

Participant's Workbook

James-Michael Smith - JMSmith.org

The Bible and Science: Friends or Foes?

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By James-Michael Smith

I. Where Did the Conflict with Science Begin?

“Once the Bible became available in English, some British church leaders busied themselves with figuring out the precise date when God created Adam (and Eve, presumably). Genesis 5, together with Genesis 11, served as the basis for their calculations. The math seemed relatively simple and straightforward. Add the ages of the fathers to the ages of their sons and work backward from the fairly well-established date for Abraham. Cambridge University’s Vice-Chancellor _____ and the Anglican Archbishop of Ireland, _____, actually became caught up in a race to see who could publish an accurate date first. By the middle of the seventeenth century, they announced to the world that Adam was created in _____ b.c.^{1, 2} Lightfoot really went overboard, citing the month, the day, and the time of day,² but few expressed suspicion about the validity of his and Ussher’s claims. Before long their date spread throughout Christendom and beyond as if it were part of the Bible text itself. By the nineteenth century, it had reached the margin notes of most English Bibles.

Unfortunately, the more widely and deeply this date became entrenched in published Bibles and Christian thinking, the wider and deeper became the credibility gap between educated people and biblical faith. For the first time the Bible became an object of ridicule.” -Hugh. Ross, *The Genesis Question*

Ancient Perspectives on Creation & Genesis

Literal 24 hr days

Long periods of time (i.e. 1,000 years)

Uncertain, but not literal 24 hr days

“Early Jewish and Christian interpreters were troubled that it took God seven days to create the world, whereas modern interpreters are puzzled by the brevity of creation in light of geology’s testimony to the age of the earth...For Luther the first day was the creation of the “crude and formless masses” that were sequentially ordered. Calvin attributed the six literal days to God’s accommodation to human understanding.” -Kenneth Matthews, “Genesis 1:1-11:26” (NAC). 148

¹ James Ussher, Archbishop of Armagh, *Annalis Veteris Testamenti* (Londini: J. Flesher, 1650–1654). For the same book in English, see James Ussher, Archbishop of Armagh, *The Annals of the World* (London: E. Tyler for J. Crook and G. Bedell, 1658).

² E. T. Brewster, *Creation: A History of Non-Evolutionary Theories* (1927), page 109. Quoted in Bernard Ramm, *The Christian View of Science and Scripture* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1955), page 174.

The Rise of the Sciences

"It seems reasonable to conclude that the *timing* of creation had little doctrinal or apologetic significance until scientists uncovered evidence for the antiquity of the universe, earth, and life. Only after these discoveries does the *when* of creation become an important evangelistic issue, one worthy of in-depth analysis."

H. Ross & G. Archer, *The G3N3SIS Debate*, p.69

"[T]he standard world-picture of Ptolemaic cosmology was firmly established long before the Christian church produced its intellectuals (Ptolemy was born about A.D. 100). In this scheme the spherical earth was at the center of the universe, surrounded by concentric spheres that contained the stars on their surfaces." C. John Collins, *Science & Faith*, p.102

Copernicus (1473-1543)

Kepler (1571-1630)

Galileo (1564-1642)

"It is no coincidence that the scientific revolution and the Reformation came at the same place and time in history – the Protestants support Kepler and Copernicus in their revolutionary new interpretation of the Bible. One could almost say that the Copernican revolution was primarily a revolution of Bible interpretation: it revealed that the scholars of the church past were not always correct in their interpretation of Bible passages like Psalm 93:1 (which had been interpreted to mean that the sun goes around the earth), just as they were not always correct in interpreting passages dealing with moral and scriptural issues." D. Snoke, *A Biblical Case for an Old Earth*. p.22

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Hubble discovers galaxies' red shift

Cosmic background radiation detected

Universe, including time itself, now seen to have had a beginning.

"I cannot believe that our existence in the universe is a mere quirk of fate, an accident of history, an incidental blip in the great cosmic drama. Our involvement is too intimate.

...Through conscious beings the universe has generated self-awareness. This can be no trivial detail, no minor by-product of mindless, purposeless forces. We are truly meant to be here."

-Agnostic Physicist Paul Davies, *The Mind of God*, p.232

"As the nineteenth century dawned, almost all geologists accepted that the earth had been around for longer than 6,000 years, because the processes that formed rock layers were slow....In 1830, however, _____ (1797-1875) published his *Principles of Geology*, and promoted the doctrine called _____. According to this doctrine, we may explain the past history of the earth entirely in terms of processes we now see in operation, without any appeal either to obsolete processes or to supernatural events." C.John Collins, *Science and Faith*, p.235

Radiometric dating

Sedimentation Layers & Ice Core samples

Coral Growth & Fossils

"We should also note that the main ideas of long geologic timescale were well in place before the time of Darwin's *Origin of Species* (1859). Hence the common way of calling old earth geology "evolutionary" is misleading. C.John Collins, *Science & Faith*. 247)

"Although no _____ links of structure, fitted for gliding through the air, now connect the Galeopithecus with the other Insectivora, yet *there is no difficulty in supposing* that such links formerly existed, and that each was developed in the same manner as with the less perfectly gliding squirrels; each grade of structure having been _____ to its possessor." Charles Darwin, *On the Origin of Species*

Variety of meanings to "Evolution"

Mutation/Natural Selection (Survival of the Fittest)

Species vs. "Kind"

Scopes "Monkey Trial"

Darwinian vs. Neo-Darwinian Evolution

II. Various Positions Adopted

"Science does not show us that the Bible is wrong. It however does help us to see when our _____ of the Bible may be wrong."

-M. Wilkinson, *The Message of Creation*, p.278

Lessons Learned from Church History

"It is of course admitted that, taking [the Genesis creation] account by itself, it would be most natural to understand the word ["day"] in its ordinary sense; but if that sense brings the Mosaic account into conflict with facts and another sense avoids such conflict, then it is obligatory on us to adopt that other...The Church has been forced more than once to alter her interpretation of the Bible to accommodate the discoveries of science. But this has been done without doing any violence to the Scriptures or in any degree impairing their authority."

-Conservative Presbyterian Theologian, Charles Hodge (1797-187

Fundamentalism vs. Modernism

"Luther, Calvin, and Melancthon all rejected the idea of a moving earth – Luther is quoted as saying of Copernicus, "This fool wishes to reverse the entire science of astronomy, but sacred Scripture tells us that Joshua commanded the sun to stand still, and not the earth"; even John Wesley many years later said that the Copernican system "tends to infidelity."

...Psalms 93:1, 96:10, and 104:5 say in very definite terms "The earth is firmly established; it can not be moved." What has changed since then – why doesn't anyone debate whether the earth moves any more? Primarily, our experience has changed.

...It seems obvious to us now that passages like Psalm 93:1 are poetic, referring to God's protection and maintenance of the earth, and not meant to imply that the earth does not rotate. Even the passage quoted by Luther, Joshua 10:12-13, in which the sun stands still, does not change the opinion of most Christians that the normal behavior of the earth is to move."

D. Snoke, A Biblical Case, p.14

The Fundamentals & J. Orr

On Psalm 104's recounting of creation:

<u>Gen Day</u>	<u>Psalm 104 verses</u>
Day 1	2a: light
Day 2	2b-4: the "firmament" divides the waters
Day 3	5-13: land and water distinct 14-18: vegetation and trees
Day 4	19-24: light-bearers as timekeepers
Day 5	25-26: creatures of sea
Day 6	21-24: land animals and man 27-30: food for all creatures

-D.Kidner, (cited in C.J. Collins, *Gen.1-4*.
p.85)

Noted Proponents:
James Orr, Bernard Ramm, Hugh Ross

Animal Death Before the Fall?

"There is not a word in the Bible to indicate that in its view death entered the animal world as a consequence of the sin of man." -J. Orr, *The Christian View of God and the World* [Edinburgh: Andrew Eliot, 1904], p.197)

"In a world without death, what would anteaters eat? What would sharks eat? Or vultures? An anteater that did not eat ants, or shark that did not eat fish, or a vulture that did not eat dead flesh would be utterly different from one of those species now. The change in nature of these animals to eat grass or other plants would require a total re-creation of them, as any biologist will testify. Yet such an utter change of all species is not mentioned in Genesis 3:14-24. All we read is that thistles will proliferate.

...The dangerous forces in creation were a drawn sword of judgment, so to speak, displayed to Adam just as he was told, "In the day you eat of it you shall die" (Gen. 2:17). One might even ask how Adam knew what God meant when he said "you shall die." If everything was idyllic and nothing died, how would Adam know what death was?"

...Human beings, and the animals in the Garden with them, may have been specially commanded to eat only from the green plants and trees, while animals in the outer regions lived a different life....but the fact remains that the teaching that human beings and animals did not eat meat before the fall is nowhere explicitly stated in Scripture; it is a deduction based on one or two verses that have alternative interpretations."

-D. Snoke, A Biblical Case for an Old Earth, pp. 51-67

"The Genesis Flood"
Catastrophism/Flood Geology

Adam's Bellybutton

"...the young-earth position is so equated with orthodoxy that when I say that I believe in an old earth, people have sincerely asked me if I also deny the virgin birth, the bodily resurrection of Jesus, etc. This is partly because theological liberals assume that the earth is old without even a debate and mock the young-earth position, so that people associate the old-earth view with theological liberalism." -David Snoke

Noted Proponents:
H. Morris, J. Whitcomb, D. Gish,
K. Hovind, Ken Hamm

But the Universe Seems So Old!

"The question is this how an age of about 10,000 years can be reconciled with the cosmological age of 12 billion years? The answer takes two forms, which are not quite consistent with each other. One answer is to argue that the Earth only appears old. This was first argued by P. Gosse in 1857, suggesting that God created Adam with a navel. In modern astronomical terms it means that God created the Universe with light already in transit to the Earth from distant galaxies, making them only appear billions of light years away. Thus the findings of modern science are accurate, but they only tell us about appearances. The real age of the Universe is revealed only in the Bible. This position is logically consistent and science cannot argue against it. However, we shall come to theological difficulties in a moment.

*The other answer (often put alongside the first, although they do say different things about science) is to argue that the majority of modern scientists have got it wrong and in fact science itself points to a Universe that is only thousands of years old. Arguments used for such a young Universe include a decay in the speed of light, problems with ages derived from globular clusters and problems with the Big Bang. These are supplemented by evidence for a young Earth apparently shown by changes in the magnetic field strength, problems with radioactive dating, the explanation of the fossil record by means of the effects of a global flood and arguments against evolution. Some of these arguments do point to some inadequacies in current scientific theories, but have not convinced the vast majority of the scientific community that our picture of the origin of the Universe is mistaken. A further attack on the scientific models is to question their philosophical basis." -M. Wilkinson, *The Message of Creation*. p.272-273*

Christian Evolution?

For long centuries, God perfected the animal form which was to become the vehicle of humanity and t...he image of Himself. he gave it hands whose thumb could be applied to each of the fingers, and jaws and teeth and throat capable of articulation, and a brain sufficiently complex to execute all of the material motions whereby rational thought is incarnated. The creature may have existed in this state for ages before it became man: it may even have been clever enough to make things which a modern archaeologist would accept as proof of its humanity. But it was only an animal because all its physical and psychical processes were directed to purely material and natural ends. Then, in the fullness of time, God caused to descend upon this organism, both on its psychology and physiology, a new kind of consciousness which could say "I" and "me," which could look upon itself as an object, which knew God, which could make judgments of truth, beauty and goodness, and which was so far above time that it could perceive time flowing past.... We do not know how many of these creatures God made, nor how long they continued in the Paradisal state. But sooner or later they fell. Someone or something whispered that they could become as gods.... They wanted some corner in this universe of which they could say to God, "This is our business, not yours." But there is no such corner. They wanted to be nouns, but they were, and eternally must be, mere adjectives. We have no idea in what particular act, or series of acts, the self-contradictory, impossible wish found expression. For all I can see, it might have concerned the literal eating of a fruit, the the question is of no consequence.

*-C.S. Lewis, *Problem of Pain*, pp.68-71*

Noted Proponents:
B.B. Warfield, C.S. Lewis, Francis Collins

Methodological Naturalism

"Science is a method of explaining the natural world. It *assumes the universe operates according to regularities* and that through systematic investigation we can understand these regularities. The methodology of science emphasizes the logical testing of alternate explanations of natural phenomena against empirical data. Because *science is limited to explaining the natural world by means of natural processes*, it cannot use supernatural causation in its explanations. Similarly, science is precluded from making statements about supernatural forces, because these are outside its provenance. Science has increased our knowledge because of this insistence on the search for natural causes."

-National Science Teachers Association

Darwinian vs. Neo-Darwinian Evolution

Noted Proponents:
H. Van Till, K. Miller,

The "New Atheists"
R. Dawkins, D. Dennett, C. Hitchens, S. Harris

When Science Oversteps Its Bounds?

"A biology professor harassed by Fundamentalist students over a number of years might become bitter and sarcastic. Or he might judge all Fundamentalists by a few outspoken and cantankerous representatives. Or the teacher of biology might have a very limited knowledge of philosophy of biology, or epistemology, or logic, or of theology or Scripture, and accordingly make statements that are far more narrow or dogmatic than the facts in the case allow. Engrossed in biological matters year after year, he might become incompetent to make dependable judgments in the larger areas of philosophy and theology. It is unfortunate when such an individual makes dogmatic statements about evolution and theology.

...evolution may be entertained as a possible secondary cause or mediate cause in biological science. But to raise it to a metaphysical principle or as the all embracing key or category or scheme of Reality and to cancel out the metaphysical worth of all other possible clues is improper science and doggerel philosophy. If evolution be used so as to relativize all ethics, logic, beauty, and religion, and to completely animalize man, we can judge only that it must be severely scolded by evangelical Christianity, and by all philosophies and world views which seek genuine significance for human personality, worth, and value, and which believe in purpose in human history."

**-B. Ramm,
The Christian View of Science and Scripture, pp.260-280)**

III. "Intelligent Design" – A Clarification

What is it?

Science?
 "Closet Creationism"?
 Philosophy

Paley's Classic "Watchmaker" design argument

Prominent ID works:

Denton's "*Evolution: A Theory in Crisis*" – Discussed the Problems with Neo-Darwinian paradigm

Johnson's "*Darwin on Trial*" / Wells' "*Icons of Evolution*" – Exposed the Misleading Rhetoric of Neo-Darwinians

Dembski's "*Intelligent Design*" / "*No Free Lunch*" – Gives the mathematical and philosophical basis for detecting complex specified information in a system (aka. Specified Complexity)

Behe's "*Darwin's Black Box*" – Introduces the concept of Irreducible Complexity whereby a system cannot be created by intermediate steps because all parts are needed before it can function

Meyer's "*Signature in the Cell*" – A detailed presentation of the functioning code/language found within living cells.

Woodward's "*Doubts about Darwin*" – A history of the modern I.D. movement, particularly regarding the rhetoric used by both sides

Objections to Intelligent Design:

1. It is just repackaged creation science
2. It shows a wrong view of God's action in the world.
3. It's just the "God-of-the-gaps."
4. You shouldn't mix theology with science.
5. It's not "science."
6. It's not there to be found.
7. Appeal to intelligent design stymies scientific progress

Cultural/Legal responses

The Dover "Panda" Trial - Judge ruled that ID is "religious"

Ben Stein's "Expelled: No Intelligence Allowed"

Noted proponents:

The Discovery Institute

IV. Major Views on Genesis 1

views

Literalistic (24-Hour-Days) view

A. Mohler, J. McArthur, J.L. Duncan

“The precise denotation of the phrase ‘and there was evening and there was morning’ is immaterial to the argument. Whether that phrase describes/defines creation days, or provides a boundary between the divine worker’s creative activity establishing a rhythm of work and rest, or is a mere transitional clause of no great theological import, it clearly is language that is intimately associated with normal days in the experience of readers from every age and culture. As such, this phrase strengthens one’s predilection toward understanding the creation days as normal days.”

-Duncan & Hall, *The G3N3SIS Debate*. p. 31

Reconstitution (“Gap Theory”) view

A.C. Custance, C.I. Scofield

Day-Age view

H. Ross, G. Archer, D. Snoke

'The stages by which the earth comes to be what it is cannot indeed be precisely fitted to the account which modern science would give of the process, but in principle they seem to anticipate the modern scientific account by a remarkable flash of imagination, which a Christian may also call inspiration. Supposing we could be transported backward in time to different moments in the past of our planet, we should see it first in a condition in which there was no land distinguishable from the water and only a dim light coming from the invisible sun through the thick volumes of enveloping cloud: at a later moment, as the globe dried, land would have appeared; again at a later moment low forms of life, animal and vegetable would have begun; sooner or later in the process the cloud-masses would have become so thin and broken that a creature standing on earth would see above him sun and moon and stars; at a still later moment we should see the earth of great primeval monsters; and lastly we should see the earth with its present fauna and flora, and the final product of animal evolution, Man.'

—Edwyn Bevan,
Cited in D.Kidner, *Genesis (TOTC)* p.55-56

"Day-age creationists, however, see the Genesis creation narrative as an artistically exquisite and _____ account passed along by the Creator Himself to a human author by the agency of the Holy Spirit. In defiance of all the laws of probability, this ancient spokesperson described the initial creation event (commonly referred to as the Big Bang), the scientifically-verified initial conditions of the earth, and the scientifically verified _____ of _____ leading up to, and including, the appearance of modern man and the progress of civilization. The march of scientific knowledge has never really threatened the accuracy and authority of this account. Instead, it offers progressively greater proof for divine inspiration and inerrancy."

—H. Ross, *The G3N3SIS Debate*, p. 143

 _____-_____views
Analogical-Days view

C.J. Collins

"Evening and Morning"

Sabbath Rest

Exodus 20:11; 31:17

"On each day [God] works, then rests for the night; and then on his Sabbath, he rests in full enjoyment of his achievements. Similarly, in 2:7, where God "forms" the man, it's as if he were a potter working in clay.

If we put all of these things together, we see that the best explanation is the one that takes these days as not the ordinary kind; they are instead "God's workdays." Our workdays are not identical to them, but analogous. The purpose of the analogy is to set a pattern for the human rhythm of work and rest. The length of these days is not relevant to this purpose, but we have to conclude from Genesis 2:5-7 that some of them (at least) were longer than our ordinary days. How much longer we can't say, except that days 1-5 have to add up to a fair number of years in order to establish the seasonal cycle seen in 2:5-7

I call this the "analogical days" interpretation. I claim that this interpretation accounts for the details of Genesis, and for how the rest of the Bible refers to this account.

***-C.J. Collins, Science & Faith,
pp. 88-90***

_____ - _____ views

Literary ("Framework") View

M. Kline, H. Blocher

Harmonization with science is irrelevant

Ancient Literary norms must be brought to bear on interpretation of Genesis

Pictorial Day View

P.J. Wiseman

Functional Day View

J. Walton – *The Lost World of Genesis One*

Genesis 1, as Ancient Cosmology is function-oriented.

The word "Create" (Hebrew *bara'*) concerns functions.

The beginning state in Gen.1:1 is nonfunctional.

Days 1-3 establish functions and 4-6 install functionaries.

Divine rest happens in a Temple, thus the cosmos is a Temple.

7 days of Gen.1 relate to the cosmic Temple Inauguration.

They do not concern material origins.

"...we believe that the inspired text, rightly interpreted, is simply silent with regard to the age of the earth and universe. What the framework interpretation does not allow, however, is binding the conscience of the Church to one particular view of the age of the earth/universe – whether that of "creation science" or of mainstream geology and astronomy. Teachers of God's word cannot say, "As a Bible-believing Christian, you must believe that the earth is young (or old). To take any other position is to fail to submit to the authority of God's word." Rather, we must speak where Scripture speaks, and be silent where Scripture is silent...Biblical history is not video footage but theological proclamation (kerygma)."

...What then is the framework interpretation? It is that interpretation of Genesis 1:1-2:3 which regards the seven-day scheme as a figurative framework. While the six days of creation are presented as normal solar days, according to the frameworks interpretation the total picture of God's completing His creative work in a week of days is not to be taken literally. Instead it functions as a literary structure in which the creation works of god have been narrating in a topical order. The days are like picture frames. Within each day-frame, Moses gives us a snapshot of diving creative activity. Although the creative fiat fulfillments refer to actual historical events that actually occurred, they are narrated in a nonsequential order within the literary source or framework of a seven-day week.

...We exercise great caution so that we do not equate a nonliteral interpretation with a nonhistorical interpretation of the text. The framework interpretation does not teach that creation was a nonhistorical event."

-M. Kline, *The G3N3SIS Debate*, pp.218-220

V. So What Exactly *IS* Genesis 1?

"The first qualification for judging any piece of workmanship from a corkscrew to a cathedral is to know what it is—what it was intended to do and how it is meant to be used." -C.S. Lewis

"All things in Scripture are not alike plain in themselves, nor alike clear unto all: yet those things which are necessary to be known, believed, and observed for salvation, are so clearly propounded in some place of Scripture or other, that not only the learned, but the unlearned, in a due use of the ordinary means, may attain unto a sufficient understanding of them." -The Westminster Confession of Faith

Genesis and ancient Near East myth

For many today, the lack of immediately preceding literary context is taken as permission to read contemporary sensibilities into Gen 1, and since our context is so technological and scientific, this has produced a regrettable and unnecessary dichotomy between science and religion. Keeping the ancient Near East backdrop for Gen 1 in mind helps avoid this pitfall. -B. Arnold, *Genesis (NCBC)* footnote 3, p.29

Enuma Elish
Gilgamesh
Atrahasis
Eridu
Sumerian King List
Memphite Theology
Instruction of Merikare

Later Biblical examples of pagan myth imagery

Rahab/Leviathan/Behemoth

*"At the very heart of the enuma eliš epic stands the conflict of the god Marduk with the forces of Chaos, and their defeat. The corpse of the monster Tiamat serves as material for the construction of the world. ...Occasional allusions have preserved statements about a battle of Yahweh against a sea and chaos monster called Rahab or Leviathan. Thus, Isa. 51.9 reads: 'Was it not thou that didst cut Rahab in pieces, that didst pierce the dragon?'; and Ps. 89.11: 'Thou didst crush Rahab like a carcass, thou didst scatter thy enemies with thy mighty arm'... Moreover, it should not be overlooked that the allusions mentioned...simply make use of the mythical picture as an isolated poetic ornament in order to depict Yahweh's power in the most dazzling possible colours. This applies even more forcibly when the thought is less of the act of creation than of the demonstration of Yahweh's power in the rescue of his people from Egypt, for which the Chaos conflict forms as it were the prototype (Isa. 51.9f). [This historicization of the myth was carried even further when Rahab became simply a pseudonym for Egypt (Ps. 87.4; Isa. 30.7), while Leviathan denoted Syria (Isa. 27.1).]...In these contexts, however, the myth no longer has a life of its own. It is of no consequence for Israel's understanding of the world, but belongs to the treasure-house of poetry, on which poets and prophets liked to draw in order to clothe their thoughts in rich apparel...The more Israel became aware of the nature of its faith, the less room, it is clear, remained for any genuine myth of the origin of the world." -W. Eichrodt, *Old Testament Theology*, 2:114-115*

Why might God communicate in ancient cosmological terms?

"Keeping in the forefront of our minds the biblical portrait of Israel's first father as an ancient Mesopotamian man may be a helpful starting point from which to understand the origin of Israel's creation story. As God entered into a relationship with Abraham, he "met" him where he was--an ancient Mesopotamian man who breathed the air of the ancient Near East. We must surely assume that Abraham, as such a man, shared the worldview of those whose world he shared and not a modern, scientific one.

The reason the opening chapters of Genesis look so much like the literature of ancient Mesopotamia is that the worldview categories of the ancient Near East were ubiquitous and normative at time. Of course, different cultures had different myths, but the point is that they all had them.

The reason the biblical account is different from its ancient Near Eastern counterparts is not that it is history in the modern sense of the word and therefore divorced from any similarity to ancient Near Eastern myth. What makes Genesis different from its ancient Near Eastern counterparts is that it begins to make the point to Abraham and his seed that the God they are bound to, the God who called them into existence, is different from the gods around them.

We might think that such a scenario is unsatisfying because it gives too much ground to pagan myths. But we must bear in mind how very radical this notion would have been in the ancient world. For a second-millennium Semitic people, as Israel's earliest ancestors were, to say that the gods of Babylon were not worth worshiping but that the true god was the god of a nomad like Abraham--this was risky, ridiculous, and counterintuitive. And this would have been no less true when these stories were later recorded in Hebrew.

Ancient Near Eastern religions were hierarchical and polytheistic. The biblical claim that Israel's God, Yahweh, alone is God might be analogous to someone claiming in our world today that the gods of ancient Greece really exist and that they sit on Mount Olympus ruling the world. To put it differently, God adopted Abraham as the forefather of a new people, and in doing so he also adopted the mythic categories within which Abraham--and everyone else--thought. But God did not simply leave Abraham in his mythic world. Rather God transformed these ancient myths so that Israel's story would come to focus on its God, the real one."

...

"It is wholly incomprehensible to think that thousands of years ago God would have felt constrained to speak in a way that would be meaningful only to westerners several thousand years later. To do so borders on modern, Western arrogance. Rather, Genesis makes its case in a way that ancient men and women would have readily understood--indeed, the only way."

-Peter Enns, *Inspiration and Incarnation*, pp. 53-55

Key differences between Genesis and ANE cosmological myths

Worldview vs. World-Picture

“Not every good faith act of communication requires that the speaker endorse what he alludes to. For example, I am not breaking faith with anyone when I refer to Sam and Frodo without asserting that The Lord of the Rings is historical—unless of course I had led my audience to believe that the account was historical when I knew it was not. In the same way, biblical authors refer to pagan myths. Whether or not the author himself believed the myth to be true has no impact on whether he made his point in good faith. It is enough to suppose that he is using the ideas in a different setting from their original or evoking the emotional overtones of the mythic names, for the purpose of asserting the Lord’s superiority over them all.”

–C.J. Collins, Genesis.1-4, pp.262-263

Hebrew Language Considerations for interpreting of Genesis 1

Fluid and flexible vocabulary

Limited Verb Tenses

Phenomenological language

Recapitulation & Dischronologization

Exodus 19:1-2

"On the third new moon after the people of Israel had gone out of the land of Egypt, on that day they came into the wilderness of Sinai. ² They set out from Rephidim and came into the wilderness of Sinai, and they encamped in the wilderness. There Israel encamped before the mountain," (Exod 19:1-2 ESV)

"A God who made no concessions to our ways of seeing and speaking would communicate to us no meaning. Hence the phenomenological languages of the chapter (like our own talk of 'sunrise', 'dewfall', etc.) and its geocentric standpoint; but hence also the heavy temporal foreshortening which turns ages into days. Both are instruments of truth, diagrams enabling us to construe and not misconstrue a totality too big for us. It is only pedantry that would quarrel with terms that simplify in order to clarify." -D. Kidner, Genesis (TOTC), p.58

"We do not consider anyone deceptive or ill-informed who follows the conventional uses of phenomenological language, because we do not expect such language to be making strong claims about the inner workings of the things it describes; instead it allows us to refer to real events without getting bogged down in such questions. Hence the question we must address is what kind of claim the language of an ancient account actually makes about the subject it describes." -C.J. Collins, Genesis 1-4, pp.261-263

"Biblical scholars refer to nonsequential ordering as dischronologization or topical arrangement, which actually is a common feature of biblical historical narrative. It occurs whenever the order in which events are narrated does not correspond to the actual chronological sequence...the narrator has "the tendency to complete a topic or subject, carrying it forward to its conclusion or a logical stopping-place and then to return to the point of departure and resume the main thread of the narrative."

-M.Kline, The G3N3SIS Debate. p.221

Genesis 1 as the beginning of the Covenant

"A close reading of Genesis 1:1-2:4a shows that the author made a careful and purposeful selection in composing the Creation account and that the features he selected do, in fact, provide an introduction to the Sinai covenant...relative to the detail of the rest of the account in chapter 1, we could almost say that the author has passed [the physical/cosmological details] by. He has chosen rather to concentrate on the creation and preparation of the land. If we judge from the topics selected in Genesis 1:1-2:4a, we can say that the author has only three specific subjects in his account of Creation: God, human beings, and the land. ...[T]he creation of the sun and moon is given considerable attention. But...neither of these celestial bodies is mentioned in its own right. Rather, their creation is recounted in terms of the role they play in human affairs on the land: "to divide the day and night and to be signs for the seasons and for the days and years" (1:14-15).

...When Genesis 1:1-2:4a speaks of God's creation and preparation of the land, we are, in fact, introduced to one of the central elements of the Sinai covenant: promise of God to give the land to Israel: "If you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all the nations you will be my treasured possession. Although the whole earth is mine, you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation" (Ex 19:5-6). What, then, does Genesis 1:1-2:4a tell us about the land? It tells us that God is its owner. He created and prepared the land, and he can give it to whomever he chooses (Jer 27:5).

...These chapters prepare the people of Israel for their lives inside the land of Israel (and outside, by implication). For example, most of them will work the ground and herd livestock. They must begin by seeing this as an exercise of dominion, no matter how much pain is involved. These people would already have been familiar with the features of the world around them, such as: if they want barley, they must plant barley seeds; land animals are typically small creepy-crawlies, larger wild game or predators, or the ones you can domesticate. Certainly [Gen.1] does not aim to provide this as information: rather, its function is to place these various categories of experience in their proper context—things work this way because the one Creator designed them to do so.

...Any Israelite who read Genesis 1-2 would certainly ask why his or her life reflected so little of these things. Genesis 3 provides the explanation, and the curses of 3:16-19 describe what these people were familiar with. The function of these chapters would be to foster an intense inward ache, a yearning for restoration—which then would move the heart to lay hold of the covenant.

C.J. Collins, *Genesis 1-4*, p.246

Key Covenant terms:

&

The Genre of Genesis 1

_____?

_____?

_____?

_____/_____?

_____?

“Genesis 1:1-2:3, in fact, does not clearly fit a traditional literary category. Although it comes closest to “narrative,” we must conclude that it is a unique piece of literature. This insight goes far in explaining why modern interpreters are groping for the key that unlocks its mysteries.”
-K. Matthews, Genesis 1:1-11:26 (NAC), p.109

VI. What does Genesis 1 *actually* say?

Genesis 1:1-2:3
(Trans. By James-Michael Smith)

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth...

but the earth was empty and desolate and darkness covered the face of the seas—yet the Spirit of God was hovering over the surface of the waters.

*God said, "There will be light."
...and there was light!*

God saw the light—that it was good!

*God made a distinction between the light and the darkness.
God named the light "Day" and the dark He named "Night."*

There was evening and there was morning. Day one

God said, "There will be an expansive dome in the midst of the water, dividing water from water."

So God made the expansive dome and separated the water that is beneath the expansive dome from the water that is above the expansive dome.

Thus it happened.

God named the expansive dome "Sky."

There was evening and there was morning. Day two

God said, "The waters beneath the Sky will be gathered to one place so that dry land will appear."

Thus it happened.

God named the dry land "Land" and the gathered waters He named "Sea."

God saw that it was good.

Then God said, "The Land will sprout grass and plants producing seed and fruit trees producing fruit according to their type with seeds in it—throughout the Land."

Thus it happened.

The Land brought forth grass and plants producing seed and trees bearing fruit with seeds in it according to their type.

God saw that it was good.

There was evening and there was morning. Day three

Numeric Patterns in Gen 1:1-2:3

Phrases that occur 10 times:

- 'God said' (3x humans, 7x other things)
- Creative commands (3x 'Let there be...', and 7x 'Let...')
- 'to make'
- 'according to their kind'

Phrases that occur 7 times:

- 'and it was so'
- 'and God saw that it was good'

3 times it is said that:

- God blessed
- God created
- God created men and women

Other numerical patterns:

- The introduction (1:1-2) contains 21 words in Hebrew (3x7), and the conclusion (2:1-3) contains 35 words (5x7)
- 'Earth' is mentioned 21 times and 'God' 35

-
E. Lucas, *Can We Believe Genesis Today?*, pp.97-98]

*God said, "There will be lights in the expansive dome of the Sky,
to distinguish between the Day and the Night
and they will be for signs, seasons, days and years;
and they will provide light in the expansive dome of the Sky
—to shine over the Land."*

Thus it happened.

God appointed the two Great Lights—the greater light, the ruler of the Day and the lesser light, the ruler of the Night—as well as the stars.

*God put them in the expansive dome of the Sky
to shine over the Land,
ruling over the Day and over the Night,
separating the Light and the Dark.*

God saw that it was good.

There was evening and there was morning. Day four

God said, "The seas will teem with swarming creatures and flying creatures will fly over the Land, over the face of the expansive dome, the Sky."

God created the Great Sea Monsters and all the swarming creatures that swarm the waters according to their types and all winged flying creatures according to their types.

God saw that it was good.

God blessed them, saying, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the water in the Seas; and flying creatures, multiply in the Land!"

There was evening and there was morning. Day five

God said, "The Land will bring forth living creatures according to their types—livestock, small animals, and wildlife of the Land according to their types."

Thus it happened.

God made the wildlife of the land according to their types, the livestock according to their types, and all the small animals of the ground according to their type.

God saw that it was good.

Then God said, "Let us make Human in our image, according to our likeness; and he will rule over the fish of the Sea and over the flying creatures of the Sky and over the livestock and over all the Land and over all the small animals in the Land."

On the Sun & Moon "created" after Day & Night

"This doesn't mean that they did not exist before, only that they are to come into view now. My evidence for this claim is the fact that the same Hebrew verb form translated, "Let there be," can be used in the phrase "May the Lord *be* with you" (as in 1 Sam. 20:13 and elsewhere)—and this doesn't suggest that he wasn't with you before. Likewise, "Let your steadfast love...*be* upon us" (Ps. 33:22; compare 90:17; 199:76) hardly means that it wasn't there before. In the same vein, Genesis 1:16 says that God "made" the great lights; and this Hebrew word doesn't need to mean that they didn't exist before—in fact it can mean "he worked on" something that was there already, or even just "he appointed." That is, "he *made*" is not the same as "he *created*."...the fourth day involves God appointing the heavenly lights to mark the set times for worship on man's calendar. This may well involve some kind of "creative" activity (and I think that it does); but even then it doesn't say that God brought these things into being at these particular times.

-C.J. Collins, *Science & Faith*, pp. 90-91

*So God created Human in His image;
In the image of God He created him;
Male and Female—He created them.*

God blessed them and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, fill the Land and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the Sea and the flying creatures of the sky and over all creatures swarming over the Land."

Then God said, "Look! I am giving to you everything that makes seed throughout all the Land. And every tree that has fruit on it bearing seed, to you it will be for food. And to every creature of the Land, every flying creature of the Sky, and everything swarming over the Land that has living breath in it, all green plants will be food.

Thus it happened.

*God saw all that He had made and, behold!
—It was exceedingly good!*

There was evening and there was morning. Day six

So the Heavens and the Earth and all their hosts were completed.

*God finished on the seventh day
from all His work that He did.*

*He ceased on the seventh day
from all His work that He did.*

*So God blessed the seventh day
and made it holy.*

*For on it He ceased
from all His work that He did in creating.*

Universal Vegetarianism?

The assigning of every green plant for food (RSV) to all creatures must not be pressed to mean that all were once herbivorous, any more than to mean that all plants were equally edible to all. It is a generalization, that directly or indirectly all life depends on vegetation, and the concern of the verse is to show that all are fed from God's hand.

-D.Kidner, Genesis (TOTC), p.52

VII. The "Two-Books" of God

Psalm 19 (TNIV)

For the director of music. A psalm of David.

- "The heavens declare the glory of God;
the skies proclaim the work of his hands.
² Day after day they pour forth speech;
night after night they display knowledge.
³ They have no speech, they use no words;
no sound is heard from them.
⁴ Yet their voice goes out into all the earth,
their words to the ends of the world.
In the heavens he has pitched a tent for the sun,
⁵ which is like a bridegroom coming out of his chamber,
like a champion rejoicing to run his course.
⁶ It rises at one end of the heavens and makes its circuit to the other;
nothing is deprived of its warmth.
- ⁷ The law of the LORD is perfect,
refreshing the soul.
The statutes of the LORD are trustworthy,
making wise the simple.
⁸ The precepts of the LORD are right,
giving joy to the heart.
The commands of the LORD are radiant,
giving light to the eyes.
⁹ The fear of the LORD is pure,
enduring forever.
The ordinances of the LORD are sure,
and all of them are righteous.
- ¹⁰ They are more precious than gold, than much pure gold;
they are sweeter than honey, than honey from the honeycomb.
¹¹ By them your servant is warned; in keeping them there is great reward.
- ¹² But who can discern their own errors? Forgive my hidden faults.
¹³ Keep your servant also from willful sins; may they not rule over me.
Then I will be blameless, innocent of great transgression.
¹⁴ May these words of my mouth and this meditation of my heart
be pleasing in your sight, LORD, my Rock and my Redeemer."

Romans 1 (JM's translation)

¹⁸ For the wrath of God is being revealed from heaven upon all godlessness and unrighteousness of people who are suppressing truth by their unrighteousness, ¹⁹ because what is known about God is visible by them, because God has made it visible to them. ²⁰ For since the creation of the world his unseen works—his eternal power and divinity—have been understood and are being perceived. So that they are without excuse.

²¹ Because although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God or give him thanks. Rather, they were given over to worthlessness in their reasoning and their foolish hearts were darkened. ²² Claiming to be wise, they became foolish ²³ and exchanged the glory of the imperishable God for a likeness-image of perishable humans or birds or quadrupeds or reptiles. ²⁴ Therefore God gave them over in the desires of their hearts to rottenness, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves. ²⁵ Whoever exchanged the truth of God for a lie and venerated and served the creation instead of the Creator, (who is praised to the ages! Amen!)

On reconciling Gen 1-4 with scientific accounts of life's origin:

"...we must be cautious about too high a level of literalism in reading this material, since it seems to follow some of the conventions of the literature of which it is part...The picture of forming man like a potter using clay may well be one of the literary conventions of the creation story, and thus we should not press its details too far. At the same time—in reference to modern theories of man's origin—we can say that the text does *not* envision man as the natural descendant of another animal. It is less decisive when it comes to where the material part of man came from. It is emphatic, however, about the supernatural character of the process that produced the first man and his wife...Genesis 2 leaves us with a distinct human pair. From Genesis 2-3 we may further infer the following:

- (1) All humans have this pair, Adam and Eve, as their ultimate ancestors
- (2) This pair were made morally upright and enjoyed a blissful relationship with each other, the world, and God.
- (3) A Dark Power used an ordinary animal as a mouthpiece to deceive this pair and lead them into disobedience.
- (4) This couple, specifically the man, was the representative head of all their descendants in their moral relationship to God, and hence they brought upon themselves and their descendents sinfulness and divine judgment, which explains why no one now experiences the blissful relationships mentioned above [JM's alternate suggestion: they unleashed Sin, an active and polluting, infecting power, into the world and their offspring were born into such ruin and accumulate it willingly as they learn and grow.]
- (5) God promised to do something remedial for the humans, and our first parents apparently believed this promise.

God banished this pair from the garden, and thus they began to experience the hardships to which God sentenced them. At the same time, they remained under God's care and retained their humanity: they raised children, they worshipped, and their descendents displayed intelligence, creativity, and resourcefulness (Gen. 4:20-24). Because of their disobedience in the garden, sin multiplied and found new ways to express itself and to soil human life and the creation; but still some held on to their faith (4:25-26). The people of Israel, who descended from Abram, were thus the heirs of Shem (Gen.11:10-27), of Noah (5:32), and of Seth (5:6-28).

[From C.J. Collins, *Genesis.1-4*. 252-255]

“The point is however that if Genesis 1 were to be written as a scientific textbook very few of us would understand it! Moreover, our scientific picture is continually being modified. Our scientific picture would be incomprehensible to a scientist of the sixteenth century. How then would God communicate to all peoples, regardless of whether or not they had a PhD in physics or the age in which they lived? The answer must surely be, in the form of a hymn or a story that could be understood and appreciated by all.”

-M. Wilkinson, *The Message of Creation*, p.278

“I can only hope that when faced with various “scientific experts,” Christians will apply as much skepticism toward those who say things that they want to hear as they do toward those who say things they don’t want to hear. Truth is never served by gullibility or by picking and choosing evidence. The same tests should be applied to young-earth “creation scientists” as ought to be applied to self-proclaimed miracle workers or prophets – does the whole story check out, or are we just given anecdotes? ...New findings are often circulated to churches and pronounced on the radio as major finds before scientists from the other side, or even the same side, have had a chance to critique them. Speakers who have no advanced degrees go on the road claiming to be scientists. Christian theologians must weigh carefully the moral implications of having “differing weights and differing measures” (Prov. 20:10 NIV) in the area of science.”

-D. Snoke, *A Biblical Case for an Old Earth*, p. 43 & 189

“Now, it is a disgraceful and dangerous thing for an infidel to hear a Christian, presumably giving the meaning of Holy Scripture, talking non-sense on these topics; and we should take all means to prevent such an embarrassing situation, in which people show up vast ignorance in a Christian and laugh it to scorn. The shame is...that people outside the household of the faith think our sacred writers held such opinions, and, to the great loss of those for whose salvation we toil, the writers of our Scripture are criticized and rejected as unlearned men. If they find a Christian mistaken in a field which they themselves know well and hear him maintaining his foolish opinions about our books, how are they going to believe those books in matters concerning the resurrection of the dead, the hope of eternal life, and the kingdom of heaven, when they think their pages are full of falsehoods on facts which they themselves have learnt from experience and the light of reason? Reckless and incompetent expounders of holy Scripture bring untold trouble and sorrow on their wiser brethren when they are caught in one of their mischievous false opinions and are taken to task by those who are not bound by the authority of our sacred books. For then, to defend their utterly foolish and obviously untrue statements, they will try to call upon Holy Scripture for proof and even recite from memory many passages which they think support their position, although “they understand neither what they say nor the things about which they make assertion.”

-St. Augustine, *On the Literal Meaning of Genesis*, 39

As J.P. Moreland pointed out, “God is not honored when his people use bad arguments for what may actually be correct conclusions.”

-C.J. Collins, *Science & Faith*, p.316

Resources on the Bible & Science

Web Resources

Young-Earth Creationism

www.answersingenesis.org – Answers in Genesis

www.icr.org – Institute for Creation Research

Old-Earth Creationism

www.reasons.org – Reasons to Believe

Progressive Creationism/Theistic Evolution

www.biologos.org – The BioLogos Foundation

Intelligent Design

www.discovery.org/csc/ - Discovery Institute's Center for Science & Culture

For a list of more organizations visit

www.biologos.org/resources/organizations

Methodist Examiner articles on Science & Faith by JM

<http://www.examiner.com/methodist-in-national/james-michael-smith>

Print Resources

History/Philosophy of Science

The Science of God – Alister McGrath (Eerdmans, 2004)

A Scientific Theology (3 vols.) – Alister McGrath (Eerdmans, 2001)

The Frontiers of Science and Faith – John J. Davis (IVP, 2002)

God & Nature – Lindberg & Numbers, eds. (UCLA Berkley Press, 1986)

The Galileo Connection – Charles Hummel (IVP, 1986)

The Wedge of Truth – Philip Johnson (IVP, 2000)

Creation and Time – Hugh Ross (Navpress, 1994)

A Matter of Days: Resolving a Creation Controversy (Navpress, 2004)

Astronomy/Physics/Geology

The Creator and the Cosmos, 3rd ed – Hugh Ross (Navpress, 2001)
 Beyond the Cosmos – Hugh Ross (Navpress, 1996)
 Quarks, Chaos & Christianity – John Polkinghorne (Triangle, 1994)
 The Science of God – Gerald Schroeder (The Free Press, 1997)
 Christianity & the Age of the Earth – Davis Young (Artisan, 1988)

Biology/Evolution/Intelligent Design

The Language of God – Francis Collins (The Free Press, 2006)
 Signature in the Cell – Stephen Meyer (Harper One, 2009)
 Evolution: A Theory in Crisis – Michael Denton (Burnett, 1985)
 Icons of Evolution – Jonathan Wells (Regnery, 2000)
 Darwin's Black Box – Michael Behe (Touchstone, 1996)
 The Edge of Evolution – Michael Behe (The Free Press, 2007)
 Mere Creation – William Dembski, ed. (IVP, 1998)
 Intelligent Design – William Dembski (IVP, 1999)
 The Design Revolution – William Dembski (IVP, 2004)
 Doubts About Darwin – Thomas Woodward (Baker, 2003)
 Darwin on Trial – Philip Johnson (IVP, 1991)

Apologetics/New Atheism

The Case for a Creator – Lee Strobel (Zondervan, 2004)
 The Dawkins Delusion – Alister McGrath (IVP, 2007)
 There IS a God – Antony Flew (Harper One, 2007)

Biblical Interpretation

The Christian View of Science and Scripture – Bernard Ramm (Eerdmans, 1954)
 The Lost World of Genesis One – John Walton (IVP Academic, 2009)
 A Biblical Case for an Old Earth – David Snoke (Baker, 2006)
 The G3N3SIS Debate – David Hagiopan, ed. (CruXpress, 2001)
 Science & Faith: Friends or Foes? – C. John Collins (Crossway, 2003)
 The Genesis Question – Hugh Ross (Navpress, 1998)

Can We Believe Genesis Today? – Ernest Lucas (IVP, 2001)
 The Message of Creation – Michael Wilkinson (IVP Academic, 2002)
 Inspiration and Incarnation – Peter Enns (Baker Academic, 2005)
 In the Beginning – Henri Blocher (IVP, 1984)
 Hard Sayings of the Bible – Walter Kaiser, et.al. (IVP Academic, 1996)

Genesis Commentaries

Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture: vol.1 – Thomas Oden (ed.)
 Genesis (Tyndale Old Testament Commentary) – Derek Kidner
 Genesis 1-4: A Linguistic, Literary and Theological Commentary – C. John Collins (P&R, 2006)
 Genesis (New Cambridge Bible Commentary) – Bill Arnold
 Genesis 1-11 (New International Commentary on the Old Testament) – Victor Hamilton
 Genesis 1:1-11:26 (New American Commentary) – Kenneth Matthews
 Genesis 1-11 (Word Biblical Commentary) – Gordon Wenham
 Genesis (NIV Application Commentary) – John Walton
 Genesis (Interpretation) – Walter Bruggemann
 Zondervan International Bible Background Commentary on the Old Testament: The Pentateuch – John Walton (ed.)

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