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Theistic Evolution an
Inharmonious Compromise:
A Charge for a Return to the
Literal Interpretation of the
Six Creation Days in Genesis

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by

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Just before Christmas, a man on national public radio gave a nostalgic address about Christian and Jewish traditions during the holiday season in America. It was a warm recollection ambling among common experiences and observations. While he dipped in and out of Biblical allusions, a brief side-comment caught my ear. Referring to the Biblical account of the six days of creation, he made a casual aside that “many of us believe it took much longer”, and then went on with his message with no explanation or apology. God’s account of the origins of the world in six days was shrugged off as generally understood to be improbable.

Many self-proclaimed Christians similarly dismiss the Biblical six day account of the origins of the earth as the same kind of week that we know today, content to conclude that God must have used what we “know” about evolution today. But how does someone who expresses a belief in God and the Bible’s authority readily deny what the Bible plainly says about creation?

Genesis 1:1-2:2 speaks of six days for the creation period. Each section details a part of creation and is qualified as one of six successive days; they even consist of morning and evening. At the end of the six days, God is said to have rested from his creation work on the seventh day, as “... the heavens and the earth were completed in all their vast array” within the previous six evenings and mornings. The Bible is simple and clear; however, this literal reading of the Genesis account of creation contradicts the widely-held and emotionally-charged belief of the modern theory of evolution, in which the origin of the world occurred over millions, if not billions, of years. The theory has so pervaded Christian thought that it is not uncommon to meet a Christian who does not take the Genesis account literally. And, yet, a nominal Christian upbringing will not permit most to completely discard Scripture in good conscience, so it is reinterpreted to accommodate “science”. This need to harmonize Scripture and evolution is perplexing, as atheists have no problem rejecting the Bible as in direct conflict with an evolutionistic view of the origins of the world. The editors of the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* once put it this way: “Creationism paints a veneer of pseudo-science on a religious belief system. No reputable scientific group accepts it as a plausible alternative to evolution, period.”¹ But many who have some church upbringing nonetheless attempt to marry the two. A fellow church member once recited to me what I have heard from many others: “Even if evolution is true, I believe God used it to make everything.” No critical thinking occurs about how the claims of evolution are incompatible with creation when expressing acceptance that both could be true.

This laissez-faire view of Scripture without analyzing the facts reflects the wide-spread toleration of a nonliteral view of the six creation days by many modern theologians, both liberal and conservative. Regardless of the theory’s absurdities, modern science’s religious adherence to evolution has so converted scholars and popular culture that even theologians have altered their Scriptural interpretation to

¹ Editorial, “Theology and a theory: Creationism is about religion, not science,” *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, 30 November 2000 Thursday, November 30, 2000 (www.post-gazette.com).

accommodate its influence, resulting in *theistic evolution*, or *progressive creationism*.² J.G. Vos, while not wanting to appear too dogmatic himself,³ admonishes those who practice such compromising:

Theistic evolution is essentially a compromise view. It did not originate with the scientists, most of whom have little use of it. Classic evolutionary science came first, then afterwards came the attempt to adjust Christian belief to the evolutionary scheme of things. Religious scholars who have been impressed, not to say frightened, by the confident assertions of scientists about evolution being not a theory but “proved fact” have reacted to their embarrassment by the attempt to adjust their interpretation of Scripture to the evolutionary scheme ... Christianity can be adjusted to such a scheme only with serious sacrifice and loss. The common disjunction between the *who and why?* and the *when and how?* of origins, as set forth by theistic evolutionists, is false and illusory.⁴

This theistic evolution is a modern phenomenon whereby those seeking to harmonize a religious belief with modern scientific theory take another look at how to interpret the six days in Genesis, particularly how the Hebrew word for *day* is interpreted. Somewhere, long periods of time must be allowed for in the Genesis account if evolution and the Bible are to be compatible. H. C. Hoeksema identifies this dilemma as “the most crucial problem ... evolution requires time ... large quantities of time ... even billions of years ... hence, when ... theistic evolutionism ... comes face to face with the Scriptural record of Genesis 1, ... [it] interpret[s] Genesis 1 in such a way as to fit [its] theory.”⁵

But should the original meaning of Scripture be reinterpreted to meet modern scientific *theories*? While some theistic evolutionists would argue otherwise, one will be hard pressed to find earlier interpretations of the Genesis creation days in a manner that allows for modern day evolution. When not predisposed to modern scientific presumptions and societal pressures, interpreting Scripture within its own context renders only a literal meaning, as a survey of Biblical exegesis throughout the church’s history not yet “enlightened” by modern science demonstrates.

INTERPRETATIONS BEFORE MODERN SCIENCE AND EVOLUTION

It would be convenient to point to early church fathers to defend a nonliteral interpretation as within orthodoxy; however, no such interpretations have been found. Joseph A. Pipa Jr. contends that “In spite of the claims of some to the contrary, in 2000 years of exegetical history, no one argued that the text taught long periods before the claims of geologists and biologists in the middle of the nineteenth century.”⁶ Morton H. Smith concurs: “My friends who hold the expansive view deny that they are following early [nineteenth] century science, *but they fail to produce many examples of pre-[nineteenth] century exegesis* advocating their view. That odd historical fact is as deserving of explanation as it is haunting for their

² Homer C. Hoeksema, “*In the Beginning God...*” (Grand Rapids: Reformed Free, 1966) , 33-34.

³ J.G. Vos, *Scriptural Revelation and the Evolutionary Worldview* (Beaver Falls, P.A.: Blue Banner Faith and Life, 1970) , 19.

⁴ *Ibid.* , 9.

⁵ Hoeksema, 37-38.

⁶ Joseph A. Pipa Jr., “From Chaos to Cosmos: A Critique of the Non-Literal Interpretations of Genesis 1:1-2:3,” in *Did God Create in Six Days?*, ed. Joseph A. Pipa Jr. (Taylor, S.C.: Southern Presbyterian Press, 1999) , 192.

case.”⁷ A long history of textual exegesis in the church understood Genesis 1 literally. There was simply no Scriptural basis or contemporary eisegetical pressure to do otherwise. Thus, Pipa rightly asks, “Did the church make such a gross error in almost 2000 years of interpretation?”⁸

In his historical survey of interpretations of the six days, Jack Lewis lists none of the early church fathers rendering the days as nonliteral in a sense that would support evolution. Even the anomaly of totaling the six days as six thousand years by Barnabas in the second century A.D., referring to Psalm 90:4 and 2 Peter 3:8, would not suffice for evolution’s billions of years.⁹ Some early fathers, such as Origen (A.D. 185-251), Athanasius (A.D. 300-373), and Augustine (A.D. 354-430) viewed God’s creation work as instantaneous -- this understanding was the only major variation from orthodoxy discussed well into the twelfth century.¹⁰ A literal interpretation of the six days was defended by the school of Antioch¹¹, as well as by Basil (A.D. 329-379), Chrysostom (A.D. 347-407)¹², Thomas Aquinas (A.D. 1225-1274)¹³, Luther (A.D. 1483-1546), and Calvin (A.D. 1509-1564)¹⁴. In their statement on creation, the faculty of Greenville Presbyterian Theological Seminary assert that puritan theologians before the Westminster Assembly taught a literal interpretation; that it is determinably inferred that members of the Westminster Assembly held to a twenty-four-hour view; that only by the mid-nineteenth century had “certain leading Presbyterians (C. Hodge, A. A. Hodge, and later, Shedd and Warfield) [begun] to conform their exegesis to the ascendant science of the day”; and that “the long history of rabbinical commentary, the very dating of the time by the Hebrew calendar, and orthodox Jewish thought so understands these texts to embrace only days of ordinary length.”¹⁵

The historical interpretation of the creation days is a literal, twenty-four-hour meaning; only when the theory of evolution came on the scene do we see serious, conservative theologians departing from a literal view of the Genesis account. Pressures from adherents to this theory who often declare it as fact effected a complete divergence from the proper reading of the Biblical account for the origin of the world. Lewis concurs: “With the rise of the natural sciences, people began to yield to the millions of years that some conjectured.”¹⁶ In his essay, “The History of the Creation Doctrine in the American Presbyterian Churches,” Morton H. Smith, also identifies the change in interpretation as a new phenomenon: “By the end of the [nineteenth] century even the orthodox leaders of the Presbyterian Church in the USA accepted the

⁷ Morton H. Smith, “The Theological Significance of the Doctrine of Creation,” *Ibid.* , 303.

⁸ Pipa, 192.

⁹ Jack Lewis, “The Days of Creation: An Historical Survey of Interpretation,” *Journal of Evangelical Theological Society* 32, no. 4 (1989) : 435-436.

¹⁰ *Ibid.* , 439, 449.

¹¹ *Ibid.* , 444.

¹² *Ibid.* , 447.

¹³ *Ibid.* , 451-452.

¹⁴ *Ibid.* , 452.

¹⁵ Greenville Presbyterian Theological Seminary faculty, “Statement on Creation,” Greenville Presbyterian Theological Seminary web site; available from <http://www.gpts.org/creation.htm>.; Internet; accessed 21 December 2000.

so[-]called findings of science, with the result that many abandoned the idea of six twenty-four hour days of creation.”¹⁷ He also notes that no debate over the six creation days being literal was recorded in the minutes of the Presbyterian church prior to Darwin’s *Origin of Species*.¹⁸ The pervasive gospel of evolution spread like a plague in the late 1800s, striking even conservative theologians. As a result, theistic evolution and its nonliteral interpretations of the six days in Genesis 1, particularly for the meaning of the word *day*, became widely accepted.

NONLITERAL VIEWS AND THEIR FAULTS

While there are various nonliteral interpretations of the Genesis *days*, the predominant ones are the *gap theory*, the *framework theory*, and the most widely held *day-age theory*. Each makes Scripture bow before modern science and say what is needed to acquiesce to the theory of evolution’s billions of years.

The Gap Theory

One version of the gap theory puts long periods of indefinite time between each *day* in Genesis, perhaps millions of years. But nothing in the text describes an intermediate time between the days; on the contrary, “evening” and “morning” qualify successive events.

The more common gap theory view says that Genesis 1:1 records an original creation of the universe followed by an interval of exceedingly long duration before the six days in Genesis 1:3-2:2 occur.¹⁹ Thus, “in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth,” joined with the earth being formless and empty, is a prelude to the six creation days, rather than an introductory summary. Lewis describes a slightly different version: “The gap theory postulates that Genesis 1:1 describes an original creation, to which the fossils belong, carried out at an undateable time. This creation then was destroyed in some catastrophe, and Genesis 1:2-2:4 describes the re-creation in six literal days.” The gap theory does not question the six days as literal; it simply adds the millions of years needed to support evolution either in between the days, or an extra element before the creation. However, if the gap theory hopes to find a place for much of the formation of the world before the six days for the evolution of things, it is important to note that verse two does not describe any activity other than the hovering of the Spirit of God; no acts of creation occur. Accounts of God’s creation works, including separating the waters, forming dry land, and creating the sky -- things that evolutionists say require enormous amounts of time -- are recorded in the first three days. Jesus, the Creator Himself, while addressing the issue of divorce in Mark 10:6, alludes to the fact that all of the creation activity did not follow a long period of time: “But at the *beginning* of creation God ‘made them male and

¹⁶ Lewis, 453.

¹⁷ Morton H. Smith, “The History of the Creation Doctrine in the American Presbyterian Churches,” in *Did God Create in Six Days?*, ed. Pipa, 1.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 2.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 5.

female’.” The sixth day of creation was during the very beginning of the origin of all things, not some time later in the distant future.²⁰

The Framework Theory

According to Mark Ross, the *framework theory* “claims that the Bible’s use of the seven-day week in its narration of the creation is a literary (theological) framework and is not intended to indicate the chronology or duration of the acts of creation ... on exegetical grounds, ... the organizing principle of the creation account is topical rather than chronological.”²¹ The framework theory points to the literary structure of the six days, and the organization of categories to claim that the Genesis account is a recapitulation of all of God’s creation works. It is God *revealing* in the span of six days what He *created* in the scope of a long, indefinite amount of time; He simply took six days to recap the story of what He did some time before. P. J. Wiseman finds this theory to be a glorious answer to resolve the “serious conflict between the interpretations made by Christians of *God’s words*, and by scientists of *His works*.”²²

Clearly, there is a structure in the creation account, but nothing suggests that each day is the time God spent to tell the story about it. E.J. Young comments, “Sometimes a schematic arrangement may serve the purpose of emphasis. Whether the language is figurative or symbolic, however, must be determined upon exegetical grounds ... If Moses had intended to teach a non-chronological view of the days, it is indeed strange that he went out of his way, as it were, to emphasize chronology and sequence.”²³ The *evening* and *morning* indicate that each day encompasses what actually happened at that moment: God’s creative acts. If each day was simply the time during which God told His creation story, then Moses would rather have written something like: “On the first day, God told me about how He created the light,” or “And there was evening, and there was morning -- the first day God spent telling me about how He created the light ... ” If this were the case, Moses might have better explained it as such. But the text says something very different: “In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth”, qualifying all that follows in the passage as part of that actual week of creative activity, not a story telling time with Moses. Lewis concludes: “Not based on any linguistic evidence, this method of interpretation demands a prior commitment to a parabolic view of Biblical revelation. The text itself does not suggest such a view, but one is brought to it by harmonizing interests.”²⁴

The Day-Age Theory

²⁰ Sid Dyer, “The New Testament Doctrine of Creation,” in *Did God Create in Six Days?*, ed. Pipa, 222; Henry M. Morris, *Introduction to Biblical Creationism: How? When? Why?* (El Cajon, Calif.: Institute for Creation Research, 1993) , videocassette.

²¹ Mark Ross, “The Framework Hypothesis: An Interpretation of Genesis 1:1-2:3,” in *Did God Create in Six Days?*, ed. Pipa, 113-114.

²² P. J. Wiseman, *Creation Revealed in Six Days: The Evidence of Scripture Confirmed by Archaeology* (London: Marshall, Morgan & Scott, Ltd., 1948) , 44.

²³ Edward J. Young, *Studies in Genesis One* (Philadelphia: P&R Publishing, 1964) , 65, 100.

²⁴ Lewis, 455.

The most prominent nonliteral view today of the six creation days in Genesis is the *day-age theory*, which holds that each day of Genesis is an era of indefinite length.²⁵ According to Lewis, this theory “attempts to supply both the time and the sequence of development needed to harmonize Scripture with the claims of geology.”²⁶

A common argument for this geological age interpretation of the *days* is that the Hebrew word for day, *yom*, can have several different meanings. According to Richard Niessen, *yom* can mean the daylight period of the evening-morning cycle; a normal twenty-four-hour period; or an indefinite time period, such as used in Psalm 90:10.²⁷ He cites the latter as the meaning day-age proponents give to the Genesis days, referring to 2 Peter 3:8 as their main example: “One day is with the Lord as a thousand years and a thousand years as one day.” But, even if the days were one thousand year periods, that would not be enough time for evolution:

Consistency would logically dictate that each of the six periods be the same length, resulting in a 6000-year period of creation from nothing to Adam. But 6000 years is only a drop in the bucket compared to the time required to make the evolutionary system work. A lack of a vast time period is the death knell of the evolutionary process. So, let us try [one] day equals 10,000 years. No, 60,000 years is not enough time either. How about [one] day equals 100,000 years? 1 million years? 10 million years? 100 million years? 1 billion years? Ah, yes, that does it for the required time! But what does it do to language as a tool to communicate meaningful information? If words have this kind of infinite flexibility, the art of communication is in deed a lost cause.²⁸

The above illustrates the imposition of an inaccurate meaning on the text. Homer C. Hoeksema, the late Old Testament professor, challenges us to substitute the word *day* in any part of the creation account with *one hundred million years* to witness its absurdity. This is how it reads in Genesis 1:31-2:3:

God saw all that he had made, and it was very good. And there was evening, and there was morning -- the sixth *one hundred million years*. Thus the heavens and the earth were completed in all their vast array. By the seventh *one hundred million years* God had finished the work he had been doing; so on the seventh *one hundred million years* he rested from all his work. And God blessed the seventh *one hundred million years* and made it holy, because on it he rested from all the work of creating that he had done.²⁹

The intent of God’s revelation is clearly abandoned for something quite ridiculous. Can the sixth set of one hundred million years be contained in just one evening and morning? Hardly, by any kind of day we know. If any one of the last three days were periods of such length, how could life forms have survived through to the next day? Niessen addresses this problem:

Plants could have survived for 48 or 72 hours without the birds and the bees, but could they have survived [two to three] billion years without each other according to the day-age scenario? ... If each

²⁵ Smith, *The History of the Creation Doctrine*, 5.

²⁶ Lewis, 454.

²⁷ Richard Niessen, “Theistic Evolution and the Day-Age Theory,” *Vital Articles on Science/Creation*, March 1980 [journal on-line] ; available from <http://www.icr.org>; Internet.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ My own inserts into the *New International Version* translation of Genesis 1:31-2:3.

day were indeed a billion years, as theistic evolutionists require, then half of that **day** (500 million years) would have been dark. We are explicitly told in verse 5 that the light was called **day** and the darkness was called **night**, and that each day had one period of **light-darkness**. How then would the plants, insects, and animals have survived through each 500 million year stretch of darkness? Clearly, a 24-hour day is called for.³⁰

Hoeksema agrees: “Very obviously, this ‘interpretation’ is absurd! It is sheer nonsense! It cannot legitimately be called an interpretation.” He also clarifies that in 2 Peter 3:8, the word *as* is used: a thousand years is *as* one day to the Lord -- not *is* one day. This verse does not qualify a creation day at all; instead, it teaches that God is beyond time, He rules over it, and He is not contained by it; we cannot gather from it that the days in Genesis describe long geological periods. The verse is a metaphor that describes God’s grandeur.³¹

One of the strongest texts to test the day-age theory is Exodus 20:8-10. God’s creation week and seventh day rest is given as a model for us to obediently follow. But how could we rest for *one hundred million years*? The word *yom* has the same meaning here in Exodus 20, very obviously a twenty-four-hour day. As Moses directly correlates the commandment in Exodus to honor the Sabbath with the Genesis creation week, which he also penned, it is clear that God’s Sabbath rest was also a twenty-four-hour period; otherwise, we would be unable to imitate it. Moses certainly would not have two different meanings for the word *day* in such similar contexts. And, if God’s Sabbath rest was an ordinary day, then, the six days preceding it must also be twenty-four-hours each. E.J. Young notes that “The whole structure of the week [as we know it] is rooted and grounded in the fact that God worked for six consecutive days and rested a seventh ... The human week derives validity and significance from the creative week. Indeed, the very Hebrew word for week ... means ‘that which is divided into seven’, ‘a besevened thing’.”³²

Some argue that God’s Sabbath rest had no *evening* or *morning* listed to denote an end; however, Robert Reymond identifies a definite conclusion:

... because the divine activity on the Sabbath day differed in character from that on the first six days (rest over against work), a different concluding formula was appended to indicate not only the end of the seventh day but also the end of the creation week: “and by the seventh day God ended his work which he made; and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he made” (author’s translation). These words suggest an end of the seventh day as surely as do the words “and the evening and the morning were the first day”.³³

Another argument of the day-age school is that there is no sun or moon until the fourth creation day, so there could not have been twenty-four-hour periods in the first three days. Ross holds this view: “ ... as there is no sun at this point in time (nor moon, nor stars), in days one through three, we have as non-

³⁰ Niessen.

³¹ Hoeksema, 47.

³² Young, 78.

³³ Robert L. Reymond, *A New Systematic Theology of the Christian Faith* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1998) , 393 [footnote no. 4].

standard, a somewhat *metaphorical* or extended use of the terms involved, since they are being used without some of their normal implications.” His point being, the luminaries were created to separate day from night and divide and mark time; so time must not have been marked in ordinary days, and the word *yom* must take a figurative meaning.³⁴ But Pipa asks: “Does it really follow that the time indicators are used metaphorically, because there is no sunlight? In Exodus 10:20, we are told that there was darkness in the land of Egypt for three days. We do not take this time indicator metaphorically, even though there is no sunlight to govern these days.”³⁵ He quotes H. C. Leupold on this point: “If scientists now often regard light as merely enveloping the sun but not an intrinsic part of it, why could it not have existed by itself without being localized in any heavenly body?”³⁶ The answer: it did, as God so records it.

The most compelling argument against the day-age theory is that Moses could have used the Hebrew word *olam*, which denotes a long period, or age, of indeterminate length. The Hebrew word *yom*, however, was used to chronicle ordinary, twenty-four-hour time periods.³⁷ Once God began time in creation, establishing successive days and periods, they continued as they are. The fourth day identifies the use of the sun and moon and stars to “serve as signs to mark seasons and days and years,” which indicates that the creation day time period was ordained as a precursor to the days that would record human events throughout history. With a declaration of their function and position, God defines the creation days as the same, twenty-four-hour days of today. Thus, theistic evolutionists have imposed a meaning on the days of Genesis that clearly was not and is not communicated by God. Since the creation days have been tampered with, it is important to conduct further, in-depth exegesis of the word *day* in the Genesis account.

THE LITERAL INTERPRETATION OF THE CREATION DAYS IN GENESIS

Objective exegesis of Scripture renders only a literal interpretation of the seven days.

What the Experts Say

In his evaluation of the word *day* in the Genesis creation story, Reymond concludes: “I can discern no reason, either from Scripture or from the human sciences, for departing from the view that the days of Genesis were ordinary twenty-four-hour days.” Besides other arguments already cited by Reymond, his reasons are: the word for day, *yom*, in the singular, dual and plural is used more than two thousand times in the Old Testament with the vast majority designated as ordinary days; the recurring phrase “evening and morning,” occur outside of Genesis in thirty-seven verses (e.g., Ex. 18:13; 27:21), and each time the words communicate ordinary days; in hundreds of other instances where *yom* is used in the Old Testament in conjunction with an ordinary number, e.g., “the first, second or third day,” such as in Ex. 12:15 or Lev. 12:3, its meaning is always a normal, literal day; the creation of the sun and moon on the fourth day would have to

³⁴ Ross, 120-121.

³⁵ Pipa, 167.

³⁶ H.C. Leupold, *Exposition of Genesis*, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1970) , 52; quoted in Pipa, 174-175.

³⁷ Niessen; Reymond, 394.

qualify at least the last three active creation days as ordinary; each of the 608 Old Testament uses of *yamin*, the plural word for *yom*, always describe literal days, never long, indefinite ages.³⁸

On the word *yom*, *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* states:

In the creation account of Gen. 1 appears the repeated phrase “and there was evening and there was morning ... day” (vv.5,8,13,19,23,31). This formula indicates (1) that “evening and morning” should be understood alike in all six days, (2) that the day begins with evening, (3) that each day is a real twenty-four-hour day, and (4) that thus the daily rhythm of time has its beginning. The creation day is understood as a normal twenty-four-hour day in Ex. 20:8-11 ... The Hebrew compound “evening-morning” ... in Dnl. 8:14 is a circumlocution for “day.” It is the equivalent of the expression “there was evening and there was morning” -- and emphasizes again that evening or sunset is the beginning of the twenty-four hour calendar day in the OT and NT ... ” (877)

Pipa asserts, “the six [twenty-four-hour] day view of Genesis 1 is indicated by the form of the chapter; by the content of the chapter; by the focus of the chapter; and by the wider Biblical context.”³⁹ On the interpretation of Genesis 1:3, “let there be light ... the first day”, he notes that the verse begins with the *vav* consecutive, a common word in the Hebrew grammar that is “used primarily to indicate temporal sequence of events”.⁴⁰ Jack B. Scott, Ph.D. in Hebrew and Semitic Languages, states: “The Hebrew Bible in no way justifies any other interpretation than the literal [twenty-four-hour] day. Don’t believe anyone who says that it does.”⁴¹ Hoeksema concurs: “... there is but one possible sense in which the creation record must be understood, and that one sense is the literal sense.”⁴² The nonliteral camp might argue that these conservative theologians are biased against anything that challenges an orthodox reading of Scripture. Victor P. Hamilton, confirming *yom* as a normal day in *The New International Commentary on the Old Testament*, notes, however, that an objective interpretation of Genesis 1 by even an adamant evolutionistic atheist renders the original meaning of Moses as a literal twenty-four-hour day:

... James Barr [a non-theistic evolutionist] agrees with the most ardent creationist that the days of Gen. 1 are meant as literal twenty-four-hour days. For Barr the crucial hermeneutical decision is not what the modern interpreter believes about “day,” but what whoever wrote Gen. 1 believed about “day.” And whoever wrote Gen 1 believed he was talking about literal days.⁴³

How Should We Interpret Scripture?

E.J. Young cautions us:

In the study of Genesis one our chief concern must not be to adopt an interpretation that is necessarily satisfying to the “scientifically penetrating mind”. Nor is our principal purpose to endeavor to make

³⁸ Reymond, 392-394.

³⁹ Pipa, 200.

⁴⁰ Ibid. , 204.

⁴¹ Jack B. Scott, “The Handwriting on the Wall: A Reply to Bryan Chapell’s ‘President’s Goals and Report’,” in “The History of the Creation Doctrine,” Smith, in *Did God Create in Six Days?*, ed. Pipa, 38.

⁴² Hoeksema, 29.

⁴³ Victor P. Hamilton, “The Books of Genesis: Chapters 1-17,” in *The New International Commentary on the Old Testament*, ed. R.K. Harrison (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990) , 53.

the chapter harmonize with what “science” teaches. Our principal task, in so far as we are able, is to get at the meaning which the writer sought to convey.⁴⁴

And when we take Scripture for what it actually intends to say, rather than what we might want it to say to match up with a naturalistic way of looking at the world, we have to conclude that the *days* in Genesis 1 are communicated as literal, twenty-four-hour periods. There is a standard rule for interpreting Scripture objectively, the grammatico-historical interpretation. This rule dictates that the grammatical meaning of the language being used, in its original understanding of the words, along with the historical context of the writer and how he would understand what he was communicating within his culture and time, must govern how we interpret what was intended in the text. Pipa reminds us that “the larger literary structure (the book[s] of the Bible) should shape our approach to discrete parts ... Even if a portion of chapter two were topical and chapters 1-3 use some figurative expressions, the book of Genesis is sequential, narrative history, therefore our analysis of the genre of chapter 1 ought to begin with the genre of the entire book.”⁴⁵ Reymond presents the *analogia Scripturae*, a principle of hermeneutics in the Westminster Confession of Faith, to govern exegesis: “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.”⁴⁶

Genesis 1 must be read in the context of all Scripture, and such an objective interpretation concludes that the creation days are literal, ordinary days as we know them, as Moses knew them, and as Adam knew them. When we impose other understandings into the writer’s mind to satisfy modern world views, we confuse, and even mislead, the meaning and purpose of God’s revelation to man about creation. We must not go to Scripture to prove our own agenda, or accommodate the prevailing paganism of the day -- that being secular humanism and empiricism. We must humbly seek God’s unchanging purpose in revealing things to us about Himself, His ways, and His acts.

THE PROBLEM WITH THEISTIC EVOLUTION

While popular today, theistic evolution is haphazard exegesis. God did not use evolution to create. Vos rightly condemns such thinking:

When we begin to speak of God’s “method” or “how” in His work of creation, we have already assumed that it was not really a work of creation at all. When we say “method” or “how” we say *process*. By any sound definition of creation it is not a process but an *act* and does not involve the use of methods or means ... creation is an act of God’s supernatural power. It is an act of omnipotence. It is an event with no cause except the will of God.⁴⁷

⁴⁴ Young, 101.

⁴⁵ Pipa, 182.

⁴⁶ Reymond, 394.

⁴⁷ Vos, 10.

Gregory Koukl of Stand to Reason points out this logical breach of the law of contradiction in theistic evolution: “Either God designs the details, or nature shuffles the deck and natural selection chooses the winning hand. The mechanism is either conscious and intentional (design), or unconscious and unintentional (natural selection). Creation is teleological; it has a purpose, a goal, an end. Evolution is accidental, like a straight flush dealt to a poker rookie.” Demonstrating that the beliefs taught by the Bible and those of secular humanism are diametrically opposed, Koukl concludes: “Theistic evolution means design by chance. That’s like a square circle--there is no such thing. Blending Darwinian evolution with creation is like putting a square peg in a round hole. It just doesn’t fit.”⁴⁸ Theistic evolution is a self-refuting, contradictory concept.

Scientific theories change with the times, “but the word of our God stands forever”. While still a religious cultural norm, evolution is already discounted by many scientists, including atheists, as faulty. In a geology class at a state college, while discussing evolution and geological ages, my professor admitted that they are just theories that may very well be disproved as time goes on. Gerald L. Schroedder, in his book *Genesis and the Big Bang: The Discovery of Harmony Between Modern Science and the Bible*, even admits that Darwin realized and acknowledged a deficiency in the fossil record of the mid-1800s, and today’s fossil record is just as faulty, with many of his followers “more certain than he was of his theory’s truth.”⁴⁹ We should never let a dying scientific theory, no matter how accepted as a given, effect our view of what God has clearly revealed to us: doing so suffers the church’s view of Scripture and God’s authority, as Smith comments: “It is worthy of consideration that those churches and seminaries that have abandoned the clear teaching of the Bible on creation, as so many have done in the modern, scientific age, have tended to drift in other areas as well.”⁵⁰ Hoeksema concurs:

When the leaven of this theory has worked through, the result has been that the wonder of grace is completely eliminated and denied. For all the miracles some naturalistic explanation is found; and the historical reality of such wonders as the incarnation and the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ is also denied. Theistic evolution is an attempted compromise ... of the lie and the truth ... the results of an attempted mixture is always a denial of the truth.⁵¹

Evolution is a farce. The church must interpret the Bible from the Bible, not from prejudiced, fleeting mindsets which strip Scripture of its power and leave the church lifeless. David W. Hall warns, “if evangelicals fine-tune their message to fit a waning scientific cosmology, just as secularists themselves are beginning to realize its indefensibility, we will not provide the best possible testimony to eternal truth.”⁵²

⁴⁸ Gregory Koukl, “Theistic Evolution: Designed by Chance?”, *Solid Ground*, (Jan.-Feb. 1997) : www.str.org.

⁴⁹ Gerald L. Schroedder, *Genesis and the Big Bang: The Discovery of Harmony Between Modern Science and the Bible* (New York: Bantam Books, 1990) , 134.

⁵⁰ Smith, 243.

⁵¹ Hoeksema, 34-35.

⁵² David W. Hall, “The Evolution of Mythology: Classic Creation Survives as the Fittest Among its Critics and Revisers,” in *Did God Create in Six Days?*, ed. Pipa, 269.

God and His body deserve no less than the best witness to His eternal truth. While theistic evolution has imposed nonliteral views on the creation days of Genesis 1 to attempt harmony with modern scientific speculations, the only way to be true to the orthodox interpretation of the church throughout the ages; to the author, the context, and the language of Scripture; and, most importantly, to God's revelatory intentions to His people about His miraculous works, is to correctly interpret the creation week as 144 hours, six twenty-four-hour days. Vos gives us this charge: "As Joshua said to Israel long ago, so we can and should say to the Christian Church and its institutions at the present day: 'Choose you this day whom ye will serve' (Joshua 24:15). Shall we compromise with the evolutionary world view, or shall we remain faithful to the Theistic and Christian view as taught in the Word of God?"⁵³

In college, facing the pressures of evolution that permeated our secular campus, a fellow Christian and I wrestled with this question. Turning to Genesis, we hoped to perhaps find a way of explaining Scripture within the claims of evolution. We could not. Neither of us being learned theologians, we simply concluded that "morning and evening" allowed no such accommodation for evolution. Doing so freed me to respond to God with the respect and awe that He intended when revealing His creative acts to us, and praise and honor Him for His grandeur and power.

Frankly, if He could not create the universe in six days, what kind of God is He? And if He did not do it, why did He say that He did? Scott challenges us not to be tempted to second-guess God: "'Has God said?' was the question initially put to our first parents, Adam and Eve. Satan, in various guises and ways has been putting that same question to every Church established to do God's will. What will our answer be?"⁵⁴

⁵³ Vos, 23.

⁵⁴ Scott, 39.

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