

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

REASONS TO BELIEVE - SEATTLE AREA CHAPTER

NEWS AND VIEWS

JANUARY 2007

What's Happening?

Upcoming Interviews

Hugh Ross and Jeff Zweerink will address the question of life on Mars on "Living Christian with Michelle Mendoza," 1 P.M. Pacific on KCIS in Seattle. Jeff will appear on the show Jan. 25; Hugh on Feb. 1. Hugh will address the global warming issue Jan. 31 on "The Matter At Hand with Rachel Ford," 8:30 A.M. Pacific on WGRC/Lewisburg, PA. Available via the web.

Chapter Meeting

The Seattle Chapter will meet in late February or early March. This is a great opportunity to meet the local folks and get involved in the RTB ministry. Look for more information in our upcoming newsletters.

We Do Presentations

The Seattle chapter does presentations on wide range of topics ranging from the scientific evidences for God, to the age of the earth debate. If your church or group is looking for speakers, contact us at seattle@reasons.org.

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Does Old-Earth Creationism Contradict Genesis 1?

GREG MOORE

An article by Dr. Terry Mortenson—"Evolution vs. Creation: the Order of Events Matters"—claims long creation days only seem reasonable to those who pay insufficient attention to the order of events in Genesis 1.¹ The only way the day-age view can be harmonized with Genesis, it asserts, is by rearranging the biblical creation events. As proof, the article cites what Mortenson contends are numerous conflicts between science and Genesis 1.

This is the second half of an article that responds to Mortenson's charges. In December, I examined Mortenson's statements regarding the biblical order of various creation events. This month I will examine the scientific view of those events and the issue of animal death before the Fall.



SCIENCE

In this section, I will examine the scientific view of the origin of the universe, earth, plants and animals. I will also address the issue of whether science contradicts Genesis 1.

The Universe

Mortenson states science puts the Sun and stars before the Earth, the other planets at the same time as the Earth, and the Sun before light on the Earth. These statements accurately reflect the mainstream view known as big bang cosmology.

The Big Bang Theory postulates the universe sprang into existence from nothing some 13.7 billion years ago. It began as a very small, dense singularity. Since then, the universe has expanded into the vast cosmos we inhabit. Thus, all matter, energy, space and time are the result of this single cosmic event dubbed the "big bang."

How was our solar system formed? Scientists believe, after the big bang, there were fluctuations in the density of the universe. Eventually, gravity condensed clumps of matter together into gaseous clouds and formed protogalaxies. Within our region of space, this molecular cloud was disturbed (perhaps by the explosion of a nearby star)

and waves in space squeezed the cloud causing it to collapse. As gravity pulled the gas and dust together, the cloud began to spin. Eventually, the spinning disk became hot and dense in the center and cool at the edges. When the density and temperature high enough at the center, fusion ignition occurred, creating the Sun. Meanwhile, at the cool edges, particles collided and clumped together (a process known as accretion) to form the planets, all of which are about the same age.³⁴

The Big Bang Model has been subjected to numerous tests and thus far agrees with virtually all the data. Three compelling reasons to believe big bang cosmology are the Hubble expansion, cosmic microwave background and big bang nucleosynthesis. Hubble Expansion is the observed phenomenon that all galaxies (outside our local group of galaxies) appear to be moving away from us, implying the universe is expanding. Cosmic microwave background is observable radiation left over from the big bang. Big bang nucleosynthesis is the process by which lighter elements (such as hydrogen, helium and lithium) were formed. Scientists can calculate how much of which elements should have formed and observations agree with those calculations.³⁵

Scientific resistance to the big bang arises not from the data but from its profound theological implications—implications of a transcendent cosmic creation event and of supernatural design in so many of the universe’s characteristics.³⁶ That is the reason most of the competing models (e.g., infinite universes) seek to downplay the uniqueness of our universe and eliminate the need for a beginning. Since many atheists resisted the big bang model until the evidence compelled its acceptance, it is fallacious to characterize it as an atheistic proposal.

Does science conflict with the Bible? No. The Bible tells us the universe was formed at God’s command from nothing that preceded it (Hebrews 11:3). This agrees perfectly with the scientific view of an initial “big bang.” The Bible speaks of the universe being “stretched out.” This fits the big bang concept of cosmic expansion.³⁷ The Bible also tells us God created the heavens and the earth “in the beginning” but does not specify how it occurred. Therefore, it is entirely possible that God created the heavens and the Earth through a series of events consistent with big bang cosmology.

As to the issue of light on Earth, science maintains our young solar system was filled with a cloud of gas, dust and debris. As the Earth cooled and its gravitational field strengthened, it attracted meteorites and other objects that bombarded the earth for over 500 million years (known as the Hadean Era).³⁸ Thus, although the Sun ignited before the Earth formed, the early Earth would have been surrounded by a thick, dense mixture of cosmic gases and debris that blocked the sunlight for many millions of years.

Does this conflict with the Bible? No. The Bible tells us the earth was dark and formless as God prepared to begin His creative activity on Earth. On the first “day,” God separated light from darkness and caused daylight to appear. On the fourth “day,” God caused the Sun, Moon and stars to appear in the sky. This agrees perfectly with the scientific view of the early Earth. Initially, the atmosphere would have been opaque and blocked all sunlight. Over time, the atmosphere would have become translucent, allowing some sunlight to penetrate the darkness (“day” one). Later, the atmosphere would have become transparent, revealing the heavenly bodies in the sky (“day” four).

Continued on page 4

In the NEWS...

[The Gods Must be Tidy!](#)

This article on the Discovery Institute site by Jonathan Witt discusses the charge that the evidence of less than optimal design argues against a creator. He suggests it is merely the work of an artistic creator. Go to: <http://www.discovery.org/csc>, click on “more” under scientific research and look under philosophy and theology.

[Faith & Reason](#)

This article on the RTB website by Ken Samples addresses the relationship between faith and reason. Samples posits there are four reasons why the Christian Faith is reasonable and not based on blind faith. Go to: http://www.reasons.org/resources/connections/200610_connections_q4/index.shtml.

[Help Your Teen](#)

Many teens abandon the faith as they leave home. These Focus on the Family articles by Marc Fey discuss the importance of helping your teen develop a solid biblical worldview. Go to: <http://www.family.org/faith/A000000584.cfm> and www.family.org/faith/A000000711.cfm.

[Was Jesus Mean?](#)

This beliefnet article by Mark Galli discusses how when Jesus spoke or acted sternly it may have been a far cry from nice but it wasn’t a far cry from loving. He maintains Jesus sometimes needed to jolt people of their stupor. Go to: http://www.beliefnet.com/story/197/story_19741.html.

[Embryonic Stem Cell Research](#)

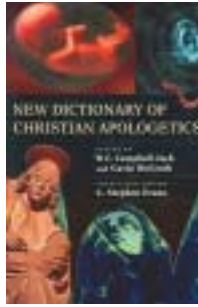
RTB has assembled a collection of questions posed to, and answered by, Dr. Fuz Rana on embryonic stem cells. This is a helpful resource for people who want a background on what they are and why they are controversial. Go to: <http://www.reasons.org>.

Book Reviews

New Dictionary of Christian Apologetics

W. C. Campbell
Intervarsity, 2006

Reviewer: Mike Brown



This is a large reference book at 763 pages of small type and no pictures or illustrations! The information on the back of the jacket best describes what you may expect from this book.

“The New Dictionary of Christian Apologetics is a must-have resource for professors and students, pastors and laypersons—in short, for any Christian who seeks a rational explanation of the Christian faith in the context of today’s complex and ever-changing world. Including hundreds of articles that cover key topics, historic figures and contemporary global issues relating to Christian apologetics, this one-volume resource will make an invaluable addition to any Christian library.

“The dictionary is divided into two parts: Part one offers a series of introductory essays that set the framework for the dictionary. These essays examine the practice and importance of Christian apologetics in light of theological, historical and cultural concerns. Part two builds on these essays to present alphabetized articles on individuals, ideas, movements and disciplines that are vital to a rational explanation of the Christian faith. Both essays and articles are written by leading Christian philosophers and theologians. Together, they form an indispensable resource for Christians in today’s pluralistic age.”

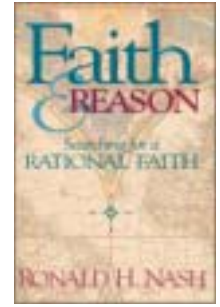
Part one only takes up 51 pages of the book. In part two you will find a wealth of information on people past and present who have affected how Western culture thinks, as well as movements and apologetic arguments. The book lists over 200 people who have contributed articles.

In the preface the editors tell us: “This Dictionary aims to provide resources for Christian apologetics in our contemporary contexts. The various articles aim not so much to provide a single ‘answer’ as to introduce theological, historical, philosophical and pastoral insights which, in turn, all contribute to create an apologia.”

Faith & Reason

Ronald H. Nash
Zondervan, 1994

Reviewer: Pat Lewis



How shall we answer the great questions of life? Does a God exist who created us? Does he care about us? When we die, does everything end? Is it rational to believe what we find in the Bible? Some skeptics have denied that it is possible to know anything at all! Such is the material with which philosophers work. Dr. Nash here gives us not only answers, but clear reasoning to show why they can be relied on.

The first of the above questions stands out. Is there a God? Basic to everyone’s world-view must be his response. A touchstone proposition of the Christian faith could be, “Human beings and the universe in which they reside are the creation of the God who has revealed himself in Scripture.” Proponents of other world-views try to refute it. Much of this book consists of various challenges by atheists and defenses by theists. The cosmological (cause) and teleological (design) arguments, religious experience and other ideas establish a basis for faith.

Evil presents a hard problem, one that blocks the way to faith for many. Yet there are paths through the difficulty. God may be using apparent evil to bring about a good that will be greater. If he creates a man having free will, who can freely choose to do good, there must be also the possibility of disobedience. If we lived in a protected world, one where no evil could occur, where would be any opportunity for humans to develop character by moral choices?

What about miracles? Two—the Incarnation and the Resurrection of Jesus Christ—are vital to the Christian faith. Dr. Nash shows that they are logically more likely to be true than any alternative theories. His final conclusion: The faith that brings us to acknowledge Jesus as our Lord is a rational faith.

The Earth

According to Mortenson, science puts dry land and an atmosphere before the sea on Earth. These statements accurately reflect the scientific view of the early earth. However, it is important to clarify the nuances of that view.

As previously stated, scientists believe the early Earth experienced impact events for over 500 million years in the Hadean Era. Some of these events would have produced enough energy to vaporize the upper layers of the Earth. Thus, the Earth would have been mainly molten liquid at that time.³⁹ As the bombardments ceased and the planet cooled, lighter elements rose to the surface and hardened to form the outer crust of the Earth.

During the same general time period, scientists believe the outgassing of gases trapped in the interior of the Earth began to form an atmosphere around the Earth.⁴⁰ Eventually, the atmosphere cooled to the point water began to condense and heavy rains poured down on the planet. After several hundred million years of constant rain, great oceans formed on the surface.⁴¹ The extent to which the water covered the Earth cannot be verified; however, many scientists believe the quantity of water was sufficient to cover the entire planet.⁴²

Scientists generally agree the continents formed several hundred million years later.⁴³ This occurred as molten rock rose upward and erupted to form “island arcs.” These arcs slowly drifted across the planet and clumped together; forming progressively larger pieces of land that eventually became continents.⁴⁴ This was the result of plate tectonics.

According to plate tectonics theory, the uppermost portion of Earth’s interior consists of two parts: the lithosphere, the solidified top layer, and an inner viscous layer known as the asthenosphere. The lithosphere exists as separate and distinct “tectonic plates” that float on the fluid-like asthenosphere. It is the movement of these “plates” that causes the formation and breakup of continents. Mountain ranges and other features of the Earth’s surface are also the result of tectonic compression, folding and faulting produces.⁴⁵

Does science conflict with the Bible? No. Genesis 1:2 indicates the Earth had an atmosphere and was covered by water prior to the six creation “days.” This agrees with the scientific view of the Earth in the later stages of the Hadean Era. According to science, the continents appeared after the great oceans formed (through plate tectonics). Again, there is no conflict with Scripture. The Bible tells us on the third “day,” God separated the water and caused dry land to appear. The Hebrew verb in this passage (*hayah*) means to come into existence.⁴⁶ Because the land was not an instantaneous *bara* creation, the land could have appeared gradually as God orchestrated the process of plate tectonics.

The Bible does not tell us what the Earth was like prior to Genesis 1:2. Therefore, the Bible does not rule out the possibility the Earth began as

a hot, dry planet. Young-earth creationists seem to assume, in order for Genesis 1 to be compatible with science, the Bible would have to state the earth was hot and dry at some point in the past. That is unreasonable. Genesis 1 is a short account of God’s creative work that omits many details. The fact some details are missing has no bearing on the truth of the statements it does make. It merely indicates that God did not feel those details were critical to the message He wanted to communicate to us.⁴⁷

Mortenson contends that the Bible teaches the atmosphere was created after the Earth was covered with water. This is based on the belief the atmosphere was created on the second “day.” As discussed previously, the second “day” describes an atmospheric division involving water, not the establishment of the Earth’s atmosphere. Genesis 1:2 indicates the earth was covered by water and had an atmosphere prior to the six creation “days.”

Mortenson also claims science rejects the idea of a global ocean and accuses Hugh Ross of being “badly uninformed” for saying the earth began with water covering the surface. However, it is Morrison who is mistaken. Support for a global ocean comes from three facts. First, the rain that fell on the early Earth for millions of years would have been of global proportions.⁴⁸ Second, comet impacts during the late Hadean Era would have increased the net amount of water on the Earth.⁴⁹ Third, the surface of the Earth would have been relatively flat due to the impact events that had liquefied the surface.⁵⁰ Therefore, the idea of a global ocean is not as far-fetched as Mortenson would have readers believe.

The Plants

Mortenson contends that science puts the sun before plants, simple plants before fruit plants, sea creatures before land plants, land animals before trees and insects before flowering plants. Based on the preceding discussions, it is clear the first statement—the sun before plants—accurately reflects the view of science. Let’s examine the other statements.

According to science, life first appeared in the sea about 3.8 billion years ago in the form of single-celled microorganisms. These were prokaryotes—single-celled organisms with no nucleus—such as blue-green algae (cyanobacteria). Next eukaryotes appeared—single-celled organisms with a nucleus—about 1.8 billion years ago. These included green algae that many scientists consider the first plants.⁵¹

Scientists believe the first plant life on the land was algae and cyanobacteria.⁵² It is not known precisely when they first appeared, but some researchers place them at about 1.3 billion years ago.⁵³ However, it is generally agreed that the first real “plants” (multicellular organisms) appeared about 700 million years ago. These were seedless, spore-producing plants known as the bryophytes—mosses, lichens and liverworts.⁵⁴

The bryophytes were followed by a series of progressively more complex plants. First, spore-producing vascular plants (plants with water-conducting tissue) appeared about 425 million years ago. Next, spore-producing progymnosperms and lycophytes appeared about 410 million years ago.⁵⁵ (The progymnosperms can be considered the first trees because they produced secondary growth or wood each year.)⁵⁶ The first seed-bearing plants, the gymnosperms, appeared about 390 million years ago. Finally, about 145 million years ago, the first angiosperms appeared—flowering plants with seeds enclosed in fruit. By about 100 million years ago, the angiosperms dominated the land, from grasses (rice, wheat, etc.), to fruit trees.⁵⁷

The scientific model is based on fossil evidence.⁵⁸ Of course, it is possible plants appeared earlier than the fossil record indicates. As a result, the dates assigned to the various types of plants should be seen as approximate timeframes.

Mortenson states science places simple plants before fruit trees. This is correct. Does this conflict with the Bible? No. The Bible tells us God commanded the land to produce seed-bearing plants and fruit-bearing trees. It does not speak of all plant life on the Earth. Hence, God could have introduced a series of simple plants before the plants and trees He created on the third “day.”

According to Mortenson, science places insects before flowering plants. This is also correct. Science places the first insects in the Devonian Period, about 400 million years ago.⁵⁹ The first flowering plants—the angiosperms—appeared 145 million years ago. Does science conflict with the Bible? No. The Bible does not tell us when insects were created. It should be noted, however, that science places the appearance of pollinating insects much later, at about the same time as the appearance of the flowering plants. This would seem reasonable from a creationist perspective.

Mortenson claims science places sea creatures before land plants. This is incorrect. Science places the first true plants—the bryophytes—at about 700 million years ago. Sea creatures appeared much later (in the Cambrian Explosion of 540 million years ago or the earlier Vendian Period).⁶⁰ Does science conflict with the Bible? No. The Bible speaks only of seed-bearing plants and sea mammals. Science places the first seed-bearing plants—the gymnosperms—at 390 million years ago. The sea mammals described in the narrative of the fifth “day” would have appeared in the upper Tertiary Period, around 30 million years ago.⁶¹

Mortenson also incorrectly maintains that science places land animals before trees. Science places the first trees—the progymnosperms—at over 400 million years ago. The first terrestrial animals appeared in the late Devonian or early Carboniferous Period, about 360 million years ago.⁶² Does science conflict with the Bible? No. The Bible places fruit-bearing trees on the third “day” and land mammals and possibly small reptiles on the sixth “day.” Science places the first fruit trees—the angiosperms—at 145 to 100 million years ago. The

land animals described in the Bible would have appeared in the upper Tertiary Period, around 30 million years ago.⁶³

Some Christians are uncomfortable with the idea of vegetation gradually appearing on the Earth in progressively more complex forms because it seems to support naturalistic evolution. They assume creationism requires an instantaneous creation of the plant life on Earth. However, the Bible does not demand that. The text tells us it was the land that was to produce the plants. Therefore, God could have introduced plants in a stepwise manner—each group of plants perfectly suited to the conditions on Earth and designed to transform the planet for the eventual creation of human beings.

The Animals

Mortenson states science puts earthworms before starfish, reptiles and dinosaurs before birds, land mammals before whales and bats, insects before mammals and land insects before flying insects, dinosaurs before dolphins and land reptiles before pterosaurs. As stated previously, many of these statements are beyond the level of detail of the biblical narratives of the fifth and sixth creation “days.” Nevertheless, let’s briefly examine them.

Scientists postulate sometime after eukaryotes—single-celled organisms with a nucleus—appeared in the seas, some diverged into animal cells about 1 billion to 700 million years ago.⁶⁴ Of course, this is based on the evolutionary paradigm. In reality, it is difficult, if not impossible, to differentiate primitive animal eukaryotes from plant eukaryotes.

Some scientists believe the first multicellular creatures appeared in the seas during the Vendian Period of 650 to 540 million years ago. They believe these organisms resembled worms, soft-bodied relatives of the arthropods (creatures with an exoskeleton) and cnidarians (jellyfish, coral, etc.). However, not all scientists agree with this interpretation because the fossil record of this period is extremely sparse and open to interpretation.⁶⁵

The first uncontested record of multicellular creatures is in the Cambrian Period, beginning 540 million years ago. This is known as the “Cambrian explosion,” a time when representatives of all the modern phyla (groupings of animals based on their external or internal characteristics) suddenly appeared in the sea. This includes such things as sponges, jellyfish, corals, starfish, sea cucumbers, sea worms, mollusks and some vertebrates.⁶⁶

From there, the scientific model shows a series of progressively more complex animals appearing—first in the sea, then on land. Sharks and primitive fish appeared in the Ordovician Period, about 450 million years ago. Insects and amphibians appeared in the Devonian Period, about 400 million years ago. The first reptiles appeared in the Carboniferous Period, about 320 million years ago. The first dinosaurs and mammals appeared in the Triassic Period about 250 million years ago. The first birds appeared in the Jurassic Period about 150 million years

ago. Whales and the more modern varieties mammals and reptiles appeared in the Tertiary Period—whales about 50 million years ago, modern mammals and reptiles around 30 million years ago. The first hominids (bipedal primates) appeared from 5 to 1.8 million years ago. Finally, human beings appeared, about 40,000 to 100,000 years ago.⁶⁷

Scientists generally agree on the order in which the major animal groups appeared. For the most part, the sequence of events is supported by fossil evidence.⁶⁸ However, dates are being constantly adjusted as new discoveries are made. There are also controversial areas such when the first birds and whales appeared. Therefore, it is very important to distinguish between facts and interpretations when examining the scientific view of the appearance of the animals.

Mortenson claims science places earthworms before starfish. This is incorrect. Science places starfish in the Cambrian Period—about 540 million years ago—long before the appearance of the first land creatures.⁶⁹ Does this conflict with the Bible? No. The Bible does not specify when earthworms and starfish were created. Mortenson assumes starfish were created with sea creatures on the fifth “day” and earthworms with land animals on the sixth “day.” The Hebrew word meanings do not support that interpretation.

Mortenson states science places reptiles and dinosaurs before birds. This is correct. Science places the first reptiles in the Carboniferous Period, about 320 million years ago, and the first dinosaurs in the Triassic Period, about 250 million years ago.⁷⁰ The first birds are placed in the Jurassic Period, about 150 million years ago, although recent discoveries, such as Protoavis, suggest true birds may have appeared around the time of the first dinosaurs.⁷¹ Does this conflict with the Bible? No. The Bible does not specify when dinosaurs were created. The narrative of the sixth “day” may include the creation of small, modern reptiles. If so, these reptiles would have appeared in the upper Tertiary Period, about 30 million years ago, long after the first birds.

Mortenson’s statement that science places land mammals before whales is correct. Science places the first land mammals in the Triassic Period, about 250 million years ago, and the first whales in the Tertiary Period, about 50 million years ago.⁷² Does this conflict with the Bible? No. The Bible tells us whales were created on the fifth “day” and land mammals on the sixth “day.” However, the narrative of the sixth “day” only speaks only of advanced land mammals: wild and easy to domesticate large mammals and small, low to the ground mammals. The fossil dates for these mammals post-date the first whales by many million of years.⁷³

Mortenson statement that science places insects before mammals is also correct. Science places the first insects in the Devonian Period, about 400 million years ago⁷⁴, and the first mammals in the Triassic Period, about 250 million years ago. Does this conflict with the Bible? No. The Bible does not specify when insects were created. Mortenson assumes insects are included with the birds God created on the fifth

“day.” The Hebrew word meanings do not support that interpretation.

Mortenson states that sciences places land mammals before bats. This is correct. Science places the first mammals in the Triassic Period, about 250 million years ago, and the first bats in the Cretaceous Period, about 80 to 100 million years ago.⁷⁵ Does this conflict with the Bible? No. Mortenson assumes bats are included with the birds created on the fifth “day.” This is possible but not required by the Hebrew word meanings. However, if that is the case, the advanced land mammals God created on the sixth “day” would have appeared in the upper Tertiary Period, about 30 million years ago, long after the first bats.

Mortenson correctly states that science places dinosaurs before dolphins. Science places the first dinosaurs in the Triassic Period, about 248 million years ago, and the first dolphins in the Miocene Era, about 24 million years ago.⁷⁶ Does this conflict with the Bible? No. The Bible does not specify when dinosaurs were created. Mortenson assumes dinosaurs are included with the land creatures created on the sixth “day.” The Hebrew word meanings do not support that interpretation.

Mortenson also correctly states that science places land reptiles before pterosaurs (prehistoric flying reptiles). Science places the first reptiles in the Carboniferous Period, about 320 million years ago, and the first pterosaurs in the Triassic Period, about 225 million years ago.⁷⁷ Does this conflict with the Bible? No. Mortenson assumes pterosaurs are included with the birds created on the fifth “day.” The Hebrew word meanings do not support that interpretation. It should be noted, however, the advanced land mammals God created on the sixth “day” appeared long after the first pterosaurs.

Finally, Mortenson states that science places land insects before flying insects. This is also correct. Science places the first land insects in the Devonian Period, about 400 million years ago, and the first winged insects in the Carboniferous Period, about 320 million years ago.⁷⁸ Does this conflict with the Bible? No. Mortenson assumes flying insects are included with the birds created on the fifth “day” and land insects with the land creatures on the sixth “day.” The Hebrew word meanings do not support that interpretation.

Admittedly, much of the scientific view of the appearance of sea and land animals is influenced by Darwinian evolution. However, that is not reason to reject mainstream science. Looking at the data objectively, the scientific view of the timing of the sea and land creatures does not contradict the Bible. As has been shown, a close examination of the facts of science and Hebrew word meanings of the narratives of the fifth and six “days” can resolve supposed conflicts.

ANIMAL DEATH

Mortenson claims the Bible teaches there was no animal death before man was created. He gives the impression this comes from order of events in Genesis 1. It does not. It is based entirely on the young-earth view of the Fall (Adam and Eve’s sin in Genesis 3). Young-earth cre-

ationists contend animal death was not part of the original creation but something God introduced as a consequence for Adam and Eve's sin. It is beyond the scope of this paper to provide a lengthy analysis of this theology. For those who desire such a review, many good resources are available.⁷⁹ However, I will briefly comment on this issue.

Young-earth creationists maintain there have been two physical existences on the Earth. Prior to Adam and Eve's sin, paradise literally existed on earth—there was no disease, decay or animal death. Then, at the Fall, God changed the creation from a perfect place to a fallen one that included those things. However, nowhere does the Bible indicate the world God created was different than ours. Indeed, the Bible tells us the creation was earthly by nature (1 Corinthians 15:46) and not heavenly (1 Corinthians 15:50).⁸⁰

Some Christians point to Genesis 1:31—"God saw all that He had made, and it was very good." They argue God would not call a creation that included animal death "very good." However, we must be careful not to put too much weight on our ideas of what "good" means. The Bible does not tell us the creation was perfect. The Hebrew word for good, *towb*, connotes a practical or economic benefit.⁸¹ Thus, the creation was "very good" for achieving God's goals for mankind—namely, to allow rational, morally free agents to come into existence and make free choices to love, obey and be in relationship with Him.⁸² Animal death in no way conflicts with that goal.

It is important to examine what happened at the Fall (Genesis 3:14-19). The reality is God judged only those who had sinned. The serpent would crawl on his belly and be bruised on the head by the seed of the woman. Eve was judged by having more pain in childbirth. Adam was judged by having to work harder for his food because the ground would no longer freely give fruit. There were no other judgments because all the guilty parties were punished.⁸³ Nothing in this passage states the judgment included the imposition of animal death.

It is also important to keep in mind that Adam and Eve were not created immortal. Eternal life was only available to them through the supernatural "tree of life." If they were not immortal, then the animals were not immortal either. Unlike Adam and Eve, however, the animals did not have access to the "tree of life" and had no way to avoid death.⁸⁴ Also consider God's warning to Adam that, if he ate from the tree of good and evil, he would surely die (Genesis 2:17). Unless Adam understood the concept of physical death, there was hardly any point in telling him the consequence of disobedience would be death. Only animal death would have provided Adam an adequate example of what "death" meant.⁸⁵

Finally, the Bible tells us that God's creative activity ceased on the seventh "day." Genesis 2:1 states: "Thus the heavens and the earth were completed..." The Hebrew word for completed (*kalah*) means to bring a process to completion.⁸⁶ The following verse tells us God rested from all His work. The Hebrew word for rested, *shabat*, means to cease,

desist and put an end to.⁸⁷ This clearly indicates God's creative activity had ended. Nothing in Scripture suggests that God created carnivores, or changed herbivores to carnivores, after the Fall. Hence, it is reasonable to conclude carnivorous activity was part of the original creation.

There are several problems with the young-earth view of the relationship between sin, death and the atonement. First, although human death is linked with human sin, it moves beyond the clear teaching of Scripture to claim all death is the result of human sin. Second, since animals are amoral creatures that are incapable of sinning, it is an unwarranted extrapolation to extend the consequences of human sin to them. Third, and most important, 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.⁸⁸

CONCLUSION

The message and purpose of Genesis 1 is the revelation of the one true God who created all things and ever keeps the universe under his sovereign control. The second major aspect of Genesis 1 is the revelation God brought forth His creation in an orderly and systematic manner.⁸⁹ It is an historical account that can and should be taken literally. However, the text does not provide all the details of exactly how God did everything. We can speculate about the missing details only if we approach the text with the respect it deserves, neither minimizing the message nor twisting it to promulgate our personal views.

In his passion to refute old-earth creationism, Mortenson presents his young-earth interpretations of Genesis 1 as biblical facts and criticizes old-earth creationists—calling them "evolutionized Christians" who play "fast and loose with the sacred text." A better approach to the age of the Earth debate is to avoid name calling and examine arguments on both sides of the issue to see whether they are biblically defensible.

As we study the text of Genesis 1, we have a responsibility to ascertain as clearly as possible what God meant by the language He guided His inspired prophet to employ.⁹⁰ This requires that we go beyond the English translations of the text—no matter how well those translations seem to fit our personal view of Genesis 1—and carefully examine the text in the original Hebrew. When we do, we see the supposed conflict between Genesis 1 and the factual data of science does not exist.⁹¹ Rather than contradicting Genesis 1, science underscores the veracity of the Bible.

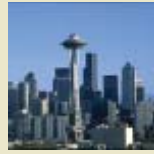
Christians have nothing to fear when it comes to old-earth science. Since God is truth, we can be confident the facts of nature will always agree with the facts of the Bible. When we take the time to properly understand the two, we can see the revelation of God's world agrees perfectly with the revelation of God's word.

Greg Moore is president of the Seattle Chapter of RTB. He is a trained RTB apologist and works for the city of Everett, WA.

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. 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. You can also call the RTB hotline seven days a week, 5:00 to 7:00 PM at 626-335-5282.