



*"The heavens declare the glory of God" (Psalm 19:1)*

# REASONS TO BELIEVE - SEATTLE AREA CHAPTER

NEWS AND VIEWS

JANUARY 2006

## What's Happening?

### [Ankerberg Debate](#)

This month, the John Ankerberg Show is airing a debate between Hugh Ross and Walt Kaiser (the old-earth view) and Ken Ham and Jason Lisle (the young-earth view). Each segment is available on-line after it is broadcast on TV at: [www.ankerberg.com/TV/ankjasrm.html](http://www.ankerberg.com/TV/ankjasrm.html).

### [Upcoming Events](#)

The chapter will be sponsoring a booth at the Northwest Christian Education Conference at Overlake Christian Church, March 23-25. This is a great opportunity to equip teachers and homeschoolers. Stop by and see us!

### [Get Connected](#)

Join us in spreading the word that science and the Bible agree! To find out how you can get involved in the chapter, or for information on the RTB apologetics training course, contact us at [seattle@reasons.org](mailto:seattle@reasons.org). Our next chapter meeting is scheduled for February 18th.

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## Old-Earth Creationism: A Heretical Belief?

GREG MOORE

Ken Ham is an ardent young-earth creationist. As president of Answers in Genesis, he generates a steady stream of articles critiquing the old-earth view. Although I disagree with most of his assertions, I respect his right to express them. However, Ham's article, "The god of an old earth," crosses the line of amicable debate. By declaring "the god of an old earth cannot be the God of the Bible" and "the god of an old earth destroys the Gospel," he is accusing old-earth creationists of heresy.

Disagreements in the body of Christ are inevitable. And history has shown debate in the church can be edifying and unifying when it is conducted properly. This requires focusing on the things that unite us and avoid passing judgment on nonessential matters (Romans 14:1). But, that is not the spirit of Ham's paper. By claiming old-earth creationism violates orthodox Christian teachings, he seeks to denigrate and marginalize it. That only serves to divide faithful Christians and prevent them from having fellowship together.



Augustine Refuting a Heretic

Given the seriousness of Ham's charges, it is important to take a critical look at this issue. It is not my purpose to defend old-earth creationism on scientific grounds. There are many excellent resources that can assist readers in that regard.<sup>2</sup> Rather, I will examine why Ham's accusation of heresy is both baseless and inappropriate.

### BIBLICAL THEODICY

Ham's claim "the god of an old earth is not the God of the Bible" is based on the question of theodicy. This is the question of how a loving, righteous and omnipotent God can allow evil and suffering in a world He created and sustains. Ham argues a loving God would not allow millions of years of animal violence and death for no reason; hence, animal death must be a result of God's judgment on human sin and could not have been part of the initial creation. While this may sound impressive, there are a number of problems with this argument.

See HERETICAL?, page 4

## “Roots for Reasons”

God is continuing to bless the Reasons to Believe Ministry and the doors for expanded outreach stand wide open. A good example of this is the recent taping of a debate with young-earth creationists Ken Ham and Jason Lisle. The debate will be aired on the John Ankerberg Show and provide excellent exposure for RTB. Equally important, it will help people—both Christians and skeptics—understand that believing in God does not require a belief in a young earth.

It's encouraging to see the growth of RTB. More importantly, it's exciting to see the lives being changed by the ministry. Hardly a day goes by that someone doesn't contact RTB to tell them how the ministry played a key role in helping them—or a spouse, child, or friend—overcome their objections to the Bible and lead them to a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.



However, this success also has a downside. As the demand for the ministry grows, it is becoming increasingly difficult for the RTB scholars to meet all the needs. In fact, RTB is being forced into the unfortunate position of having to turn down outreach opportunities due to the lack of scholar time and availability.

This is the focus of RTB's "Roots for Reasons" program. The goal of this program is to build an adequate financial foundation (roots) to fund the addition of new scholars. What will it take to accomplish this goal? RTB

wants to raise \$400,000 a year for 5 years in new funds (i.e., over and above current donations and revenues). This will cover the salaries, benefits, equipment, support staff and other things that are required for two new scholars.

The RTB scholars help further the Great Commission through personal outreach efforts—writing, researching, speaking, mentoring, training—touching thousands, even millions of lives each year. Thus, the addition of each new scholar multiplies exponentially the depth and breath of RTB's effectiveness in leading people to Christ. Due to the success of the "Roots for Reasons" program, RTB was able to hire one new scholar in 2005, astronomer Jeff Zweerink. Now they are working on the second position.

Please give prayerful consideration to this vital effort. Imagine the difference two new scholars will make! Through the generosity of an RTB supporter, a \$1 million matching fund has been established so every gift to "Roots" is doubled. If you would like to make a one-time donation, send it to Reasons to Believe "Roots," P.O. Box 5978, Pasadena, CA 91117. For more information on the program, or to set-up a monthly giving plan, please contact Esther Attebery at RTB, 800-482-7836 or [eattebery@reasons.org](mailto:eattebery@reasons.org).

Thank you for your ongoing support of the Reasons To Believe Ministry. Together we can truly make a difference in impacting the world with compelling reasons for a belief in the Bible and faith in Jesus Christ.

## In the NEWS...

### [Dover in Review](#)

This four-part article by John West of the Discovery Institute provides an in-depth analysis of the Judge Jones decision in the Dover trial. Go to: <http://www.discovery.org/scripts/viewDB/index.php?command=view&id=3135&program=CSC>.

### [Darwin's Pyrrhic Victory](#)

This article by Pat Buchanan discusses how Darwinism is on the defensive and how court decisions, like the one in Dover, help rather than hurt this effort. Go to: [http://www.worldnetdaily.com/news/article.asp?ARTICLE\\_ID=48102](http://www.worldnetdaily.com/news/article.asp?ARTICLE_ID=48102).

### [It's God or Darwin](#)

This article by David Klinghoffer discusses the Dover decision that rejected the teaching of ID and questions whether Darwinism is really ideology free. Go to: <http://www.nationalreview.com/script/printpage.p?ref=comment/klinghoffer200512210814.asp..>

### [O'Reilly, Letterman, and The Culture War](#)

This article by Richard Pearcey discusses the current culture war between those who believe in a nation under God and those who believe in a nation apart from God. Go to: [http://www.pearceyreport.com/archives/2006/01/j\\_richard\\_pearc\\_1.php](http://www.pearceyreport.com/archives/2006/01/j_richard_pearc_1.php).

### [A Winsome Witness](#)

This article by Chuck Colson discusses how Christians should be a good witness in the public square. Go to: [http://www.pfm.org/AM/Template.cfm?Section=BreakPoint\\_Commentaries1&CONTENTID=17634&TEMPLATE=/CM/ContentDisplay.cfm](http://www.pfm.org/AM/Template.cfm?Section=BreakPoint_Commentaries1&CONTENTID=17634&TEMPLATE=/CM/ContentDisplay.cfm)

### [Remember to Seek the Lord](#)

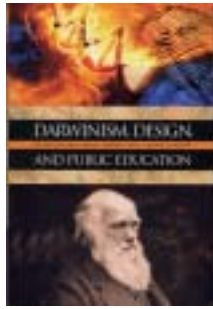
This Breakpoint article by T. M. Moore discusses how we can learn from Asa's mistakes (2 Chronicles 14-16). Go to: <http://www.pfm.org/AM/Template.cfm?Section=BreakPoint1&Template=/CM/ContentDisplay.cfm&ContentID=17765>.

## Book Reviews

### Darwinism, Design & Public Education

John Campbell & Stephen C. Meyers  
MSU Press, 2003

Reviewer: Mike Brown



The purpose of this book is summarized in an excerpt on the back cover: "In this book, leading design theorists present their scientific case for intelligent design, their criticisms of contemporary Darwinism and their arguments for a pluralistic controversy-based model of science education. They contend that if science education is to be other than state sponsored propaganda it must expose students to the scientific controversies that now exist about neo-Darwinism and other theories of biological origins."

The book is divided into four major sections:

1. Should Darwinism Be Presented Critically and Comparatively in the Public Schools?
2. Scientific Critique of Biology Textbooks and Contemporary Evolutionary Theory
3. The theory of Intelligent Design
4. Critical Responses

At over 550 pages (not including the appendices) this is an excellent work for anyone who wishes to get a good overall picture of the issues surrounding Darwinism vs. Design in our public school systems. While this is certainly not light reading, the scientific material is, for the most part, presented clearly and with sufficient illustrations to be understood by someone without a science background.

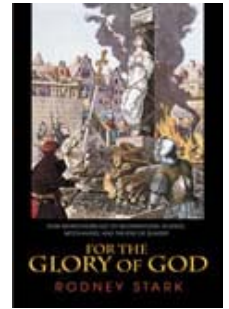
The critical responses provided by several opponents of ID are well worth reading. As Michael Ruse states in the introduction to his critique: "Every scholar needs critics far more than he or she needs friends. ... and critics are an absolutely essential part of the intellectual quest that makes life meaningful and worthwhile."

I have experienced the silent treatment from friends to whom I have given copies of my apologetics course. I always ask for input—and never get it! I don't know if its because they haven't studied it—or have and don't want to hurt my feelings. My tendency is to believe the latter. Criticisms and arguments against our beliefs can only make us better apologists. They help ensure we are using legitimate arguments for our beliefs, and also help us be prepared to defend our beliefs against the latest attacks. Iron sharpens iron.

### For the Glory of God

Rodney Stark  
Princeton University Press, 2003

Reviewer: Pat Lewis



When Columbus set out on his voyage, was he defying a common belief that the Earth was flat? Did the Catholic Church oppose Galileo because of his scientific discoveries? Was there a "Dark Age" of ignorance and barbarity? Millions believe these ideas, which have been taught as facts. All are false according to Professor Rodney Stark, a sociologist at the University of Washington.

Stark claims proponents of atheism have twisted and concealed the truth about the role of religion in the movements that formed Western civilization. In four cultural episodes, the Protestant Reformation, European witch-hunts, the abolishing of slavery, and the flowering of science, Christian leaders played major parts. Readers will be amazed to learn the truth.

Multiple religious organizations tend to arise, but any powerful group such as the Catholic Church will seek to silence all competitors. Wyclif, Hus and Luther did not wish to be competitors. They hoped to change the Church. Only when this failed did Luther organize a "Protestant" Church.

Satanism was feared as a danger to society. Thousands of innocent people were forced to confess under torture. Churchmen played a leading part in bringing the witch-hunts to an end. Movements to abolish slavery began in a Philadelphia Meeting of Quakers. They spread to England, then to other countries. Everywhere the leaders were people ablaze with moral fervor.

Christian theology was also essential for the rise of science. The handiwork of a perfect God must function in accord with immutable principles which man may discover. Science arose only once in history, in a culture dominated by belief in a conscious, rational, all-powerful Creator. Other religions, not having similar theologies, never originated science.

Nowhere does Dr. Stark describe his own religious beliefs. However, he does clearly state, "I argue that religion and science are compatible, and that the origins of science lay in theology." Welcome words to us who struggle with current arguments about science and religion!

First, God needs no reason for the things He does. As Creator, all things occur by His providence and for His purposes (Colossians 1:16). It is clearly a mistake, then, to think that God's choices are determined by anything or anyone outside Himself. The Bible tells us God does what He pleases, He answers to no one, and He is under no obligation to any of His creatures (Isaiah 46:10, Job 23:13, 33:13, 41:11). It also tells us God knows in advance what He will do, what the results will be and nothing can thwart His plans (Psalm 33:11, Isaiah 46:10, Job 42:2).

Nor is God's loving character in any way impugned by animal death. Whatever God does is by definition proper and just. As Calvin states: "...God's will is so much the highest rule of righteousness that whatever He wills, by the very fact that He wills it, must be considered righteous."<sup>3</sup> Thus, in light of the biblical doctrine of God as Creator and Sustainer, it is wrong to question God's character (Job 40:8). Instead, we should trust His goodness and care, knowing in all things, God works for the good of those who love Him (Romans 8:28).

Second, it is wrong to presume animal death is not loving. We must look at animal death from God's perspective. Just as God's thoughts are not our thoughts and His ways are not our ways (Isaiah 55:8), so His definition of "good" is probably different as well. Numerous verses of Scripture tell us God provides food for the carnivores of the Earth thereby condoning the death of some animals for the survival of others.<sup>4</sup> Thus, according the Bible, animal death—at least carnivorous activity—is a blessing from the hand of a loving Creator.

Since God is the Creator, He has the prerogative of creating things for limited use. Just because something dies doesn't mean death is a bad thing.<sup>5</sup> The world was created for the purpose of accomplishing God's plan for humanity and animal death plays an essential role in God's creation. A healthy ecological system depends on a continuing cycle of life and death. Also, many things that are important to human life—coal, oil, limestone, topsoil to name but a few—all come from the death and decay of animals.<sup>6</sup>

Third, Ham's argument does not solve the question of theodicy. Ham focuses on God's loving nature but ignores His omnipotence. God is the sovereign first cause of all things.<sup>7</sup> Not only did He create all things but in Him all things hold together and everything works out in conformity with His will (Colossians 2:17, Ephesians 1:11). Thus, the why and when of animal death is superfluous. Whether animal death was part of the initial creation, or something that was imposed at later date, God is ultimately responsible for it.

Solving the question of theodicy is a matter of adopting the correct starting point. Standing on the Bible we have the answer. Evil and suffering exist for good reasons: God, who is altogether good and can do no wrong, sovereignly decrees they take place for His good purposes (Isaiah 45:7).<sup>8</sup> Therefore, the old-earth view of millions of years of animal death before Adam and Eve is not a problem. Animal death is part of God's eternal plan, it works for His good and the good of His people, and just because God has decreed it, it is righteous.

#### DEATH BEFORE SIN

Ham's claim "the god of an old earth destroys the Gospel" is based on the contention that death before human sin is not theologically supportable. Ham reasons if there was death before Adam and Eve sinned (known as the Fall), death cannot be

## Apologetic TOOLS

### [Creation Update Webcast](#)

Join Hugh Ross and Fuz Rana each Tuesday, 11:00 AM to 1:00 PM (PT), for webcast about how science agrees with the Bible. Listen live and/or download past broadcasts. Go to the RTB website and click on "Get Tuned In."



### [Daily Discoveries](#)

RTB posts a new scientific discovery on their website each day that supports the RTB creation model. You can also view past discoveries since 2003. For an archive of discoveries, go to the website and click on "Today's New Reason."



### [Ministry Newsletters](#)

RTB's free newsletters feature great articles on science and the Bible. They also keep you informed about what's happening at the ministry. Go to the RTB website and click on "Free Magazine." You can also view and print past issues.



### [Message of the Month](#)

Receive a monthly CD featuring special discussions by the RTB scholars while supporting RTB financially. This year's series is titled, "Adam: Miracle, Myth or Monkey?" Go to the RTB website, and click on "Donate."



### [Outreach Brochures](#)

Get RTB's brochures for initiating science and the Bible discussions. Topics include the big bang, the origin of life, the anthropic principle and the "days" of Genesis. Go to the RTB webstore and click on "ministry items."



### [Apologetics Training Course](#)

Take RTB's training course and become an official RTB apologist. Available through the chapter for \$200. Course materials include audiotapes or CDs, two videos (VHS or DVD) and seven books. Financial scholarships are available.



the penalty for sin—and, if death is not the penalty for sin, then Christ's death was unnecessary and meaningless.<sup>9</sup>

Before examining this issue, it is important to clarify the young-earth and old-earth positions on death. Both young-earth and old-earth creationists believe there was no human death before Adam and Eve sinned. Where they disagree is on the origination of animal death. Young-earth creationists insist all death—both human and animal—began at the Fall. Old-earth creationists maintain there was animal death inside, outside and before the Garden of Eden.

Young-earth creationists have developed a number of arguments to support their position. Several of these arguments deal with the issue of whether animal death is good and consistent with God's loving nature, which was discussed in the previous section. Here I will address what I consider to be their other major assertions.

#### *The Initial Creation Did Not Include Death and Decay*<sup>10</sup>

This argument focuses on three statements of Scripture: Romans 8:20—"the creation was subjected to frustration," Romans 8:21—"the creation will be liberated from its bondage to decay," and Romans 8:22—"the creation has been groaning." Young-earth creationists claim these statements indicate the initial creation was perfect, literally heaven on earth—but, at the Fall, the creation was changed to an earthly place that included death and decay. This they say is the "frustration" and "bondage to decay" Paul speaks of in Romans 8.

However, while Romans 8 tells us when the "bondage to decay" will end (when the children of God are glorified), it does not tell us when it began or what the nature of that bondage is.<sup>11</sup> Thus, it cannot be proven that Romans 8 refers to a changed creation and the introduction of animal death. Also, the Bible gives no indication the physical laws governing the pre-Fall world were different than today. Rather, the Bible tells us the creation was earthly and not heavenly (1 Corinthians 15:47) and that it was transitory from the beginning (Psalm 102:25-26).<sup>12</sup>

In addition, not all Bible scholars believe Romans 8 speaks of the physical creation. Some believe the "bondage to decay" is the earth's present service as a graveyard of the dead. They suggest Paul's metaphor of the creation's groaning is drawn from Isaiah 24:26—an apocalyptic picture of the earth as a graveyard awaiting the resurrection of the dead. Isaiah states "the earth mourns" because it has been made to "cover her slain."<sup>13</sup> This does seem to fit the context of Romans 8 that speaks of the earth being set free from bondage when the children of God are glorified.

#### *Death Before Sin Violates the Biblical Doctrine of Death*<sup>14</sup>

This argument also focuses on three statements of Scripture: Romans 5:12—"death entered the world through sin," Romans 6:23—"the wages of sin is death," and 1 Corinthians 15:26—"the last enemy to be destroyed is death." Young-earth creationists maintain these passages indicate all death—both human and animal—is the result of Adam and Eve's sin.

However, the issue being dealt with in these passages is clearly human death. Romans 5:12 states death came to "all men" as a result of sin, and

## RTB Resources

Was Adam an accident of nature? Are humans descending from primates? In this new breakthrough book, "Who Was Adam," Hugh Ross and Fuz Rana examine the evidence that challenges these notions and points to a special, supernatural origin of mankind. *Intermediate/Advanced, Hardback*, US\$ 12.95.



In *Origins of Life: Biblical and Evolutionary Models Face Off*, Hugh Ross and Fuz Rana reveal how life's beginnings can be tested. They examine origin-of-life research and compare it to the biblical model, exploding the myth of a naturalistic origin of life. *Intermediate/Advanced, Hardback*, US\$ 12.95.



The length of time represented by the word "day" in the Genesis creation account is a source of controversy in the Christian church. In this new book, *A Matter of Days*, Hugh Ross explores how this controversy developed and addresses many of the key issues of the debate. *All Readers, Paperback*, US\$



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both Romans 6:23 and 1 Corinthians 15:21-26 speak of spiritual redemption which limits the meaning to human death. If these passages are interpreted more widely, Christ's redemptive purpose would need to extend to the animal kingdom, which is implausible.<sup>15</sup> Therefore, while these passages support the view that human death is the result of sin, they do not support the view that all death is the result of sin.

In reality, animal death before the Fall is not a theological problem. Adam and Eve were not immortal by nature. Eternal life was only available to them through the supernatural "tree of life" in the Garden of Eden. And, if they were not immortal, then it must follow that the animals were not immortal either. However, unlike Adam and Eve, the animals did not have access to the "tree of life." Hence, because animals had no way to achieve immortality, they would have had no possible way to avoid death.<sup>16</sup>

#### *Death Before Sin Negates Christ's Atonement*<sup>17</sup>

This argument focuses on Christ's death and resurrection. Young-earth creationists argue if death—all death—is not the penalty for sin, death could not be used to atone for human sin; thus animal death before the Fall destroys the reason Christ died and the meaning of His resurrection.

However, there are several problems with the young-earth view of sin, death and the atonement. First, while human death is linked to human sin, it moves beyond the teaching of the Bible to claim all death is the result of human sin. Second, since animals are incapable of sinning, they are not in need of a restoration of relationship with God and it is wrong to extend the consequences of human sin to them. And third, while it is true there is no remission of sin without the shedding of blood, Christ's blood, it does not follow that there could have been no bloodshed before sin.<sup>18</sup>

It is very important to emphasize the crucial importance of Christ's death. Without it, we would have no hope of eternal life. However, animal death before the Fall does not diminish the significance of Christ's death because there was no need of atonement before there was sin.<sup>19</sup> Only human beings are capable of sin, only human beings are subject to judgment and only human beings are offered the salvation Christ earned on the cross. One can only wonder how animal death could interfere with God's plan for humanity, a plan that included the Fall.

#### *The Restored Creation is a Picture of the Original Creation*<sup>20</sup>

This argument focuses on prophetic scripture, usually Isaiah 11:6-9, that speaks of a future time when "the wolf will dwell with the lamb." Young-earth creationists claim this passage speaks of a "restored creation" and, because this restored creation contains no animal death, the pre-Fall creation must not have included animal death.

However, Scripture is silent about an Edenic restoration. The restoration promised in Acts 3:21 is not of Eden but of Christ's "restoring the

kingdom to Israel" (Acts 1:6). This will not be a return to the pristine condition of Edenic innocence prior to the Fall, but a fulfillment of God's covenant with Abraham—a rebirth of the nation he was promised.<sup>21</sup> The Bible also states the promise we are looking forward to is not a return to Eden but "a new heavens and a new earth" (2 Peter 3:13). In fact, the former things will be destroyed and will not even be remembered (Isaiah 65:17).

In addition, some Bible scholars believe Isaiah 11:6-9 speaks figuratively of future time when hostile nations will live peacefully with Israel. Calvin believed it speaks allegorically of bloody and violent men, whose cruel and savage nature shall be subdued.<sup>22</sup> The *Wycliffe Bible Commentary* explains the picture of animals living together peacefully symbolizes the removal of all natural hostility and fear between men.<sup>23</sup> However, regardless of whether Isaiah is taken literally or figuratively, it does not prove there was no animal death in Eden.<sup>24</sup>

#### ORTHODOXY AND HERESY

Ham claims Christians who hold the old-earth view are "worshipping a different God" and he encourages them "to return to the loving, holy, righteous God of the Bible." While he doesn't explicitly accuse old-earth creationists of heresy, that is the practical effect of these statements. Are these charges warranted? To answer this, it is important to understand the basis for determining whether a teaching is orthodox or heretical.

Orthodox can be defined as whatever teachings are sufficiently faithful to Christian principles that those who adhere to them should be accepted as fellow-Christians. Heresy can be defined as teachings that compel true Christians to divide themselves from those that hold them.<sup>25</sup> It might seem these definitions provide an effective way for determining whether a teaching is aberrational, but they don't. The problem is not all teachings carry the same weight—some warrant division, while others can and should be tolerated in the church (Romans 14).

The Bible reveals the doctrines that are essential to the Christian faith. These include the deity of Christ (and the doctrine of the Trinity), Christ's bodily resurrection from the dead, salvation by grace through faith alone, and the Gospel.<sup>26</sup> While there are many other important doctrines, these are the only ones that are declared by Scripture to be necessary for salvation. Other doctrines may be Biblical and should be believed by those who want to be faithful to Scripture—nevertheless, those who deny, or who are confused about them, can be saved.<sup>27</sup>

The Bible also tells us it is the job of the whole church to stand together in unity and judge what is heretical (Ephesians 4:12-13).<sup>28</sup> Therefore, since the whole church—all Christian denominations whether Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, or Protestant—agree on the essential doctrines of the Christian faith, this is first litmus test of whether a teaching is heretical. The second test is whether the Bible explicitly condemns the teaching or states it is not to be tolerated in the church.<sup>29</sup>

Let's start with the second test. Does the Bible explicitly condemn the old-earth view of long creation "days" or animal death before the Fall? No. In fact, as we examine the writings of the church fathers, we see these issues were openly debated and never considered a test of orthodoxy.<sup>30</sup> Therefore, there is no justification for labeling old-earth creationism a heretical teaching on the basis of Scripture or the teachings of the historic Christian church.

With regard to the first test, whether old-earth creationism contradicts the essential doctrines of Christianity, I cannot speak for all Christians who hold an old-earth view. Admittedly, some old-earth proponents are theistic evolutionists or Darwinists and I cannot state with certainty what they believe. However, because Ham's article identifies Dr. Hugh Ross as the main spokesman of the progressive creationist movement (the day/age view of Genesis), I will respond based on the beliefs of the Reasons To Believe (RTB) Ministry<sup>31</sup>:

1. Does RTB deny or distort the doctrine of the Trinity? No. The RTB statement of faith states: "We believe in one infinitely perfect, eternal and personal God, the transcendent Creator and sovereign Sustainer of the universe. This one God is Triune, existing eternally and simultaneously as three distinct persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. All three persons in the Godhead share equally and completely the one divine nature, and are therefore the same God, coequal in power, nature, and glory."
2. Does RTB deny or distort the deity of Christ? No. The RTB statement of faith states: "We believe that Jesus Christ is both true God ... and true man ... We also believe in the great events surrounding Jesus Christ's life ... including His eternal preexistence, His virgin birth, His attesting miracles, His sinless life, His sacrificial death on the cross, His glorious bodily resurrection from the dead, His ascension into heaven, and His present work in heaven as High Priest and Advocate. ..."
3. Does RTB deny Christ's bodily resurrection? No. The RTB statement of faith states: "We believe Jesus Christ rose bodily from the dead, conquering sin, death, and all the powers of Satan. The resurrection is God's historical affirmation and vindication of Jesus Christ's unique identity, mission, and message. ... Jesus Christ now resides at the right hand of the Father, and lives to indwell all who recognize their sinfulness, who repent, and who turn their lives over to His authority."
4. Does RTB deny salvation is by grace through faith alone? No. The RTB statement of faith states: "... Jesus Christ suffered and died in the place of sinners, thus satisfying the Father's just wrath against human sin, and effecting true reconciliation between God and mankind for those who believe. ... Redemption is solely a work of God's grace, received exclusively through faith in Jesus Christ, and never by works of human merit."
5. Does RTB deny or distort the Gospel? No. The Gospel message is that Jesus is God in the flesh, who died for sins, rose from the

dead, and freely gives the gift of eternal life to those who believe (Gal. 1:8-9). Hence, the gospel message is automatically included in the other essential doctrine of Christianity, which, as it has been demonstrated, are neither denied nor distorted by RTB.

The charge that a group's beliefs are heretical is a serious one that should not be made lightly. Some Christians "cry wolf" whenever a teaching seems to conflict with their beliefs. Such a practice merely divides Christians and ignores the biblical guidelines for determining what is heretical. In uncertain or borderline cases, we should always give the benefit of the doubt to the group in question. Ultimately, only God can judge human hearts; thus, the principle of "innocent until proven guilty" should always be the first rule we follow.<sup>32</sup>

Has Ham met the burden of proof for leveling a charge of heresy against old-earth creationists? No. We can state with certainty that mankind lost fellowship with God at the Fall, and human death—both physical and spiritual—entered the creation. This is stated in the Bible. However, there is no basis for claiming Christians must hold a young-earth view or that old-earth creationism is damaging to Christianity. In fact, one can argue old-earth creationism is a positive force in the church because it removes roadblocks that open the way for an aggressive advance of the Gospel.

#### THE NINTH COMMANDMENT

The ninth commandment, "You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor," has much to say about how we are to conduct ourselves in these matters. The duties required by this commandment include preserving and promoting the good name of our neighbors, defending their innocence, speaking the truth in matters of judgment and discouraging slander.<sup>33</sup> The sins forbidden by this commandment include prejudicing the truth and the good name of our neighbors, passing unjust sentence and raising false rumors.<sup>34</sup>

Simply put, we are to follow Jesus' command to love our neighbor as ourself (Mark 12:29-31). We are bound to meet other Christians with whom we disagree on matters of faith and practice. We do not have to agree with them but we do have an obligation to love them, treat them courteously and deal with them as we ourselves would like to be treated (Matthew 7:12). We may strongly disagree with their ideas and vigorously contend against them in the public square, but we must still show respect for these people in spite of our differences.<sup>35</sup>

The Bible lays out several principles in Romans 14 we should follow in dealing with Christians whom we disagree with. Obviously, this does not apply to the essential doctrines of the Christian faith. However, apart from the teachings the Bible instructs we cannot deviate from, there are numerous areas where we can disagree. The specific examples the Apostle Paul uses to articulate the principles involve the eating of meat sacrificed to idols, but the principles apply to other situations as well.<sup>36</sup>

First, we are not to have a judgmental attitude toward one another on

non-essential matters. Paul says in Romans 14:3, “the man who eats everything must not look down on him who does not.” In other words, we are to be respectful of those whose views differ from ours on matters where the Bible does not provide clear principles or guidelines. In verse 4, Paul goes on to say, “Who are you to judge someone else’s servant?” This is a reminder that we answer to God and only He knows our hearts and can properly judge our motives.

Second, we are to decide for ourselves what is right and wrong when it comes to the non-essentials of the faith. Paul says in Romans 14:14, “I am fully convinced that no food is unclean in itself. But if anyone regards something as unclean, then for him it is unclean. Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind.” In other words, a particular belief or practice is wrong for those who believe it is wrong, but others are free to disagree. Paul reminds us in verses 5-6 that the key test is whether the belief or practice is for the Lord.

Third, we are not to engage in divisive behaviors regarding non-essential matters that can affect other believers’ walk with the Lord. Paul says in Romans 14:13, “make up your mind not to put any stumbling block or obstacle in your brother’s way.” While we may object to their beliefs or practices, we should respect them for their sake knowing they are fellow partakers in the faith and God is working in their lives.

Whether Ham’s behavior violates the ninth commandment and the principles outlined in Romans 14 is between him and God. However, it is fair to say that his article makes divisive statements about old-earth creationists and those efforts need to be evaluated in terms of the impact they have on the body of Christ. Christians debating non-essential matters should not act like boxers whose goal is to demolish one another. Rather, we should “make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification” (Romans 14:19).

## CONCLUSION

As brothers and sisters in Christ, we need to conduct ourselves honorably in all things (Hebrews 13:18). Where we disagree on the non-essentials of the faith, our overriding goal should be to work for unity in the church. When we are unwilling to acknowledge our fallibility, we reveal we are more interested in winning a discussion than in the discovery and triumph of truth. Our reputation is much better served if we show ourselves ready to be corrected when in error, rather than if we keep obstinately to our viewpoint when the evidence shows it to be wrong.<sup>37</sup>

The charges Ham makes against old-earth creationists in “The god of an old earth” are clearly unwarranted. While he is a passionate champion of young-earth creationism and would like all Christians to hold that view, the ends do not justify the means. There is no basis for claiming the old-earth view violates Scripture, contradicts the essential doctrines or does damage to the Christian faith. Equally important, it is the job of the whole church, not individuals or groups within the

church, to judge these matters.

Of course, there are Christians on both sides of age-of-the-earth debate who are guilty of poor behavior. To this end, we must always be mindful that it is love that builds up (1 Corinthians 8:1) and our conversations should always full of grace (Colossians 4:6).

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## END NOTES

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## Seattle Chapter Reasons To Believe

### Who Are We?

The Seattle Chapter of Reasons To Believe is a local extension of the worldwide, interdenominational Reasons To Believe ministry. We exist to support our parent organization and foster local involvement in the ministry. We serve the Puget Sound area and are composed of Christians of different ages and backgrounds.

It is our conviction that the same God who created the universe inspired the Bible. Therefore, what God says through His word must agree with the facts of nature. We reject the notion that science and the Bible are at odds and provide a scientifically-sound and Biblically-faithful alternative to Darwinism and young-Earth creationism.

### What Do We Do?

Our mission is to remove the doubts of skeptics and strengthen the faith of believers. We provide scientific, historical and philosophical evidence that supports the Christian worldview and helps remove barriers to a belief in God, the Bible and the Gospel of Jesus Christ. We carry out this mission by:

- Helping people access RTB and other scientifically and biblically sound resources.
- Bringing nationally-known speakers into the area to promote the scientific reliability of the Bible.
- Assembling a team of local apologists to address questions about science, the Bible and related topics.
- Working with teachers and homeschoolers to achieve a balanced approach to the teaching of origins.
- Building alliances with local churches, ministries and groups to maximize the exposure of the RTB ministry.
- Reaching out to unbelievers with gentleness and respect, encouraging them to evaluate their worldviews.

We welcome your involvement and support. For more information, contact us at [seattle@reasons.org](mailto:seattle@reasons.org). Tax-deductible donations can be sent to: Seattle RTB, PO Box 99683, Seattle, WA 98139-0683.

## Questions? Get Answers.

Whether you are looking for scientific support for your faith or answers to questions about God, the Bible, and science, contact us at [seattle@reasons.org](mailto:seattle@reasons.org). You can also call the RTB hotline seven days a week, 5:00 to 7:00 PM at 626-335-5282.