

THE TRINITY REVIEW

For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, for the weapons of our warfare [are] not fleshly but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ. And they will be ready to punish all disobedience, when your obedience is fulfilled.

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Copyright 2003 John W. Robbins Post Office Box 68, Unicoi, Tennessee 37692

Email: jrob1517@aol.com

Website: www.trinityfoundation.org

Telephone: 423.743.0199

Fax: 423.743.2005

The Days of Creation

W. Gary Crampton

In the *Westminster Confession of Faith* (4:1) we read:

It pleased God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, for the manifestation of the glory of His eternal power, wisdom, and goodness, in the beginning, to create, or make of nothing, the world, and all things therein, whether visible or invisible, in the space of six days, and all very good.¹

This is as precise a statement with regard to the creation account of *Genesis* 1 as one could hope to find. In the beginning, God created the entire universe, out of no pre-existent material (*ex nihilo*), in a period of six days. And as A. A. Hodge pointed out, at the time of the writing of the Confession "modern science" had not yet challenged the solar day view of creation. Hence, there is little question that when the divines spoke of six creation days they had in mind twenty-four hour days. Hodge is correct. But long before "modern science" challenged Bible believers, there were Christian scholars (for example, Augustine), who have not held to a solar day view. Yet the divergence from a twenty-four hour day theory of creation did not seriously begin until the late 18th and early 19th centuries with the onslaught of evolutionary thinking. Sadly, the church has played the role of

the sycophant; she has been all too quick to adapt to the teachings of modern scientists.

All too frequently orthodox Christians are heard to parrot the well-worn cliché "the Bible is not a textbook on science." As John Robbins maintains, if what is meant by this statement is that the Bible is not exclusively about or especially for the study of science, then it is correct. But this is all too obvious, and it is not the normal meaning of this cliché. Usually when we hear "the Bible is not a textbook" what is meant is that we must study the Bible and then we must study science, and then we must compare notes to see what we are to believe.² This form of thinking is well described by John Whitcomb:

Whenever there is an apparent conflict between the conclusions of the scientist and the conclusions of the theologian . . . the theologian must rethink his interpretation of the Scriptures . . . in such a way as to bring it into harmony with the general consensus of scientific opinion on these matters, since the Bible is not a textbook on science.³

¹ A. A. Hodge, *The Confession of Faith* (Banner of Truth Trust, 1983 [1869]), 82, 83.

² John W. Robbins, "Is the Bible a Textbook?" *The Trinity Review*, June 1979.

³ Cited in Edward J. Young, *Studies in Genesis One* (Presbyterian and Reformed, n.d.), 52.

But this is a low view of Scripture. As Paul writes in *2 Timothy* 3:16-17, the Bible is a textbook; or better, it is *the* textbook. And all other books are to conform: "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work." And since the Bible has a monopoly on truth, whatever is true about creation must be learned from the Bible.

What does the Bible say about the creation days? It says that God created the universe in six ordinary days. Even as some of the critics admit, the most natural reading of *Genesis* 1 supports the solar day view. In fact, the context demands six literal days, in that God defines the Hebrew word day (*yom*) in the chapter. In verse 5 we read: "God called the light day, and the darkness He called night. So the evening and the morning were the first day." What could be clearer than this? Moses defines the first day as a period of time consisting of evening and morning. Henry Morris writes:

In the first chapter of *Genesis*, the termination of each day's work is noted by the formula: "And the evening and the morning were the first [or second, etc.] day." Thus, each "day" had distinct boundaries and was one in a series of days, both of which criteria are never present in the Old Testament writings unless literal days are intended. The writer of *Genesis* was trying to guard in every way possible against any of his readers deriving the notion of non-literal days from his record.⁴

Then in verse 14 we read: "Then God said, 'Let there be lights in the firmament of the heavens to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs and seasons, and for days and years.'" Again, we have a clear statement regarding a twenty-four hour day, and a distinguishing between days and years. *Exodus* 20:11 confirms this, declaring that God performed his creative work in six days: "For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the

Earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day."

But the fact that God created the universe in six literal days does not negate the fact that he created it with the appearance of age. In *John* 2, for example, we read of Jesus "creating" wine from water. But the wine appeared as if it had undergone the natural, lengthy, process of fermentation. In a similar way, Adam was formed out of the dust of the Earth (*Genesis* 2:7). But even though he was only seconds old, he did not appear as an infant. Too, we are told in *Genesis* 1:12 that God created full grown trees; they appeared to be several years old.

Various Views of the Creation Days

Otherwise orthodox scholars have attempted to explain away the natural reading of *Genesis* 1 in various ways.

1. *Literary framework or double symmetry theory.* This view maintains that God created the world *ex nihilo*, but that the days of *Genesis* 1 are not to be considered literal days. Rather, they are used as a semi-poetic device by which God is conveying a picture of his power in creation. The phrase found in verses 5, 8, 13, 19, 23, and 31: "and there was evening and there was morning . . ." is a poetic refrain.

Further, the advocates of this view argue, there is a balanced literary structure found in the parallel between the first group of three days and the second group. For example, the first day speaks of light and darkness, and the fourth day of the sun, moon, and stars. The second day speaks of waters above and below the heavens, and the fifth day of fish in the waters and birds in the heavens. The third day speaks of the separation of the land and the sea, and plants, fruits, and vegetation, and the sixth day of animals and mankind that live on the land and eat the food.

But this misses the point. As E. J. Young observed, even though there is a parallelism regarding the interrelationships that exist among the six days, this does not change the fact that the Bible speaks of these events as occurring within a normal week, *i.e.*,

⁴ Henry M. Morris, *The Genesis Record* (Baker, 1976), 56.

there is a certain amount of chronology involved.⁵ Second, the parallelism or poetic form that is found in *Genesis* 1 is unlike the parallelism found in other parts of Old Testament poetic literature. And to build a case for the literary framework theory from this form of poetry is exegetically unsound. In the words of Buswell, it is "like seeing faces in the clouds. . .the faces are really there and can be seen by others to whom they are pointed out; but the question is whether they were intended."⁶

Third, the parallelism that is found in *Genesis* 1 says too much to support the double symmetry view. Young insightfully reduced this theory to absurdity when he wrote:

As soon as one examines the text carefully, however, it becomes apparent that such a simple arrangement is not actually present. We may note that the light-bearers of the fourth day are placed in the firmament of heaven (1:14, 17). The firmament, however, was made on the second day (1:6, 7). Inasmuch as the fourth day is said to parallel the first, it follows that the work of the second day (making the firmament) must precede that of the first and fourth days (*i.e.*, placing the light-bearers in the firmament). If the first and fourth days are really parallel in the sense that they represent two aspects of the same thing, and if part of the work of the fourth day is the placing of the luminaries in the firmament, it follows that the firmament must be present to receive the luminaries. The firmament, therefore, existed not only before the fourth day, but, inasmuch as it is a parallel to the fourth, before the first day also. This is an impossible conclusion, for verse three is connected with verse two grammatically, in that the three circumstantial clauses of verse two modify the main verb of verse three. At the same time by the use of its introductory words ["And the Earth"], verse two clearly introduces the detailed

account of which a general statement is given in verse one. Verse two is the beginning of the section or unit, the first action of which is expressed by the main verb of verse three. To hold that the days two-five precede days one-four is simply to abandon all grammatical considerations.⁷

It seems, then, that the literary framework hypothesis is false.

2. *The day-age theory.* This view, which came into prominence after the evolutionary hypothesis became popular, avers that the days of *Genesis* 1 are to be understood as ages or epochs of time in chronological sequence. In other words, the word *yom* is used in a figurative sense. This theory is employed to insert long periods of geological time into the Biblical account of creation in order to make room for the views of modern science.

Day-age advocates maintain that the Bible does not always use the word day (*yom*) as a solar day (for example, *Genesis* 2:4; *Zechariah* 4:10; *2 Peter* 3:8). Schaeffer states it this way: "The simple fact is that *day* in Hebrew (just as in English) is used in three separate senses, to mean: (1) twenty-four hours; (2) the period of light during the twenty-four hours; (3) an indeterminate period of time. Therefore, we must leave open the exact length of time indicated by *day* in *Genesis*."⁸

Day-age protagonists claim that the genealogies found in *Genesis* 5 and 11 may not be used to support the solar day view because there are gaps in the genealogies. They also argue that the scientific methods of dating the Earth, and the uniformitarian theory of geological processes, posit a world of great antiquity.

⁷ Young, 69.

⁸ Francis A. Schaeffer, *The Complete Works of Francis A. Schaeffer* (Crossway Books, 1982), II:39. It should be noted that Schaeffer himself is not dogmatically teaching a day-age view; he is merely leaving this open as a possibility. For example, he writes: "If anyone wonders what my own position is, I really am not sure whether the days in *Genesis* 1 should be taken as twenty-four hours or as periods. It seems to me that from a study of the Bible itself, one could hold either position" (II:134).

⁵ Young, 69.

⁶ J. Oliver Buswell, Jr., *A Systematic Theology of the Christian Religion* (Zondervan, 1962), I:143.

But there are problems here. First, as we have seen, the context of *Genesis* 1 demands a six-day creation. Second, even through it is true that *yom* is not always used to denote a period of twenty-four hours, it is also true that when *yom* is not used in this sense, it is abundantly obvious (compare 2 *Peter* 3:8). Certainly it is not obvious in the first chapter of the Bible. Then, too, whenever *yom* is used in the non-prophetic Old Testament literature (as we find in *Genesis* 1), preceded by a numerical adjective, it always indicates a literal day. If Moses had meant ages instead of days he could have easily used the Hebrew words *dor* or *olam*, both of which mean "age." And as noted above, the Sabbath day command found in *Exodus* 20:8-11, which clearly refers to the days of creation, can be properly understood only when the days of the creation and work weeks are considered to be literal days.

There is also an error in arguing for the day-age theory from the gaps found in the genealogies of *Genesis* 5 and 11, because even if there are genealogical gaps, there are no chronological gaps. The issue at hand has to do with chronology, not genealogy. Moreover, the uniformitarian view of fossil records is negated by *Romans* 5:12, where Paul states that there was no death prior to the Fall. There could be no fossilization without death, and there could be no death without Adam's sin. If Adam were created ages after the rest of creation, then the other creatures would not have died to give us fossil records. In fact, the idea of Adam's being created ages after the rest of creation conflicts with the words of Jesus, who said that "from the beginning of the creation God made them male and female" (*Mark* 10:6). It is also noteworthy that out of the scores of scientific methods of dating the Earth, a large number of them posit a very young Earth.⁹ Bert Thompson writes: "There are over seventy-five scientific methods which indicate that the earth is relatively young."¹⁰ Many of the dating techniques which scientists have previously used to "prove" that the Earth is very old have of late either been discarded altogether, or show that the Earth

could have been created by God with the appearance of age.¹¹

Herman Hoeksema has said it well: "The attempt to explain *Genesis* 1 in such a way that it presents the world as having been created in a six-fold period of thousands or millions of years is from an exegetical point of view to be considered as a total failure."¹²

3. *The gap theory.* The attempt to prove an ancient Earth from the Scriptures can only be accomplished in one of three ways. Geological time must be inserted before the creation week, during the creation week, or after the creation week. The third alternative is virtually ruled out because it does nothing to support the evolutionary thought of modern science. If the days are ordinary days and man is created only a few days after the other creatures, then evolution is ruled out altogether. Not only this, but the chronological records of *Genesis* 5 and 11, along with the genealogy of *Luke* 3, militate against the insertion of time after the creation week.

The attempt to insert geological time during the week of creation is the attempt of the day-age theorist. We have seen that this theory is unwarranted. The gap theory, or the ruin and reconstruction theory, is the only other alternative. It attempts to insert geological time prior to the week of creation. This view claims that God originally created the universe, including man, billions of years ago. This creation is recorded for us in *Genesis* 1:1. But due to Satanic rebellion God had to destroy the entirety of his original creation, leaving it in the state described in verse 2, which gap theorists translate: "The Earth became [not was] without form and void." In this theory, billions of years of uniformitarian geology are found in an alleged gap between the first two verses of *Genesis*—time which accounts for the ice age, ape-men, dinosaur fossils, and a host of other extinct forms of life. Then in *Genesis* 1:3-31 we have the account of the second creation of the universe in six twenty-four hour days.

⁹ Morris, Henry M., and Gary E. Parker, *What Is Creation Science?* (Creation-Life Publishers, 1982), 250-257.

¹⁰ Bert Thompson, "The Age of the Earth," *Essays in Apologetics*, edited by Bert Thompson and Wayne Jackson (Apologetics Press, 1984), I:67.

¹¹ E. H. Andrews, *God, Science & Evolution* (Evangelical Press, 1980), 107-127.

¹² Herman Hoeksema, *Reformed Dogmatics* (Reformed Free Publishing Association, 1966), 179.

The gap theory has serious difficulties. First, the present writer agrees with Schaeffer when he writes: "The weakness of this idea [the gap theory] . . . is that there are no supporting verses for it in the rest of the Bible"¹³ Second, although it is possible to translate the Hebrew verb *hayetha* in *Genesis* 1:2 as "became," rather than "was," it is without justification to do so. Thompson correctly says: "The verb *hayetha* of *Genesis* 1:2 is translated 'was' in all the standard translations because that is its meaning. Surely it is significant that none of the Old Testament linguists felt compelled to translate *hayetha* to suggest that the Earth became waste and void, as gap theorists propose."¹⁴ Not only this, but the phrase "waste and void" of *Genesis* 1:2 does not refer to something that has been ruined and is in need of repair. Rather, it refers to the fact that the Earth was "empty and formless." It was without living things and all of the features that it would later possess. That this is the meaning of the verse is confirmed by *Isaiah* 45:18, which states that God "did not create it [the world] in vain, [but] who formed it to be inhabited."¹⁵

Third, the gap theory is false when it avers that there was human life on this Earth prior to Adam. In *I Corinthians* 14:45-47, the apostle Paul states that Adam was the "first man," i.e., the first human being. Luke confirms this in his Gospel (*Luke* 3:38). And fourth, it is highly unlikely that God would pronounce all that He had created as "very good" (*Genesis* 1:31), with Adam and Even looking out over a virtual graveyard of the remnants of a previous creation.

4. *The revelation day or tutorial day view:* This theory maintains that the days of *Genesis* 1 are not to be considered as days in which God created the universe. Rather, they are days in which God revealed the story of creation to Moses; they are revelational days, not creation days. In this approach, as Garry Brantley says, we have an attempt to have the best of both worlds: "It does not deny a literal understanding of the days of *Genesis*

1, and it allows for the time needed to accommodate the evolution model or an ancient universe."¹⁶

In this theory, heavy emphasis is given to extra-Biblical evidence, where parallels are drawn with ancient Near Eastern creation myths that refer to pagan gods instructing certain rulers over a period of days. Since there is a similarity in vocabulary and literary style between *Genesis* 1 and these mythical accounts of creation, say the advocates of the revelational day view, there is at least a strong likelihood that the *Genesis* account is also given in a tutorial day fashion. Some protagonists of this theory offer alternative translations for portions of *Genesis* 1, to make the text "fit" the tutorial day concept.

But this is faulty exegesis. First, it is improper and silly to adapt Biblical revelation to the mythical writings of other Near Eastern cultures. As the *Westminster Confession of Faith* (1:9) says: "The infallible rule of interpretation of Scripture is the Scripture itself; and therefore, when there is a question about the true and full sense of any Scripture (which is not manifold, but one), it must be searched and known by other places that speak more clearly."

Second, the translations which "play with" the text of Scripture to make it fit the revelational day viewpoint are as guilty as those who attempt to make the text fit the gap theory. *Exodus* 20:11 is most explicit: "For in six days the Lord *made* [not revealed his creative activities] the heavens and the Earth, the sea, and all that is in them." Brantley's comment is apropos: "Theories of this kind demonstrate how much the Biblical text must be bent to accommodate evolutionary time scales."

Conclusion

The ordinary day theory is the only one that is exegetically sound. God created all things within a period of six literal days, and he created with the appearance of age. This theory is the one that gives us the most natural reading of *Genesis* 1. In fact, as we have seen, the context of *Genesis* 1 demands six

¹³ Schaeffer, II:132.

¹⁴ Bert Thompson, "Popular Compromises of Creation—The Gap Theory," *Reason & Revelation* (Apologetics Press, Vol. XIV, No. 7, 1994), 54.

¹⁵ Edward J. Young, *The Book of Isaiah* (Eerdmans, 1972), III:211.

¹⁶ Garry K. Brantley, "Six Days of Creation, or Revelation," *Reason & Revelation* (Vol. XIV, No. 6, 1994), 45.

twenty-four hour days. Jack Scott asserts that the Hebrew grammatical construction of *Genesis* 1 "excludes every possibility of interpreting the meaning of 'day' in any other sense than the most obvious; namely, a day as experienced by the original recipients of this revelation—the twenty-four hour day."¹⁷

The present writer agrees with Williamson, who, after summarizing the various theories, concludes by saying: "For our part we can see no good reason to doubt that God did create the world in six twenty-four hour days, with the appearance of age."¹⁸

Finally, it should be noted that the matter of the days of creation is not a minor issue. It is not just a subject of controversy between academicians. It's a matter of whether we are going to believe God as he has revealed himself to us in his Word, or whether we are going to believe the latest findings of modern science. Douglas Kelly summarizes:

[T]his is not just an academic nicety or a question that can easily be sidestepped. Surely the teaching of God on the original creation is terribly important. If we cannot trust his [God's] Word at the first creation, . . . how can we trust it anywhere else? How can we trust what it says about Christ in the new creation, if we can't trust what it says about the original creation? The whole Bible stands or falls together as one piece.¹⁹

¹⁷ Jack Scott, *Adult Biblical Education Series* (Committee for Christian Education and Publications, 1978), II:1:20.

¹⁸ G. I. Williamson, *The Westminster Confession of Faith for Study Classes* (Presbyterian and Reformed, 1964), 42-43.

¹⁹ Douglas F. Kelly, *The Creation* (an unpublished sermon series, 1976, 1977), 37-38.