



"VITAL ARTICLES ON SCIENCE/CREATION"

impact

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Impact #360 PROGRESSIVE CREATIONISM

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Did God use vast ages of time, even millions and billions of years, to bring the universe and the world to its present form? Many Christians have adopted this view during the past two centuries in order to bring the Bible into harmony with the consensus of contemporary scientific opinion.¹

"Progressive creationists," such as Drs. Hugh Ross and Robert Newman, profess faith in the inerrancy and infallibility of the Bible, and reject more radical views such as theistic evolutionism (e.g., Dr. Howard Van Till), but nevertheless believe also in the timetable of Big Bang cosmology. They believe that millions of years separated the (miraculous) appearance of the various kinds of living things.²

The efforts of most secular scientists to explain the ultimate origin of the universe in terms of purely natural processes, however, suffer from severe limitations. No one except God was there when the universe began, and thus no human being could have observed *the nature, the sequence, or the duration* of the original events. That is why scientists differ so profoundly from each other on this vital issue.³

Four thousand years ago, God said to Job: "I will demand of thee, and answer thou me. Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? declare, if thou hast understanding" (Job 38:3-4). The stupendous impact of that question continues to the present hour.

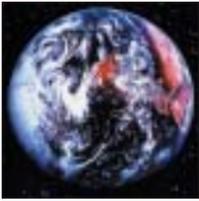
One of the truly amazing things about the Bible is that it agrees with itself! Even though God used forty human authors over two thousand years, and even though highly complex topics are dealt with, there are no contradictions! Job and Moses, the earliest Bible writers, are supplemented, not contradicted, by the last writer, John. That is because the Spirit of God "moved" them to record what was beyond their own finite limitations (II Peter 1:21; cf., I Peter 1:11).

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The intricate details of Genesis 1–2 are sufficient in themselves to negate the theory of Progressive Creationism. This discussion must await a future article. However, our purpose at this time is to demonstrate that stretching the days of creation to millions of years to accommodate secular theories becomes even more absurd when we allow the entire Bible to shed its essential light upon the first chapter of Genesis. For example, it was through the mere spoken word of the pre-incarnate Christ, “the Word” (John 1:1,3; 1:14), that “All things were made.” But how, actually, were the heavens and the earth created through the Second Person of the Triune Godhead? *What method* did He use, and *how long* did He take to do the work of creation? Here is the amazing answer: “By the word of the LORD were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of His mouth . . . For He spake, and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast” (Psalm 33:6,9). Note carefully that God did not create a tiny speck of energy from which the stars and planets gradually formed through billions of years as the Big Bang theory requires. Instead, “the heavens . . . [even] all the host of them” (Genesis 2:1) came into existence instantly. Progressive Creationism is rendered impossible by this statement. The second book of the Old Testament confirms what the first book says about the duration of creation events: “in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is” (Exodus 20:11; cf., 31:17). No Israelite, hearing these words, could have understood them as allowing for long periods of time. They knew that the six days in Genesis were literal days, because each of them was identified by a numerical adjective (one day . . . second day . . . etc.), and each of them was locked into the “evening . . . morning” formula which refers to a 24-hour period. This includes the seventh-day Sabbath, which all Jews understand to be a literal day.

A major problem with “Progressive Creationism” is its insistence that animals (and even pre-Adamic “men”) died long before Adam sinned. Thus, the strong Biblical connection between sin and death is broken. The reason why “the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now” and is in “the bondage of corruption” is because it “was made subject to vanity, not willingly [i.e., because of some inherited design defect], but by reason of Him [God] who hath subjected” the creation to the curse at the time of Adam’s rebellion (Romans 8:20–22). Thus, there could have been no death in the animal kingdom before the Fall and the curse. Progressive Creationism collapses under the weight of Romans 8. In this connection, it is highly important to understand the nature of the Kingdom which Christ offered to Israel, and which He will establish at His Second Coming. In many ways, it will be a restoration of the pre-Fall earth. During the Kingdom age, which our Lord taught us to pray for (Matthew 6:10), “The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, . . . and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. . . . [and] they shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain [=kingdom; cf., Isaiah 2:2]: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea” (Isaiah 11:6–9). All threats from the animal kingdom will end, for God “will cause the evil

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beasts to cease out of the land: and they shall dwell safely in the wilderness, and sleep in the woods” (Ezekiel 34:25; cf., Hosea 2:18; Isaiah 35:9). This Kingdom will be a time of “restitution [*apokatastasis*—“restoration,” cf., Matthew 17:11; Acts 1:6] of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began” (Acts 3:21).

These characteristics of the coming thousand-year Kingdom of Christ (cf., Revelation 20:2–7) show us clearly what the animal kingdom was like in the pre-Fall world. Indeed, as Genesis 1:30 affirms, all animals (“every beast of the earth . . . every fowl of the air . . . and to every thing that creepeth upon the earth”) at the beginning of the world were exclusively plant-eaters, like Adam and Eve (v.29). This totally excludes the possibility of millions of years of death in the animal kingdom before the Fall, and thus of “Progressive Creationism.”

How can Christians believe in an “old earth” when our Lord stated that Adam and Eve were created at “the beginning of the creation” (Mark 10:6)? Christ our Creator further asserted that the blood of the prophets, including Abel who was murdered by his older brother because of his faithfulness to God, began to be shed at “the foundation of the world” (Luke 11:50). In fact, human tribulation, which began for Adam and Eve when they were expelled from the Garden, has occurred “from the beginning of the creation which God created” (Mark 13:19), not millions of years after the earth was formed.

Furthermore, Christ who created all angels (Colossians 1:16), told the Pharisees that the greatest of the angels, Satan, “was a murderer from the beginning” (John 8:44; cf., I John 3:12,15, which explains that Satan encouraged Cain to murder Abel). The apostle John repeated this significant point: “the devil sinneth from the beginning” (I John 3:8). It is quite evident that Satan’s rebellion against God did not occur millions of years before Adam, for God announced, just after He had created Adam and Eve, that “every thing that He had made” was still “very good” (Genesis 1:31). It was therefore sometime between the end of the seventh day and the temptation of Eve (Genesis 3:1; II Corinthians 11:3; Revelation 12:9) that Satan led his great angelic rebellion against God (Ezekiel 28:15; Isaiah 14:12–15), and sought to enlist Adam, the king of the earth, to join this rebellion, by reaching him through his queen. Furthermore, the apostle Paul, who had “the mind of Christ” (I Corinthians 2:16), stated that the invisible things of God, such as His “eternal power and Godhead” have been “clearly seen” by men since “the creation of the world” (Romans 1:20). Note that it had to be *men*—not animals—who *saw* God’s invisible attributes of greatness at the time of the world’s creation. This excludes millions of years from the Genesis record.

We conclude that progressive revelation—each additional verse shedding infallible light on previous revelation—demonstrates conclusively that “old-earth Progressive Creationism” must be abandoned by those who claim to believe that God has not erred in His written revelation of truth in the sixty-six books of the Bible.

Notes:

1. For several years I attempted to do this by means of “the gap theory,” which puts vast ages between Genesis 1:1 and 1:2 because, as a young Christian, I was still deeply influenced by courses in historical geology and paleontology which I took while still an unbeliever at Princeton University. See Whitcomb, *The Early Earth* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1986), pp. 141–58, for my reasons for finally rejecting this compromise position.
2. For a highly readable analysis of the views of Hugh Ross, see John MacArthur, *The Battle for the Beginning* (Thomas Nelson, Inc., 2001), pp. 57–71. On the views of Newman and Van Till, see J. P. Moreland and John Mark Reynolds, eds., *Three Views on Creation and Evolution* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Pub. House, 1999).
3. See, for example, Henry M. Morris, *That Their Words May Be Used Against Them: Quotes From Evolutionists Useful For Creationists* (El Cajon: I.C.R., 1997).



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