

## CONTENTS

GUIDE TO SOME TERMS USED	5
INTRODUCTION	7
HISTORY	15
THE BIBLE	25
OLD-EARTH THEORIES	43
PROBLEMS	49
SCIENCE	55



# Introduction

In today's world, Christians have to face the fact that there is a conflict, real or apparent, between the biblical account of creation and a theory of origins which is believed by the majority of scientists. It is a theory which is constantly presented to us, in education and in the media, as scientific fact. I refer, of course, to the theory of evolution, with its associated billions of years. On the one hand, the Bible appears to say that God created the world and universe in six days a little over 6000 years ago, and God saw that his new creation was 'very good'. It was only when Adam and Eve disobeyed God that evil (both moral and physical) came into the world. Secular scientists, on the other hand, believe that the universe is billions of years old, and that the history of life on earth is one of millions of years of death, disease, suffering, struggle and violence. In fact, many Christians believe this too.

## Does it matter?

Does it matter? Is it important? Many Christians think it is not. 'It is just a side issue,' they say. 'Let's just get on with the job of evangelism and practical Christianity.' 'There are more important things to spend time on than a divisive debate about creation and evolution.' It is probably true that most Christians in the UK ignore this debate or are unaware of it, or hold some kind of 'old-earth' view. Yet many of them are godly people who live fruitful Christian lives. Clearly our salvation and sanctity do not depend on whether or not we believe that God created the heavens and the earth in six literal days. Nevertheless, when we look at the big picture, it is clear that this debate is actually very important. I intend to show in this book that the theory of evolution with its associated billions of years

- is incompatible with Scripture;
- attacks the foundations of Christian doctrine;
- was originated by deists and atheists whose intention was to exclude God from science;
- is the foundational belief of secular humanism—not to mention Marxism, Nazism and other ideologies;
- has borne much evil fruit in the lives of people and nations;

- is a satanic deception;
- is scientifically incorrect.

I believe that the church in the Western world has made a disastrous mistake in trying to fuse Christianity with the secular view of origins. I believe also that the catastrophic decline of Christianity and the rise of secular humanism in the West have been caused partly by this very mistake. F. Sherwood Taylor, Curator of the Museum of the History of Science, Oxford, said this: '... I myself have little doubt that in England it was geology and the theory of evolution that changed us from a Christian to a pagan nation.'<sup>1</sup>

Some Christians do not take kindly to statements of this nature. They are annoyed and impatient with 'young-earth' creationists, especially when the latter say that 'old-earth' creationists are compromising with a satanic deception. But if the secular view of origins really *is* a satanic deception, it *must* be exposed and rejected. It would not be right to sit back and say that it is simply a matter of my opinion versus your opinion. We are, after all, commanded to 'test all things' (1 Thessalonians 5:21). When young-earth creationists reject evolutionary and old-earth teaching, they are accused of being uncharitable, divisive, simplistic and irrational, and of refusing to face the facts of science. This brings us to the heart of the matter.

The central issue at stake here is not whether the earth and universe were created in six days a few thousand years ago, *it is the authority of God's Word*. Do we believe that the Bible is the infallible, inerrant word of God, and that it is supremely authoritative in everything it says? If so, are we prepared to submit to its authority and believe it, even when it contradicts majority scientific opinion? If the plain meaning of Scripture (discussed later) is at odds with majority scientific opinion, do we question the truth of what the scientists tell us, or do we question the truth of what God has revealed to us? Do we reinterpret the scientific evidence, or do we reinterpret Scripture?

I think it is true to say that, in the Western world, the majority of Christian

leaders have accepted the secular view of origins—the billions of years, if not the theory of evolution—and have reinterpreted Scripture to fit in with this view. In effect, I believe, they have (unintentionally) put the authority of ‘science’ above the authority of Scripture. Instead of beginning with *the infallible, unchanging Word of God who was there* and interpreting the scientific evidence in the light of that Word, they begin with *a fallible, changing opinion of men who were not there* and interpret Scripture in the light of that opinion. (Note that majority scientific opinion is not scientific fact. Many discarded theories were once majority opinion.) Again and again various evangelical leaders have admitted that when Genesis 1 is taken in a straightforward way, it appears to teach that the universe was created in six ordinary days. But then they go on to say that this cannot be its true meaning, because science has proved that the universe is millions or billions of years old.

### Three examples

I will give three examples of this. The first is Charles Hodge (1797–1878), who was a systematic theologian at Princeton Theological Seminary. He wrote many books and articles defending the truths of Christianity, including biblical inerrancy. But he lapsed when he rejected the plain meaning of Genesis because of alleged geological facts. Actually they were not facts at all—they were uniformitarian *interpretations* of facts. (Uniformitarianism is the assumption that the natural processes operating in the past are the same as those that can be observed operating in the present. It discounts, for example, the possibility of the global Flood of Noah.) This is what he wrote: ‘It is of course admitted that, taking this account [Genesis] 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 [millions of years], and another sense avoids such conflict, then it is obligatory on us to adopt that other.’<sup>2</sup>

My second example is the evangelical theologian Gleason L. Archer: ‘From a superficial reading of Genesis 1, the impression would seem to be that the entire creative process took place in six twenty-four-hour days ... this seems to run counter to modern scientific research, which indicates that the planet Earth was created several billion years ago ...’<sup>3</sup>



My third example is this. Not long ago, I had a debate, conducted by e-mail, with a certain evangelical leader. At first he argued that the days of creation could not have been literal days because the sun was created on the fourth day, and he pointed out that in the Bible the word 'day' can have a figurative meaning, etc., etc. He also emphasized that science has proved that the world and universe are billions of years old. However, I sent him an article (now published as a booklet) entitled '15 Reasons to Take Genesis as History'.<sup>4</sup> The article showed that the days of creation are clearly meant to be understood as literal days, and that grammatically, the creation account is consecutive, historical narrative—not poetry or metaphor. After reading it, the leader wrote, "With regard to the "15 Reasons" article I have no problem with his argument regarding the internal witness of Scripture.' He also wrote that he had 'no problem with James Barr'. James Barr was a leading Hebrew scholar and professor at Oxford University, and was quoted as follows in the '15 Reasons' article:

... probably, so far as I know, there is no professor of Hebrew or Old Testament at any world-class university who does not believe that the writer(s) of Gen. 1–11 intended to convey to their readers the ideas that:

- a) creation took place in a series of six days which were the same as the days of 24 hours we now experience;
- b) the figures contained in the Genesis genealogies provide by simple addition a chronology from the beginning of the world up to later stages in the biblical story;
- c) Noah's Flood was understood to be worldwide and extinguish all human and animal life except for those on the ark.<sup>5</sup>

Apparently this evangelical leader accepted James Barr's statement, and he accepted the '15 Reasons' argument concerning what the Bible intends us to understand—although it contradicted what he himself had been saying. But in spite of this, he continued to insist that the world and universe must be billions of years old, because it is 'a proven fact of science'. How did he reconcile these contradictory positions? His solution was to describe the biblical teaching as 'the

internal witness of Scripture'. In other words, he was saying—if I understand him correctly—that the biblical version of creation and the Flood is purely 'internal', and has little or nothing to do with external reality.

He was, in fact, embracing the liberal belief that Scripture is authoritative in the realm of 'spiritual' things, but not in the realm of history and science. He was accepting that the Bible says one thing, and that secular science says something entirely different—and was concluding that, when it comes to the physical reality of creation, we must believe secular science rather than the Bible. As an evangelical, he would probably say that he believes the Bible is inerrant in all areas, including history and science. But as far as creation is concerned, I think it is clear that he is not putting that belief into practice.

### **Different positions**

Many evangelicals in the West think along the following lines: The Bible *appears* to say that God created the universe in six literal days just over 6000 years ago, and that the Flood was global. But science has proved evolution and/or billions of years; therefore the Bible does not mean what it *appears* to say. They remember the Galileo affair. They remember that some Christians refused to believe that the solar system is heliocentric, because they thought (wrongly) that the Bible says it is geocentric. They fear that they would be making the same kind of mistake if they were to reject evolution and/or billions of years. Therefore they have invented various theories which try to harmonize the Bible with evolution and/or billions of years. They search for evidence to prove that the Bible does not really mean what it *appears* to say.

Ironically, non-evangelical Hebrew scholars like James Barr may be better judges of what the author intended us to understand. They are not worried about trying to harmonize the creation account with science, because they do not believe in the inerrancy of Scripture. They are free to concentrate solely on *what the text actually says*. As Hebrew scholars, they have no doubt whatsoever that the author intended us to understand that God created the universe in six literal days a few thousand years ago, and that Noah's Flood was worldwide. Young-earth creationists agree that this is what the text says, and is what the author intended

us to understand. The difference is that *we believe it!*

### **A change of position**

I understand the thought processes of 'old-earth creationists' because I myself was one of them until quite recently! I was convinced that science has proved that the universe is billions of years old. In various ways I tried to reconcile the secular timescale of origins with the biblical account of creation. I tried 'progressive creation' (repeated episodes of creative activity over millions of years), the 'literary framework' theory (in which the whole account is symbolical) and finally a theory of my own invention! In the end I realized I was twisting and turning, trying to get round the clear, unambiguous teaching of Scripture. Also, my eyes were opened to the fact that the scientific *evidence* (as opposed to the secular interpretation of that evidence) actually favours the biblical account. I have come to believe that I was compromising. At the time, however, I sincerely believed that I was *not* compromising.

I have the highest regard for evangelical scholars; but I believe that many of them (and many other Christians) have gone down the wrong path by trying to harmonize the biblical account of creation with the secular view of origins. Incidentally, those of us who believe that Genesis 1–11 is meant to be understood as straightforward history prefer to call ourselves 'biblical creationists', not 'young-earth creationists'.



# History

In the rest of this book, I will discuss the question of how God created the heavens and the earth under five headings—History, The Bible, Old-earth theories, Problems and Science. In this section I will take a brief look at how the Christian church has dealt with this question. I will look also at the origins of the modern theory of evolution, with its timescale of billions of years, and at some of the consequences. We could call them the *roots* and *fruits* of these beliefs.

## Past interpretations

How has Genesis 1–11 been interpreted by Christians in the past? Jonathan Sarfati deals with this question in depth in Chapter 3 of his book *Refuting Compromise*.<sup>1</sup> His treatment includes lengthy quotations from the Church Fathers, the Reformers, the Westminster Confession of Faith (1646), John Wesley and others. Nearly all those who were specific about the days of creation accepted that God created the world and universe in six literal days. Among the Early Church Fathers, the only exceptions found were Clement of Alexandria (c. 150–215), Origen (185–253) and Augustine (354–430).<sup>2</sup> But all three were from the Alexandrian school, and so tended to allegorize various passages of Scripture. Their allegorization did not arise from within the text, but from outside, Greek influences. In any case, they said that God created everything in an instant, not over long periods of time. Furthermore, they argued explicitly for the biblical timeframe of a few thousand years, as well as the global Flood of Noah. (Augustine, incidentally, had no knowledge of Hebrew.) The following quotation concerns the Church Fathers of the Eastern Orthodox (EO) church:

The late Seraphim Rose, an EO priest, meticulously documented the views of the church fathers of the EO church, showing that they viewed Genesis the way modern creationists do.<sup>3</sup> ... Rose showed how the EO church fathers were unanimous in their view of the historicity of creation week, the Fall and the global Flood. They also believed that God's creative acts were *instantaneous*. They saw the world before the Fall as fundamentally and profoundly different to that which pertained after the Fall.<sup>4</sup>

Likewise, the Reformers (such as Luther and Calvin) and Orthodox Jews appear to have been unanimous in holding to literal creation days.<sup>5</sup> The Jewish philosopher Philo of Alexandria (c. 20 BC – AD 50) favoured a figurative interpretation; but he was a Hellenized Jew, and he used allegory to fuse and harmonize Greek philosophy and Judaism. Henri Blocher, an exponent of the non-literal ‘literary framework’ interpretation, named just one person in the Middle Ages who advocated a non-literal interpretation, Gersonides (1288–1344), and one who *may* have done so, Thomas Aquinas (1224–1274).<sup>6</sup>

It was only after secular scientists began developing their ideas of vast ages and evolution in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries that Christians began to interpret Genesis 1–11 in terms of those ideas. Before then, long ages were not even thought of by conservative exegetes. This is strong evidence that those ideas *do not come from within* the Bible. They are alien ideas imported *into* the Bible.

It may be objected that similar things can be said of heliocentrism (the belief that the earth and other planets revolve around the sun). However, the geocentrism/heliocentrism debate is fundamentally different from both the young-earth/old-earth and the creation/evolution debates. Christians believed in a six-day special creation because they perceived that this is what the Bible teaches. But the primary reason for belief in geocentrism was not the teaching of the Bible. It was the fact that the sun and planets *appear* to revolve around the earth, and that the prevailing ‘scientific’ view at that time (established by a second-century Alexandrian Greek, Claudius Ptolemy) was geocentric. It can be shown quite easily that the Bible does not specify whether the solar system is geocentric or heliocentric, whereas it *does* specify the timescale of creation.

### **Responses to long-age and evolution theories**

How did Christians respond to the challenge of long-age theories of geology, and then the theory of evolution? An early response was that of the ‘scriptural geologists’. These people were forgotten for many years, but have been rediscovered recently by T. Mortenson.<sup>7</sup> One example is George Young (1777–1848), who was an ordained minister, but also an extremely competent geologist. They defended the historicity of Genesis 1–11, and argued that ‘Flood

geology' explains the observations of geology much better than the secular ideas of slow, gradual change. According to Flood geology, the whole surface of the planet was reshaped rapidly and catastrophically by the global Flood of Noah's day. Together with volcanic and tectonic activity on a huge scale, vastly exceeding anything that occurs now, it was responsible for most present-day geological features. Most fossils are the remains of organisms buried during and after the Flood. It is a popular misconception that 'Flood geology' was first thought of by young-earth creationists in the twentieth century; the truth is very different. Many early Christians, including Tertullian (c. 155–230) and Augustine (354–430) believed that fossils are the remains of organisms buried in Noah's Flood. Later examples are Niels Steensen (1638–1686, also known as Nicolas Steno, the pioneer of modern geology) and John Woodward (1665–1722).<sup>8</sup>

There has always been a remnant who continued to believe that the Bible means what it says in Genesis 1–11. However, the majority of Christian leaders sought to harmonize the Bible with long-age theories of geology, and then later with the theory of evolution. William Buckland (1784–1856) is a prominent early example. He was an Anglican clergyman, and was the leading geologist in England in the 1820s. Various ways of adding millions of years to the Bible were invented. By adopting this approach, conservative Christians were trying to preserve Scripture; but in effect, I believe, they were trusting man's word rather than God's Word, and were placing science in authority over Scripture. Two main views came to be held: *concordism* and *discordism*. Concordism tries to preserve Genesis as history and reinterprets certain passages. It accepts the secular timeframe, and sometimes the theory of evolution also. Discordism regards Genesis as non-historical, and tends towards full-blown theistic evolution.

The most widespread concordist views are the 'gap theory' and the 'day-age theory'. The gap theory proposes that the fossils and rock layers are the remains of a *previous* creation which was destroyed by a great flood. These events are inserted into a supposed 'gap' between the first two verses of the Bible. The rest of the chapter is said to describe a *reconstruction* of the world in six days. The day-age theory proposes that the 'days' of creation were really long periods of time, each one lasting millions or billions of years.



Ever since long-age geology and the theory of evolution became established in the nineteenth century, Christians have been divided over how to respond to the secular view of origins. Among evangelicals there are two main positions. One is to accept the secular view in whole or in part, and to reinterpret the Bible to harmonize it with that view. The other is to reject the secular view, believing it to be incompatible with the Bible and contrary to the evidence. Are both these positions equally valid, or is one right and the other wrong? And does it really matter? This booklet examines some of the biblical, scientific and historical issues, and helps the reader to understand the debate and to make an informed choice.

**'Dr Robert Gurney provides a succinct and important argument in favour of a literal reading of Genesis 1-11. This booklet includes scientific and theological discussions, but majors on how the biblical account of creation should be interpreted.'**

—Andrew M. Sibley BSc (Hon), MSc EDM (Open), FRMetS. Council member of the Creation Science Movement and author of *Restoring the Ethics of Creation*

**'The author has provided a valuable introduction to the matters of greatest importance in this crucial debate, upon which, I believe, hinges the very survival of a Christian witness in many once-Christian nations. Heartily recommended!'**

—Don Batten B.Sc.Agr.(Hons 1), Ph.D., senior writer, researcher and lecturer, Creation Ministries International (Australia), Brisbane, Australia



Robert Gurney was born in Burma of missionary parents. After qualifying in medicine at Bristol University, he worked in a hospital in Nazareth, Israel, as a medical missionary in Tanzania and Kenya, and as a general practitioner in Devon before his retirement. He is the author of a book and a number of articles in theological journals on the

subject of Daniel's prophecies. He has been interested in creation and evolution since his schooldays, and this booklet has been written after many years of searching for the truth concerning this issue.

#### **Day One Publications**

Ryelands Road Leominster HR6 8NZ

email—[sales@dayone.co.uk](mailto:sales@dayone.co.uk)

[www.dayone.co.uk](http://www.dayone.co.uk)

In the UK call us on ☎ 01568 613 740

FAX 01568 611 473

In North America: ☎ toll-free 888 329 6630

UK £4

ISBN 978-1-84625-097-2



9 781846 250972 >

**DayOne**