

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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The Hoax of Scientific Creationism

John W. Robbins

Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. I am delighted to be able to come to your annual convention again this year.

As I was preparing my remarks for this meeting, studying some of the legal briefs in this litigation and the transcript of the oral arguments before the Supreme Court last December, I became convinced that there has been a major and fatal philosophical mistake made by those who call them selves creationists. For that reason I am adding a subtitle to my talk: "The Hoax of Scientific Creationism."

Three years ago I had the opportunity to speak at the annual convention of the Baltimore Creation Fellowship on the subject of the political impact of scientific creationism. At that time I pointed out that the political impact of scientific creationism has been almost wholly in the field of education, since the educational system in this country is largely controlled by the government. I believe that the Baltimore Creation Fellowship still has cassette tapes of my 1984 talk, as well as my 1985 and 1986 talks, and those interested in this subject might want to get those tapes after listening to my speech today. I also have available the text of one of those talks entitled *The Scientist as Evangelist*. These talks are all part of a systematic approach to science that I hope you will acquaint yourselves with. A more detailed statement of this approach is given in Gordon H. Clark's book, *The Philosophy of Science and Belief in God*, which is available for purchase today.

Three years ago at this convention I predicted that the scientific creationists would lose the Louisiana case, and they did so, resulting in their appeal to the Supreme Court. Since the Court has not yet handed down a decision in this case, I shall hazard another prediction: The scientific creationists will lose again. But I would like to go further and make another comment: Not only will they lose, they deserve to lose.

The Backgrounds

In 1981, the legislature of the State of Louisiana enacted the Balanced Treatment for Creation-Science and Evolution-Science Act by overwhelming majorities. Seventy-nine percent of the House (71 to 19) and 68 percent (26 to 12) of the Senate supported the bill. A challenge to the constitutionality of that Act has reached the United States Supreme Court. It is my purpose here to discuss the philosophical, not the legal, arguments advanced by the defenders of scientific creationism. I do not intend to discuss the various steps in the extensive litigation surrounding this Act, but to call attention to the argument put forth by the scientific creationists, an argument that is hostile to Christianity.

It is not merely the State of Louisiana that advances this anti-Christian line of thought. The counsel of record in the case is Wendell R. Bird, who has gained fame in recent years for his activities defending scientific creationism, and who presented

the oral argument before the Supreme Court last December. In addition to Mr. Bird, several men formed a nonprofit, tax-exempt organization to raise money for the prosecution of this litigation, and that organization carries on its letterhead the names of some of the leading lights of creationism in the United States: Henry Morris, A. E. Wilder-Smith, George Howe, Walter Lammerts, John Klotz, Duane Gish, Bolton Davidheiser, James Robison, Tim LaHaye, George Benson, John Whitehead, Howard Phillips, and Gary North

The appearance of these names and the association of these men with this litigation are quite surprising when one reads the legal briefs and the transcript of the oral arguments before the Supreme Court. For the briefs, contrary to what you and the American people have been led to believe, do not represent Christianity, and are, in fact, hostile to Christianity. In a few moments I shall quote the briefs filed in the Louisiana case. After I have done so, I believe that you will agree that the views represented in the briefs are not Christian and do not deserve the support of those who are.

Academic Freedom

Let me begin with the issue of academic freedom. The Louisiana statute declares that the Act "is enacted for the purpose of protecting academic freedom." Unfortunately the Act does not define the phrase "academic freedom," even though it does define several other terms. In their briefs the scientific creationists seize upon this undefined phrase and try to infuse their own meaning. They argue that the purpose of the Act is to protect the students' academic freedom "to hear additional scientific information."

But that, of course, is not the meaning of the phrase "academic freedom." The lawyer opposing the scientific creationists argued before the Supreme Court that "The idea of academic freedom that is advanced here is...unlike any previous notion of that term. It's not a term; it's an incantation, as [Mr. Bird] uses it." The federal appeals court had come to the same conclusion, and in its decision it stated: "Academic freedom embodies the principle that individual instructors are at liberty to teach that

which they deem to be appropriate in the exercise of their professional judgment. The principle of academic freedom abjures state interference with curriculum or theory as antithetical to the search for truth. The Balanced Treatment Act is contrary to the very concept it avows.... The compulsion inherent in the Balanced Treatment Act is, on its face, inconsistent with the idea of academic freedom as it is universally understood."

Let me make very clear what is happening here, for it is typical of their whole argument. The scientific creationists are attempting to change the meaning of words in order to achieve the goal they want. They have attempted to redefine "academic freedom," and that is not the only, nor the most important, term they misuse. Any effort that requires this sort of intellectual dishonesty cannot advance truth. The federal appeals court recognized the deception involved in this maneuver, and they pointed it out in their opinion.

Creation

Yet the American people, and especially American Christians, have not been so perspicacious as the federal court. They have been fooled by the scientific creationists, who rely on American Christians for their funding. The American people, particularly American Christians, have been fooled by the word "creation." They tend to think that all people who use the word "creation" are talking about the same thing, namely the Biblical account of creation. But they are not. All the people who use the word "God," or the phrase "born again" are not using those terms in the sense that the Bible uses them. Shirley MacLaine means some thing quite different when she uses the phrase "born again." The scientific creationists have made it crystal clear, for all who care to read what they have written, that they are not talking about the Genesis account of creation, which is the only account that all Christians hold to be true. The scientific creationists' notion of "creation" is as different from the Biblical doctrine of creation as the reincarnationists' notion of the "new birth" is different from the Bible's teaching about regeneration.

Let me quote some more from their legal briefs. The briefs open with the assertion: "Creation-science consists of scientific evidence and not religious concepts...." Any Christian worth his salt should prick up his ears at such a statement. If he does, he will not be disappointed. On the same page the brief states that "creation science does not necessitate...reference to a creator or God." Let me repeat that: "Creation science does not necessitate reference to a creator or God." That statement, as well as the first, is on the first page of the brief. Moreover, both these statements are repeated throughout the briefs many times. These are not simply slips of the pen or typewriter; they are essential parts of the scientific creationists' arguments.

On page 6 of the brief we find these statements: "There are several misconceptions about creation-science. It does *not* essentially involve creation 'from nothing', 'kinds' of plants or animals, 'catastrophism' or a 'worldwide flood', or a 'relatively recent inception' of the universe and life." Let me read the statement again. "There are several misconceptions about creation-science. It does *not* essentially involve creation 'from nothing', 'kinds' of plants or animals, 'catastrophism' or a 'worldwide flood', or a 'relatively recent inception' of the universe and life."

Being a Christian, I thought creationism essentially involved most, if not all, of those things. Biblical creationism certainly does. But scientific creationism does not. The scientific creationists say so themselves.

Is it not obvious that the scientific creationists are trying to redefine the term "creation" just as they tried to redefine the phrase "academic freedom" in order to bamboozle both the courts and the Christians? Please do not assume, as most people seem to do, that people always use words in their normal or usual sense. They don't, especially when they have a hidden motive or are governed by fear. This litigation is a prime example of the deliberate misuse of words.

On the same page on which these statements appear, we find the scientific creationist definition

of "creation": "creation-science means origin through abrupt appearance in complex form of biological life, life itself, and the physical universe.... Creation in this context means simply 'abrupt appearance in complex form'." I repeat that definition: Creation means simply "abrupt appearance in complex form."

Let me ask you gentlemen here today: Is that what *you* mean by "creation"? Is this the Baltimore Abrupt Appearance in Complex Form Fellowship? Or is this the Baltimore Creation Fellowship? The lawyer opposing the scientific creationists, who in all likelihood is a secular humanist, commented about this novel definition of the word "creation": "It has never before been seen upon the face of the Earth except in Mr. Bird's briefs, and [in] the affidavits prepared [by the scientific creationists]." In his oral argument before the Supreme Court he quoted *Webster's Third International Dictionary*, published in 1981, on the word "creation": "the act of bringing into existence, from nothing, the universe or the world or the living and nonliving things in it." He also quoted Webster's second edition, published in 1934: "the act of causing to exist or the fact of being brought into existence by divine power, or its equivalent."

As a Christian, I would prefer to agree with other Christians rather than with secular humanists. I am sure that you would too. But that understandable prejudice should never prevent us from perceiving that in this case, and in many others, the secular humanist is closer to the truth than those who profess to be Christians. He knows what "creation" means, and he knows the scientific creationists are trying to deny it. As a Christian, one can only be embarrassed by such subreption.

As you know, the abrupt appearance of complex forms does not necessarily involve creation at all. Stephen Jay Gould of Harvard University has developed a theory of punctuated equilibrium that is compatible with the abrupt appearance of complex forms. Gould is a militant anti-Christian. But since his views fit the definition of creation offered by the scientific creationists, we must conclude that Stephen Jay Gould is a creationist! Fred Hoyle, a non-Christian, and N. Wickramasinghe, a Hindu,

also support the abrupt appearance of complex forms by imagining evolution from outer space. That makes them creationists as well! Other theories of "hopeful monsters," massively mutated life forms, are equally compatible with the abrupt appearance of complex forms. These theories are evolutionist not creationist, but they all miraculously become "creationist" by virtue of this startling new definition of the word "creation." It is now possible for agnostics, atheists, Hindus, and evolutionists to be classified as creationists, for they all may believe in the abrupt appearance of complex forms.

The New Meaning of Creationism

The scientific creationist brief, of course, does not let the matter rest by stating this novel and perverse definition of "creation" only once. It repeats it several times. This repetition is itself important, for it underscores the fact that this new and non-Christian view of "creation" is central to the scientific creationist argument. One of the scientific creationist witnesses, Dr. Terry L. Miethe, a professor at Liberty University in Lynchburg, Virginia, filed an affidavit in which he said, "Creation science has changed in content over the past decade, and is different from the religious views of creation that prevailed over the past centuries...."

Now this is a most important statement. Creation science has changed its meaning over the past decade. It is different from the religious views of creation that have prevailed in past centuries. Since the religious views of creation that have prevailed in past centuries, at least in the United States and Europe, are the Biblical view, creation science is not Christian.

The difference between scientific creationism and Christianity, and the hostility of the scientific creationists to Christianity, may be seen in another quotation from their brief: "The State agrees wholeheartedly that public schools constitutionally may not and should not teach the *Genesis* account of creation ... in science classes." The Louisiana legislator who sponsored the Balanced Treatment Act and who heads the Creation Science Legal

Defense Fund, Bill Keith, is quoted in the brief as saying, "I've been accused of wanting to teach the first chapter of *Genesis* in our science classrooms in our public schools. *Not only would I be opposed to that* (I have never advocated that)...." In his oral argument before the Supreme Court, Wendell Bird, representing the state of Louisiana, said, "the State agrees wholeheartedly ... that the teaching of the Bible, as part of implementing this statute, would be unconstitutional. The State has consistently taken the position that that, in a science classroom, would not be appropriate under the Constitution or under the statute." Mr. Bird repeated that statement several times before the Supreme Court.

Consider also this colloquy between Mr. Bird and a Justice of the Supreme Court:

QUESTION: Does it [creation science] necessarily require the teaching of a God, a personal God, as opposed to a first cause that may be quite impersonal, or a giant slug, for all we know?

MR. BIRD: Your Honor, teaching creation science does not entail, necessarily, the teaching of any of those concepts. In other words, with creation science consisting of scientific evidence ... in none of that is there any concept of a creator, and certainly no concept of *Genesis*.

Could any further statements be clearer than these? The Balanced Treatment Act, the State of Louisiana, the Creation Science Legal Defense Fund, Wendell Bird, and by implication all the men who have permitted their names to be used by that organization are advocating a theory of creation quite different from the Biblical doctrine. More over, they are all opposed to teaching the *Genesis* account of creation in science classes. Perhaps they would allow the *Genesis* account to be taught in literature classes, along with Greek and Roman mythology, but certainly not in science classes, where the subject is "truth."

Let me review this astonishing and scandalous situation. There is a case before the Supreme Court of the United States involving many professed Christian leaders. In the public's mind, the case

involves the Christian doctrine of creation and whether or not it can be taught in the government schools of Louisiana. But if one reads the briefs prepared by the scientific creationists in this litigation and one does not even have to read them very closely it is abundantly clear that the constitutionality of the Biblical doctrine of creation being taught in the public schools is *not* being litigated, that *all* parties involved agree that the *Genesis* account of creation must not be allowed in science classes in the government schools, and that the public especially the Christians of America who blindly trust their leaders to tell them the truth have been conned into supporting a movement that is non-Christian by its own repeated admission.

How did this happen? How did the "change in content" in the meaning of creation occur in the last decade? How have the Christians of America been fooled? The full explanation is a study in the failure of evidentialist apologetics.

Evidentialist Apologetics

Since many people, including some scientists, are discouraged by the use of any theological word having more than two syllables, I will define "apologetics" as "the science of defending the faith." That should please those scientists who disdain anything non-scientific. I will also define "faith" as "the propositions contained in the Bible, together with all their logical implications." The Bible is a system of truth, and it is the purpose of apologetics to defend that truth against all who would deny it. Given these definitions, we can see that apologetics is not concerned with defending common sense notions or scientific opinions. It is concerned with defending the Bible.

The modern creationist movement began about 25 years ago with the publication of *The Genesis Flood* by Henry M. Morris and John C. Whitcomb. The book was designed to defend the *Genesis* account of Noah's flood as a worldwide flood. Moreover, it was designed to do so by citing evidence from geology, hydrology, and other scientific disciplines that is compatible with the *Genesis* account and difficult to explain on the basis of uniformitarian evolutionary development. *The Genesis Flood* was

an interesting attempt to embarrass those scientists who denied catastrophism by marshalling the evidence that seemed to imply a worldwide catastrophe like the *Genesis* flood.

But Messrs. Morris and Whitcomb never quite got the logical situation straight. They have never quite understood what proves what. And if this failure is embarrassing in high school geometry, it is absolutely fatal in theology. Morris' and Whitcomb's method seemed to imply that scientific evidence could prove the truth of *Genesis*. But at least Messrs. Morris and Whitcomb kept fairly close to the Scriptures and were concerned to defend the accuracy of the Biblical statements. Unfortunately, their very concern with Scripture is what obscured the irreparable flaws in their apologetic method. In the past ten years we have seen that incorrect method carried to its logical conclusion. That conclusion has been the transformation of Biblical creationism into scientific creationism.

As the quotations from the scientific creationists that I have already read demonstrate, Morris' and Whitcomb's early fidelity to the Scriptures has been jettisoned as the implications of their apologetic method have become more and more clear. The scientific creationists have declared their independence from the Bible. Scientific creationism does not necessarily involve "religious concepts, a creator or God, creation from nothing, catastrophism, a worldwide flood, the recent inception of life, or 'kinds' of plants or animals." Science is capable of discovering truth, according to these men. One need not start with the Bible at all. This is one of the most prevalent superstitions of the twentieth century.

The development of the sort of non-scriptural, even anti-scriptural, scientific creationism that we have been discussing is a logically inevitable result of the belief that science is not a handmaiden to theology, but an independent enterprise that can prove some vague notion of creation. It can not. Science cannot prove anything, let alone prove creation. But it is this blind faith in science as a cognitive enterprise that explains why the meaning of "creation" has changed in the last ten years and is now quite different from religious views of past centuries.

The Testimony of Three Men

The non-Christian ideas being defended in this litigation and the method used in their defense may be illustrated by the religious backgrounds and educations of the expert witnesses called by the scientific creationists. These witnesses exemplify the fatally flawed nature of scientific creationism and its method of apologetics: The scientific creationists have relied on Hindus like Wickramasinghe, agnostics, atheists, and Thomists like Norman Geisler and Terry Miethe. They have not called one expert witness who believes that it is both impious and just plain stupid to try to prove from science that the Word of God is true.

In the Louisiana case none of the expert witnesses called by the scientific creationists represents a Biblical point of view. Three expert witnesses in philosophy, theology, and education were called: Dr. Terry Miethe earned his first doctorate from St. Louis University, a Roman Catholic institution. His master of divinity degree came from McCormick Seminary in Chicago, which he himself describes in a sworn affidavit as "theologically-liberal and neo-orthodox." He is a member of the national Jesuit honor society, Alpha Sigma Nu. He is also a professor at Liberty University, a fundamentalist institution. The fact that a faculty member of a Christian institution can be a graduate of a liberal and neo-orthodox seminary and a member of the Jesuit honor society should set off alarm bells in the head of anyone concerned about guarding Christ's doctrine.

The expert witness in theology was the Rev. Dr. William G. Most. Dr. Most earned his bachelor's, master's, and doctor's degrees from Roman Catholic institutions, the two advanced degrees from Catholic University. He is a former president of the Mariological Society of America, a member of the Pontifical International Marian Academy, and the author of *Mary in Our Life*, among many other books and articles. In his affidavit for the scientific creationists, Dr. Most stated that "I am personally wide open on the question of evolution from a religious point of view.... I believe that the answer must come from science...."

The expert witness in education was Dr. Robert Clinkert, also a Roman Catholic who earned his doctorate from Loyola University in Chicago.

The selection of these men to defend Christianity would be inexcusable, but we have already seen that what they are defending is not Christianity, but something called "scientific creationism." These men are advocating something, but it is not Christianity. Yet Christians have been bamboozled into supporting scientific creationism by giving hundreds of thousands of dollars to fund this litigation and similar lawsuits all across the country. In a century of religious and scientific hoaxes, scientific creationism may be among the biggest.

A Philosophical Explanation

But rather than simply understanding that scientific creationism is not Christian and does not deserve the support of Christians, it is far more important that we understand how Biblical creationism was transformed into scientific creationism in the space of ten years. That shift, so subtle and yet so rapid, illustrates the enormous danger and futility of trying to fight divine battles with human weapons. The emergence of scientific creationism from Biblical creationism in the last decade is due to the use and popularity of evidentialist apologetics. An unscriptural philosophy, the sort of vain philosophy that we are warned about in *Colossians*, is the cause of the change.

There are two basic forms of Christian apologetics: evidentialism and presuppositionalism. The evidentialist form holds that Christians ought to try to prove the existence of God and the veracity of the Bible on the basis of premises that all men will accept, such as the reliability of sense perception. The presuppositionalist method holds that the existence of God and the inerrancy of Scripture are to be assumed as indemonstrable axioms; they cannot be proved, and it is both impious and stupid to try.

Involved in the evidentialist method, although the evidentialists may be reluctant to admit it, is the necessity of redefining key terms. We have seen how the scientific creationists have attempted to

redefine "academic freedom" and "creation," emptying the latter of almost all Biblical content. But this redefinition of terms may also be clearly seen in the best evidentialist apologete of them all, the thirteenth-century Roman Catholic Thomas Aquinas. Thomas held that one could prove the existence of God in five ways, and the first and more manifest way was the way of motion: "It is certain, and evident to our senses," Thomas wrote, "that in the world some things are in motion." From this axiom that he considered indubitable, Thomas attempted to deduce an Unmoved Mover. He concluded his proof by saying, "And this everyone understands to be God." But Thomas's unmoved mover is the unmoved mover of the pagan Aristotle. It is no more the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, it is no more Jesus Christ, than scientific creationism is the Genesis account of creation. Writing in Latin, Thomas referred to his unmoved mover and his first cause as neuters. They are "It." God is not neuter. God is not an "It."

The reason that both philosophical giants like Thomas Aquinas and lesser men like the scientific creationists must redefine their terms is their common method of apologetics evidentialism. One cannot deduce the God of the Bible from any secular axioms, whether those axioms be common sense, scientific evidence, or simply sense perception. It is logically impossible. One of the first rules of logic is that terms must not appear in the conclusion of an argument that did not first appear in its premises. If the terms are not in the premises, they logically cannot show up in the conclusion. Even Thomas Aquinas admitted that he believed in creation only because God revealed it. But the scientific creationists are not quite so wise as Thomas.

To make their upside-down apologetic method appear to succeed, to make it appear plausible, evidentialists must substitute something for both God and for creation. They cannot logically get to God from their premises, and they cannot get to creation either. For that reason, Thomas Aquinas substituted Aristotle's unmoved mover for God, and scientific creationists substitute the abrupt appearance of complex forms for creation. They assert, they do not prove, they assert that Aristotle's

unmoved mover is the same as God, and the abrupt appearance of complex forms is the same as creation. Neither proposition is true.

The influence of evidentialist apologetics on scientific creationism may be seen by reading any of the relevant books. It may also be seen in the Louisiana statute itself, for the statute repeatedly uses the word "evidences." I quote from the statute: "Creation-science means the scientific evidences for creation and inferences from those scientific evidences." "Evolution-science means the scientific evidences for evolution and inferences from those scientific evidences." Only evidentialist apologetes talk like this: Every one else uses the word "evidence" in the singular. Someone steeped in the murky brew of evidentialism drafted the Louisiana statute. The author left his unmistakable mark in all the esses in the law.

Conclusion

The scientific creationists have furnished us with their own statements distinguishing their views from those of the Bible. It is past time for Biblical Christians to consider whether they ought to continue to spend thousands of dollars on such specious arguments, and, more importantly, whether Christians can any longer afford to use a method of defending the faith that inexorably leads to non-Christian conclusions.

It has taken only a decade for Biblical creationism to turn into scientific creationism. Many Christians are not yet aware of the change. The scientific creationists have a pecuniary interest in keeping them uninformed of the change. But the ramifications of the change are extensive, and its implications are lethal. Once the axiomatic acceptance of Scripture as inerrant is abandoned, the surrender to pagan ism is sure and swift. The Bible and the Bible alone is the source of truth. It is in the Bible alone that we read about creation. Neither science nor Aristotle has anything to say about it. Science is ever learning and never able to come to the knowledge of truth.

Let us therefore, as Biblical creationists, stop funding and supporting the scientific creationists

and return to our divinely commanded duty of building Christian schools, publishing Christian books, and preaching the whole counsel of God to every creature. And let those who call themselves Christians return to the faith they profess and defend it as it ought to be defended: as God's truth, and nothing less.

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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.