



## God's Decree of Creation

*When "Other" Came Into Being*

(Westminster Confession of Faith IV:1)

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### Part 3

### Beyond Genesis One

#### Other Portions of Scripture

It would be unwise to accept any proposed view of the events of Genesis chapter one until other portions of Scripture are taken into account. God's word must be self-consistent as a whole. It is also important to consider the interpretive alternatives God in his wise providence has permitted to emerge in his church.

#### Day Seven: the Sabbath

Genesis 2:1-2 Was the seventh day also a literal 24-hour day?

The day after day six, when all of creation was pronounced to be essentially complete, was a day of non-creation. It began a whole era of non-creation. All of what was decreed to come into existence had essentially been created and declared to be "good".

Genesis 2:1,2 "[Thus the heavens and the earth were completed, and all their hosts. And by the seventh day God completed his work which he had done and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done.](#)"

On the next 24-hour day which immediately followed day six, God announced the principle of sabbath. The Hebrew word for "[Sabbath](#)" is "[shabbat](#)" (שבת) which means "[ceasing](#)". It would be contrary to his infinite character to interpret this to mean that God needed to rest, or that he needed a break of some sort. His rest could only have meant a cessation from what the text said he had been doing. He had been creating new material classes of things. This ceasing from special creation of new forms of things continues all the way to the present time and extends to the end of the present world order.

If the Genesis 2:2-3 Sabbath was literally 24 hours long, then on the eighth day God must have resumed again what had been suspended at the end of the sixth day. This would mean that following the seventh day God began again to create new classes of things and cause them to appear in a display of his glory in the material world. This is contrary to the direct remarks that begin Genesis 2. The chapter begins by saying that the work of creating had been complete.

It should also be noted that the formulation "[there was evening and there was morning...](#)" is not used regarding the seventh day. By removing this contextual identifier we see a clear shift in the record Moses preserved for us in writing. The previous indicator for taking the Hebrew word "yom" as a 24 hour period is no longer presented by the author for his readers regarding the Sabbath Day.

Therefore this verse defies the necessity of taking the seventh day in the same sense in which we are to understand the previous six. Similarly "yom" is not used of a 24 hour period in Genesis 1:5 and 1:16 where it is used of the approximately 12 hour period of light. In Genesis 2:4, the verse immediately following the establishment of the Sabbath, it is used to describe the whole period of creation. Context dictates which of the legitimate meanings of any given word best fits how it is used in a particular place.

Exodus 20:11 - Does the Forth Commandment describe creation as lasting just 144 hours?

It is always helpful to use inspired references to help us formulate our interpretation of a text. However, the language of Exodus 20:11 is not exactly as it is usually represented in our translations. The expression "[in six days God created...](#)" is literally "[because six days Yahveh made...](#)" (כי ששת ימים עשה יהוה - ki shaeshet yamim asah YHVH ...).

The preposition "in" is not in the Hebrew text. Instead of the prefix "baet" (בַּ), which is the preposition meaning "in", we find the conjunction "ki" (כִּי) which is *relational* or *causative*. It means "because of, so that, but, when". The grammatical structure does not rule out various possible interpretations of the allusion to Genesis one.

On the one hand it could be an allusion to the six 24-hour inspection days as mentioned in our proposed view. These are the literal days when God pronounced each phase of his decreed work to be essentially complete.

On the other hand, it could be a reference to the six phases of creation marked out by the moments of approbation (using it the way the Bible sometimes uses "yom" to represent an indefinite period of time).

It is undecidable, from Exodus 20:11 alone, to determine which meaning of "yom" must be adopted. Since the word "day" (*yom* - יוֹם) does not always refer to a 24-hour period (see the Part 2 of this study for examples), and since this context offers no specifications as it did in Genesis One, we are not able to demand one meaning over the other. If the word "yom" is used in several different senses in the Genesis creation account itself (Genesis 1:5,16 2:4), it would be highly presumptuous to demand that it must have one particular use in the Exodus reference which is given in the context of Sinai.

Exodus 20 does not introduce the work of creation for the purpose of interpreting or of explaining the time frame of Genesis one. It mentions the work of creation as the foundation for the Sabbath commandment. A citation used for this purpose would not be expected to address the separate components of the creative work (decree, act of creation, additional modifications, inspection, and pronouncement). Rather it would have in view simply the six phases of creation taken as a whole. They were presented chronologically in the Mosaic account. Those acts were completed by the end of day six.

It would hardly serve as a regular reminder of God's work if man worked just seven days of his life, then ceased working for the remainder of his life just as God ceased from creating any more new material orders of things when the Sabbath of Genesis 2 began.

The God of Sabbath made the earth's rotation cycle to mark the days of man's labor on which he would carry out the creation mandate of caring for and subduing God's earth to bring forth his daily provisions. To aid in man remembering that God is his Creator and Sovereign Owner of all that is, he was to work six days (commemorative of the six phases of God's creative work), and cease from that particular work on every seventh day.

### **Considering the statement of our Confession**

Does the statement of the *Westminster Confession* rule out the non-contiguous view of the Inspection Day concept by saying, "**in the space of six days**"?

Clearly the scholars who wrote this statement did not have before them the various interpretations we deal with today. The question was not being asked then in the same way that it is being asked in our era. Therefore we would not expect them to formulate wording that would answer unasked questions.

There were various views of Genesis One at the time the Confession was formulated. One was the "Instantaneous Creation" concept of some of the church fathers. They took care to rule out that alternative since it is contrary to sound exegesis of all the texts involved. They were, however, very careful to refrain from inserting their own limited understanding into the confession of the church. By selecting an expression that simply reflects the wording of the law in Exodus 20:11 they provided room for interpretation within the boundaries set by God's word. Very probably they did not anticipate the latitude their words would provide. But in God's providence, their strict adherence to the terms of Scripture alone does not rule out ideas they had not considered.

The wording "**... in the space of six days**" is found in the Westminster Confession of Faith 4:1, Shorter Catechism question 9, and a similar expression in Larger Catechism question 15.

As with Exodus 20:11, the term "day" in the Confession was taken from Scripture where it may be employed in various ways. While the scholars who wrote this statement may have personally had dispositions as to how the term "day" was intended here, their care to limit expressions to what could be either directly read or deduced

necessarily from Scripture has left us with a statement able to withstand the growth of our understanding of God's word as time tests our exegetical conclusions.

### **Comments on a few other popular creation models**

#### **The Appearance of Age Model**

This is sometimes called the "*Pro-chronic Creation Model*". It suggests that God made things with an appearance of age. The universe and earth were created to look mature and therefore older than they really were at the time God made them.

This view is primarily an attempt to accommodate the biblical record with scientific observations. However, it is in one sense strictly a non-scientific view. It implies that all tests and measurements should be expected to yield a greater age than things really are. All things are said to have been made in an aged form containing evidences that they had a history which in fact they did not have. This position must argue that the universe does appear to be older than it is. They suggest that in spite of what scientific measurements are expected to show, the universe is actually very young. Creation, by its appearance of age, intentionally and inescapably deceives the uninformed observer.

Critics of this view argue that, if accepted, this approach would make God's revelation in nature unreliable. The message of creation (as described in Psalm 19:1-4, Romans 1:20, and other similar passages) becomes deceptive instead of revelatory of God's glory, nature, truth, and power. God, they would have believe, made things so that man's investigation of the created universe should yield an untruth. It makes it hard to understand how Paul could write in the Romans 1:20 passage that God's revelation in creation concerning his divine attributes, power, and nature could leave man without excuse.

Believers who hold to this model therefore attempt to find justification within the text of Scripture that would necessarily lead a faithful exegete to conclude that scientific observations are not reliable when investigating the age of things ranging back to the time of creation. They usually cite the completed form of Adam (who would have had the appearance of age considering our experience that adults come from children who come from babies), the immediate creation of trees (which we presume would have had concentric rings usually interpreted as being the result of age), and other such evidences inherent in every created thing brought into being instantly, but in a completed form. Those characteristics would be necessary to the nature of the thing created.

However, the appearances they speak of, often do not stop with revealed and physically necessary examples such as Eden's tree rings or a mature Adam. Many proponents wander far from biblical exegesis and speak of the light from distant stars as containing false data. When spectral emission and absorption lines are observed from distant stars and galaxies, they are shifted by measurable amounts that appear to reveal particular information about their source, travel history, and the environment they have passed through. Yet this view claims that the light never came from that source, and never went through the environment whose signature appears in the spectral lines. The gases that appear to have produced the absorption lines never actually filtered the light. Furthermore, the band splitting and shifting we see in the spectra were not done by the influences to which the lines appear to testify. The light was created to look as if all this had happened when it did not. Such minute details in the spectra are not necessary to the nature of light itself.

It is one thing to question the validity of natural observations. It is quite another thing to assume theologically that God's creation is a carefully planned deception. Taken to this extreme, this would be a very dangerous approach unless clear biblical data can be presented to justify such a non-natural interpretation. Where creation might deceive us, we would expect the Creator to tell us clearly in his written word. It is a huge leap of logic to extend the apparent age of Adam, which is clearly affirmed in Scripture so we would not be deceived, to the shifting of spectral lines in light from distant cosmic objects.

Scripture is intended to present creation as a declaration of truth concerning God's character and nature. Many holding to this view come close to denying God's integrity in revealing himself in creation, since the first objects he made would uniformly present false information about their extremely exaggerated age and falsified history.

This view is based upon and employs assumptions that are not directly stated in Scripture, nor are they derived from the Bible by good and necessary deduction. The presumption that if God made an adult human

immediately with an appearance of maturity, then he must have made all other things with evidences of age and extreme antiquity is hard to derive with such certainty. No one would dispute that God could have done so. The question is, is there any biblical evidence that shows that he made all things with an appearance of age?

This hermeneutic reduces logically to an anti-scientific position. It insists that our investigations and any scientific tests performed would show that the universe appears old. The results are interpreted as proving their opposite, that God has created a perfectly mature appearing universe that defies those who expect to discover its age. The chronology of the Earth and Universe as observed is never therefore what it appears to be.

If the motive of those holding this view is to attempt to reconcile what they see as a disparity between what we observe in nature and what they believe is stated in the Bible, then this theory is of no real help. If they mean to simply state what the Bible demands, they are to be commended for their attempt, but should be warned of the highly speculative nature of the principles of extending the data beyond its intended and stated purpose. They should also be cautioned about the uncertainties introduced for those intending to observe God's revealed nature in creation as we are told to do throughout Scripture. General revelation becomes less than reliable.

The failure of certain arguments such as "appearance of age" does not refute that the earth is young, nor affirm that it is old. If we are to understand what God is declaring in creation, then we need to avoid explanations that only complicate the issue by pure speculation.

### **Flood Geology**

This view does not attempt to interpret Genesis one by reasoning from biblical information alone. Its primary motive is to use biblical data to explain geological findings. The fundamental assumption is that the flood in the days of Noah accounts for the seeming antiquity of the earth. The geological strata and the placement of the fossils, are explained in terms of flood dynamics including erosion and tidal effects. Some include atmospheric changes they say were tied to the flood to account for changes in the rates of radioactive isotope decay which are necessary to support their view.

While its proponents all believe that the Bible demands a young earth, their arguments tend to center mostly upon scientific theories. The scientific models they adopt follow an approach that was popular in the late nineteenth century which sees sudden cataclysmic events rather than slow processes as the most significant cause of change in the physical world since its origin.

Critics of Flood Geology say that it is based upon a forced re-interpretation of scientific data motivated by assumptions about the age of the earth, and the rejection of what it calls "uniformitarianism". Among its assumptions is that the earth can be no older than a few thousand years which they believe is an absolute limit set by a literal interpretation of Genesis one.

One of the problems in dealing with this position is that it rarely differentiates between uniform processes and uniform laws. It labels them both "*uniformitarian*". On the one hand Flood Geology discounts uniformity in studying ancient processes since we cannot know for certain that things operated as they do now. The radioactive decay of certain isotopes is often said to have changed its rate and perhaps its process after the flood. But if physical laws as well established as nuclear decay are brought into question, one might wonder how they can be so sure that the process of flood dynamics was the same then. Obviously they do not believe that physical laws have changed or their whole scientific approach would be self-discounted.

Sadly, some proponents of Flood Geology have been guilty of basic inaccuracies. In their writings the current positions of other theories (both Christian and non-Christian) are often misrepresented and misstated. They seldom seem aware that evolutionary scientists do not teach the kind of uniformitarian philosophy they spend so much time attacking. Most anti-creationists today agree that the process of change often occurred very suddenly and was often the result of cataclysmic events in a model they call "Punctuated Equilibrium". Current evidences that conflict with this model's re-interpreted scientific observations are regularly omitted from their monographs and text books. Many of their arguments are based upon ideas that have been withdrawn by those originally proposing them. Yet they never mention such updates. Responses and criticisms of their position by the scientific community are often never addressed. They keep using arguments that have long been shown to be contradicted by improved measurements. Flood dynamics totally fails to deal with astrophysical data, since

flood geology can apply to earth structures only. Other theories must be incorporated to explain the things we observe in the universe such as the analysis of spectral lines from distant cosmic objects.

Totally unsupported conjectures have been made to explain some of their proposals. Many Flood Geologists imagine that an ice canopy existed over the earth prior to the flood which, it is claimed, would have affect nuclear decay rates and fusion rates. However no confirmable mechanism has been found to support such a claim. Some, in support of the old canopy theory, even speculate that it never rained before the flood. But the only biblical reference cited refers to a period prior to the creation of plants when there had not yet been rain. It can be argued from the language and flow of thought in Genesis 2:5 that rain began prior to the creation of plants, long before the flood.

This theory appears to be motivated more by its attempt to deal with scientific observations, than with deriving a position from Scripture alone. God's word should not need the invention of ice canopies, or theories of geological stratification and fossil deposition to make sense to the modern reader. A reaction to Darwinian thinking appears to have been more the cause of this approach than a serious attempt to exegete Scripture and be satisfied with what it says.

Again, the failure of these arguments neither refutes that the earth is young, nor affirms that it is old. It does however harm our view of Scripture when poor evidence and reasoning is used as the foundation for our biblical faith.

### **Synthesis of the Appearance of Age and Flood Geology Views**

Most who defend the young earth view hold to a combination of the two previously examined theories. They say the earth is young, created full-grown with an appearance of age. Yet they use flood geology to account for the phenomenon of old age where they believe they need to do so. Basically, when one view fails to account for some particular detail, the proponents call upon the other view.

Critics of this model point out that it takes an inconsistent uniformitarian approach. Supporters often present alleged scientific data to prove that the earth and the universe were more recently created. They usually base their position upon observations which are then extended back in time uniformly to show that they could not have been in operation for billions of years. Are the flood dynamics findings evidences of matters where God missed giving them an appearance of age at creation and so he added it at a later time? If, as they claim, they have discovered some observations that show that the earth is young, then the whole universal appearance of age idea is discredited.

It is convenient to adopt two totally different views. When flood dynamics or their current scientific theories cannot account for some observation in connection with their young earth assumptions, they simply appeal to the appearance of age argument.

The same problems critics cite for each of the component theories are usually applied to the synthesis of the two. Many see this combined view as self-defeating. On the one hand it claims that geological phenomena do not have an appearance of age. They are just evidences produced by flood waters and atmospheric canopies operating within the bounds of uniform physical laws. On the other hand they say that God made everything with an appearance of age and that the use of uniform physical processes to explain what we observe is to be doubted.

Those holding this view have often vacillated between explanations. For example, a rock may be dated by radioactive methods which appear to give it great age. On the one hand they would say that the age of the rock was built into it at creation when God inserted various levels of isotopes in it to make it appear older than it really is. On the other hand, they would say that since the collapse of the pre-flood canopy the decay rates have changed which account for the faulty finding. One often gets the impression that the answer is just pragmatic. What ever works best in supporting a young age for the earth is adopted.

A more helpful approach is to re-examine the actual statements of Scripture to limit our affirmations to what it actually says. When human theories blend sometimes adverse principles to support what the Bible does not directly state, the reliability of God's revelation in Scripture is marginalized. If the earth is young then it must be accepted as young based upon the sound exegesis of biblical texts alone. If it is old then we need to be willing to set aside historic assumptions to the contrary if they are not delivered to us by God's prophets and apostles.

## **Day-Age and Day-Gap Theories**

The Day-Age model suggests that the days of Genesis One should be looked upon as long periods of time which is admittedly one of the uses of the word "yom" in the Hebrew language. We have shown in the Part 2 of this study that the use of the expression, "[and there was evening and there was morning](#)" gives contextual problems with this view. As we previously stated, "there is nothing in the immediate context that would direct the reader to suspect a non-literal meaning for such common terms as 'evening and morning'."

The Day-Gap model suggests that long geological ages separate each of the acts of creation which took place on one particular 24 hour day. The evidence for this is purely drawn from scientific observations with no support from Scripture. The Gap Theories also present problems regarding the interdependency of things created. It cannot explain how certain parts of creation lasted so long without the other parts coming into existence millions of years later. For example, certain plants depend upon certain animals to pollinate them. If those animals were not created for millions of years later how did these plants survive?

## **Covenantal Language or Framework Analysis**

Some have attempted to remove the question of age entirely from Genesis One by adopting a view that God employs covenantal or literary language divorced entirely from any attempt to describe physical processes. When we read Moses, we are looking at literature intended for a very different culture than what we know today. The "week" in Genesis One is presumed to be a metaphor God used to communicate his work within the framework of the work week imposed upon Israel with respect to keeping the Sabbath.

Some using this general approach say the record in Genesis One is topical rather than sequential. The wide variety of views that fall into this general category illustrates how subjective the approach is. It relies upon supposing literary forms which make a passage of the Bible to be taken in a way other than how it reads, and without any internal indication that it does not mean what it states linguistically.

Many supporting the various forms of this approach preserve the view that all Scripture is inerrant and infallible because of its inspiration from God.

## **Concluding Statements**

It is the opinion of this author that the age of the universe, the age of our earth, and the antiquity of man are matters not intended to be revealed by God in Scripture. This view as presented would be consistent with either a young or old earth view. It does not rule out either position. It does preserve the idea that Genesis One is a literal, chronological, physical account of the bringing into existence of physical reality supernaturally by the God who has made covenant with his people and who has revealed himself and preserved that revelation for us in the Bible.

The Bible regularly points us to behold in nature the truly revealed glory, power, and nature of its Creator. It also cautions us that our perceptions of general revelation are neither infallible nor inerrant. Matters of science yield degrees of probability and likelihood, not certainty. They are limited by our own sampling of data, and by our understanding of the variables that effect how natural principles operate in various circumstances.

Creation infallibly and inerrantly declares truth about God day and night. However, due to the distortions imposed upon our understanding by the fall of man in Adam, we need to rely only upon the direct statements made in Scripture, and those that can be necessarily derived from Scripture. This data alone should be employed in the forming of statements of doctrinal certainty. This is the goal of this minimalistic approach to exegesis.

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Credit must be given to my Seminary Professor Robert J. Dunzweiler who promoted this view and developed many of it's supporting arguments.