Against Creation-Science*, ed. by Roland Mushat Frye. New York:Charles Scribner's Sons, 1983.
- Jacob, Edmond. *Theology of the Old Testament*, London:Hodder and Stoughton, 1958.
- Jordan, James B. *Creation in Six Days, A Defense of the Traditional Reading of Genesis One*. Moscow, Idaho:Canon Press, 1999.
- Morris, Henry M. *The Genesis Record*, Grand Rapids:Baker Book House, 1976.
- Keil, C. F. and Franz Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*, vol. 1. Grand Rapids:William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1976 reprint.
- Lewis, Jack P. "The Days of Creation: An Historical Survey of Interpretation" *Journal of The Evangelical Society*, 32/4 (December 1989): 433-455.
- Milligan, Robert. *Scheme of Redemption*. , St. Louis:Christian Board of Education, 1868, 13th printing.
- Newton, Sir Isaac. *Letter to Thomas Burnet*, Keynes Ms. 106(B), King's College Library, Cambridge, UK, as represented online at The Newton Project, <http://www.newtonproject.sussex.ac.uk/view/texts/normalized/THEM00253> retrieved 2/8/2011.
- Peacocke, A.R. *Creation and the World of Science, The Bampton Lectures, 1978*. Oxford:Clarendon Press, 1979.

-
- Philo. *On the Account of the Word's Creation Given by Moses*, Vol. 1. transl. F. H. Colson and G. H. Whitaker. Cambridge:Harvard University Press, 1971.
- Ramm, Bernard. *The Christian View of Science and Scripture*. Grand Rapids:Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1954 reprint 1966.
- Rimmer, Harry. *Modern Science and the Genesis Record*. Vol. 2 of the John Laurence Frost Memorial Library, 2nd ed. Grand Rapids: Wm B. Eerdmans,1937.
- Smith, Morton H. "The History of the Creation Doctrine in the American Presbyterian Churches" in *Did God Create in Six Days?* Ed. Joseph A. Pipa, Jr. and David W. Hall. Southern Presbyterian Press: Taylors SC, The Covenant Foundation: Oak Ridge TN, 1999.
- The Codex Alexandrinus. (Royal Ms. 1 D v-viii) in reduced photographic facsimile. *Old Testament Part 1, Genesis-Ruth*. London:British Museum, 1915.
- The Codex Alexandrinus. (Royal Ms. 1 D v-viii) in reduced photographic facsimile. *Old Testament Part 2, 1 Samuel-2 Chronicles*. London:British Museum, 1930.
- Waltke, Bruce K., "The Literary Genre of Genesis, Chapter One," *Crux* 27/4 (1991):2-10.
- von Weizsäcker, C.F. *The Relevance of Science, Creation and Cosmogony, Gifford Lectures 1959-60*, London:Collins, 1964.
- Wiens, Roger C., *Radiometric Dating, A Christian Perspective*
<http://www.asa3.org/ASA/resources/Wiens2002.pdf> retrieved 2/11/2011.
- Thompson, Bert. *Sears-Thompson Debate: Does the Bible Allow for an Ancient Earth?* (videotape) Apologetics Press, Inc. Montgomery AL 1983.
- The New Scofield Reference Bible. Oxford, 1967.
- Scofield Reference Bible. 1909 via Google Books,
<http://books.google.com/books?id=nec8AAAAYAAJ&dq=scofield%20reference%20bible&pg=PR3#v=onepage&q&f=false> .
- Septuaginta. ed. Alfred Rahlfs, Stuttgart:Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1935.
- Young, Edward J. *Studies in Genesis One*. Philadelphia:Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1964.