



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

REASONS TO BELIEVE - SEATTLE AREA CHAPTER

NEWS AND VIEWS

JUNE 2010

What's Happening?

Reasons Institute

Reasons to Believe offers a new Creation vs. Evolution course through its Reasons Institute. The five-to-seven week course is designed to help participants use RTB's creation model to challenge the evolutionary paradigm. For more information go to: <http://www.reasons.org/learning/reasons-institute/courses>.

Social Networking

RTB is now using several social networking sites. Check them out at: Twitter at http://twitter.com/RTB_official, Facebook (you can login through www.reasons.org/rtb-social-networking), and You Tube at <http://www.youtube.com/user/ReasonsToBelieve1>.

Chapter Meetings

In the fall, the Chapter will begin a series of Saturday morning meetings called "Sound Reasons" which will feature special presentations on a variety of topics designed to equip and inform you. Stay tuned for more information about this exciting series!

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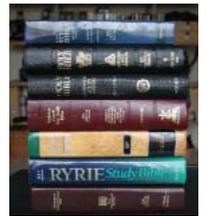
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Historic Age Debate: Dependence on Translations (Part 4)

DR. JOHN MILLAM

The King James Version renders the sixth commandment as "Thou shalt not kill" (Ex. 20:13; Deut. 5:17). Can people use this as evidence that capital punishment is unbiblical? Actually, no. The original Hebrew in these verses specifically refers to murder, not to all forms of killing. This example highlights the need to consider other translations or better yet to go back to the original text.

The vast majority of theologians and scholars (both past and present) have relied on Greek, Latin, English, or other translations for their understanding of the Old Testament (OT). This series of articles has focused on the implications this practice has for the interpretation of Genesis 1-11 in particular part 1. Parts 2 and 3 discussed how differences in [language] and [culture] can affect how we construe these critical passages. Here we focus on the roles that errors or problems in specific translations play in debates over Genesis.



MOST INFLUENTIAL TRANSLATIONS

Septuagint (or LXX): Hebrew Scripture was first translated into Greek starting c. 282 BC. This version was named the Septuagint (meaning 70) because the work was said to have been done by 70 rabbis. Legends grew up around its formation imbuing it with special authority. It was particularly influential among the Hellenistic (Greek-speaking) Jews living outside of Israel as well as those in the early church.

Old Latin Bible (or Vetus Latina): The Old Latin Bible refers to a collection of translations of the Greek Septuagint into Latin. These manuscripts are "translations of translations" rather than true translations from the Hebrew. The Old Latin nourished Western believers who knew Latin but not Greek or Hebrew.

Vulgate: After Latin began to dominate Europe, Jerome (fifth century) was commissioned by the Pope to create a single authorized Latin translation to replace the Old Latin ones. Originally, Jerome was instructed to only revise the Old Latin by comparing it against the Septuagint and the Greek New Testament because people were familiar with the Old Latin and wouldn't be receptive to a significant change in

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Thinking as Christians Part 6

DAVID PETERSON

Last time, we looked at the fact that Bible “stories” are really history, and can hold their own when put side by side with our secular studies of history. Sometimes there will be apparent conflicts, like that of Darius the Mede, that can’t be resolved with the current state of knowledge; but we can rest on our faith that there is a resolution, even if it is never found. In apologetics, we would like to be able to answer every challenge with a conclusive response, but that is not how truth works! No historical source (secular or scriptural) is complete, so there is always room for some missing fact that would resolve the problem. In addition, some apparent contradictions come from misinterpretation either of scripture or of other data. We need to be ready to change our interpretations when we find a contradiction with clear facts (not just theories) from other sources. Often we must recognize several possible ways to take a passage, and hold to one tentatively rather than dogmatically.

The same thing can happen with science: Since our knowledge is incomplete, we must be humble in our insistence on what we “know” about the world. Even the Bible makes no claim to tell us everything we’d like to know, and it is easy to misinterpret it based on what we think we “know.” For a case study in how an apparent contradiction with scientific truth can arise, let’s look at the story of Galileo.

Before Copernicus, most of the world believed “scientifically” that the sun goes around the earth. Why? It was obvious—you can see the sun go around, and you can’t feel the earth moving. From this common-sense idea, early scientists built astronomical theories with which they could predict eclipses, the movement of planets, etc., giving further credence to it. (They had to make their model of the solar system more and more complicated, with circles around circles around circles, in order to accurately predict where a planet would be seen – but it did work.)

Living in that culture, readers of the Bible would naturally interpret passages about a moving sun and a stable earth in the obvious way, taking it to mean just what they believed. For example, “He set the earth on its foundations; it can never be moved” (Psalm 104:5); “It [the sun] rises at one end of the heavens and makes its circuit to the other; nothing is hidden from its heat” (Psalm 19:6); “The sun rises and the sun sets, and hurries back to where it rises” (Ecclesiastes 1:5).

In reading passages like these, Christians of the time would never have reason to consider that there could be alternative interpretations! As we now know, theirs was not the only, or the best, interpretation; but it took new scientific evidence to force a re-thinking. At first (in the 1500’s, the time of Luther and Calvin) the evidence for the new Copernican theory was slight; in fact, until Kepler’s discovery in 1605 of elliptical orbits, the new theory made less accurate predictions than the old theory! But things changed in 1609 when Galileo’s telescope revealed the similarity of other planets to the earth, the phases of Venus (showing that it went behind the sun), and the moons of Jupiter (showing that orbits around planets were possible). A few scientists became convinced by such arguments that the sun must be at the center. And in response to them, theologians turned verses like those above into proof-texts, declaring that the Bible teaches that the sun moves.

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In the NEWS...

[Babies and Good and Evil](#)

This *tothesource* article discusses a study conducted by a psychology professor at Yale University to determine if babies know the difference between good and evil. His conclusion was some sense of good and evil seems to innate. Go to http://www.tothesource.org/6_2_2010/6_2_2010.htm.

[Molecular Machines in Cells](#)

This Discovery Institute article by Casey Luskin discusses how molecular machines pose a serious challenge to evolutionary theory and examines 40 examples, many of which exhibit irreducible complexity. Go to: <http://www.discover.org/a/1479>.

[ID and the Origin of Evil](#)

This Salvo Magazine article by Jay Richards addresses the claim that bad designs and evil disprove intelligent design. His answer is that ID only claims that certain features of life and the universe exhibit design, not everything. Go to <http://www.salvomag.com/new/articles/salvo4/idrichards.php>.

[The Case Against Abortion](#)

This *tothesource* article goes beyond the issue of whether abortion is immoral and examines the issue of whether it is a violation of rights. The author concludes abortion is wrong because it denies unborn victims the right to legal protection against deliberate homicide. Go to http://www.tothesource.org/5_5_2010/5_5_2010.htm.

[The Celebrity of Artificial Life](#)

In this article, Fuz Rana discusses the claim that researchers production of a synthetic genome in the lab eliminates the need for a Creator and supports a natural origin of life. According to Rana, it shows just the opposite, that life on Earth required the work of an Intelligent Agent. Go to: www.reasons.org/celebrity-artificial-life.

the reading of the text. Jerome wanted to translate the OT from the Hebrew instead and eventually did just that. He still had to stay close to earlier translations, so some details/problems of the Septuagint and Old Latin translations were carried over into the Vulgate.

King James Version (KJV): The fifth in a series of “authorized” English Bibles, the KJV was commissioned in 1611 by King James I of England. While its OT was translated directly from the Hebrew, in many cases the KJV follows the Septuagint or Vulgate instead. (This occurred primarily when the translators had difficulty understanding the original Hebrew.) For example, the use of “firmament” in Genesis 1:8 is a direct carry over from the Latin firmamentum of the Vulgate rather than a direct translation of the original Hebrew (raqiya or “sky”). Nevertheless, the KJV remained the dominant English translation among Protestants until the twentieth century.

As history shows, “transitional inertia” allowed problems in early translations to pass into newer ones (such as the KJV’s use of “firmament”). Furthermore, all four of these translations were popularly treated as being inspired in their own day; so many believers considered them of equal or greater authority than the Hebrew original. As a result, errors in these translations were often defended rather than being corrected.

IMPACT ON INTERPRETATION

The debate over the age of the Earth and the days of creation involves figuring out which point-of-view understands Genesis “literally.” But ultimately, “literal” applies only to the Hebrew original. Translations are human productions and must be judged according to how closely they reproduce the original text.

While Bible translators strive to be faithful in their work, small problems or errors may still creep in. Thankfully most of occurrences are insignificant. But we can identify a number of instances where translational issues have had a direct and long-lasting effect on how theologians interpreted the early chapters of Genesis.

THE SONS OF GOD/GIANTS

Genesis 6:1-4 reads that the “sons of God” had children with the “daughters of men.” Historically, the most popular way of understanding this passage was that the “sons of God” refer to angels or to the descendants of the godly line of Seth, Adam’s son. The translators of the Septuagint, however, biased interpretations toward one standpoint by substituting “angels” for “sons of God”. (The sons-of-God-as-angels view was fashionable in Jewish circles at that time. It appears in the apocryphal Book of Enoch, so the translators of the Septuagint were simply reflecting popular thinking.) This helps explain why the angel interpretation held exclusive dominance in the church for the first two centuries. A second example can be found in this same passage where the Septuagint translated Nephilim (literally “fallen ones”) as “giants” (Greek gigos). As a result, the view that the Nephilim were “giants” was rampant in the early church.

EVENING-MORNING-DAY IN GENESIS 1

At the center of controversy over the days of creation is the evening-morning-day phrase, which appears six times in Genesis 1. The KJV renders it, “And the evening and the morning were the Xth day.” This interpretation actually misrepresents the original Hebrew in multiple ways and in each case lends artificial support for a calendar-day view.

First, the verb (“was”) appears twice in the Hebrew, but the KJV actually leaves out the second occurrence and so reduces it to a simple sentence. The Young’s Literal Translation (YLT) correctly says, “and there is an evening, and there is a morning–day one.” Second, the KJV reads “the first day” for Genesis 1:5, whereas the Hebrew actually reads “one day” or “day one” instead. Third, the KJV adds the definite article “the” before “day” even though it is not present in the Hebrew. For example, Genesis 1:8 KJV says “the second day” when it should say “second day” or “a second day.” Adding “the” makes the reading easier in English, but it implies that it is talking about a specific period of time (i.e., a solar day) rather than representing time generically. Given the dominance of the KJV for the last several centuries, this mistranslation has played a major role in popularizing the calendar-day interpretation among English speakers.

THE GENESIS GENEALOGIES

Many early Jewish and Christian writers summed the ages at fatherhood in the genealogies of Genesis 5 and 11 in order to compute the time from Abraham back to Adam and creation. Such attempts assume that these genealogies don’t skip names, but, as previously discussed, this assumption is untenable (see parts 2 and 3). For those who chose to perform these calculations anyways there is yet another problem—the ages given in the Septuagint differ from those in the original Hebrew. It seems they were altered to make the gradual decrease in life spans smoother. Thus, estimates for the time of Adam and Eve’s existence (again assuming no gaps) were in the range of 5700-5200 BC based on the modified values in the Septuagint (and Old Latin). The Vulgate restored the Hebrew values and so subsequent attempts placed Adam around 4000 BC. This little exercise demonstrates how using the Septuagint instead of the Hebrew gave dramatically different results.

USSHER-LIGHTFOOD CHRONOLOGY

In the mid-seventeenth century, James Ussher and John Lightfoot took the young-earth view of the Genesis genealogies one step farther and published chronologies of biblical events starting with the creation of the world in 4004 BC. Details of their chronologies were included in footnotes and even headers of some KJV Bibles. The popularity of the KJV among Protestants effectively spread and canonized this estimate for the age of the earth throughout the English-speaking world. This in turn, helped solidify their assumptions regarding Genesis 1-2, 5, and 11. While these miscalculations don’t represent errors in the text of the KJV itself, it does demonstrate how a particular translation can dramatically shape the age debate.

Thus the “church” (Catholic, and to some extent Protestant) unwittingly took the side of “old science” against “new science”, putting itself in the midst of a controversy where it didn’t belong, and creating a conflict between scripture and science that never had to exist. Within a century after Galileo, the scientific evidence became so strong that Christians found themselves in the position of insisting the Bible taught something that was clearly false. They eventually recognized that the passages supposed to teach geocentrism are not intended to do so, and can be properly interpreted in ways that agree with modern science. Were they compromising with science, letting science win against scripture and tell us what to believe? No; they were just doing (belatedly) what we always have to do in interpreting scripture: identify the possible meanings of a passage, compare these with other scriptures and external data, and choose the best interpretation to fit everything we know.

We now recognize that saying the sun rises does not mean that it actually moves; even a modern astronomer can say that, when it is appropriate to use everyday language. And the Bible is not written in modern technical English! If only Christians had realized that sooner.

How can we avoid becoming a source of “anti-apologetics”, providing ammunition for unbelievers to use against scripture, instead of supporting our faith?

First, we must be careful to distinguish between scripture itself and our interpretation of it, and be aware of our biases. Like scientists, as humans we tend to interpret according to what we believe, rather than the other way around. This should keep us from making absolute statements about scientific issues, pro or con, that might tie us to an idea that may later be proved worthless, and which the Bible doesn’t really teach.

Second, we can take both scripture and other data seriously, looking carefully for valid ways to fit it all together, yet being careful not to jump at answers that mishandle one or the other. Then we can offer possible explanations of apparent discrepancies, or point out ways in which scientific facts (if they turn out to be true) will support faith, always remaining humble as we do so. The correct interpretation of scripture will never conflict with the truth about nature, but we may not know either as well as we think!

Thus the same principles we saw for handling historical conflicts apply also to science: recognize the limitations of the data, be humble about our interpretations of scripture and science, propose harmonizations tentatively, be open to correction by new data, which may disprove our most cherished assumptions, or suggest ideas we’d never imagined.



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 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.