

Inerrancy and Biblical Authority: How and Why Old-Earth Inerrantists Are Unintentionally Undermining Inerrancy

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Abstract

The International Council on Biblical Inerrancy (ICBI) met from 1978–1988 and drafted two very helpful documents explaining the doctrine of inerrancy and defining the principles of sound interpretation (hermeneutics). The documents affirmed that the Bible is inerrant in matters of history and science and that scientific theories should not be used to overturn Scripture's teaching about Creation and the Flood. Nevertheless, the vast majority of the 300+ signatories of those two documents favored some old-earth interpretation of Genesis 1. How could this be? This paper will carefully examine the relevant affirmations and denials in those documents to expose the ambiguous wording that opened the door for these old-earth views. I will then document a number of examples to show how leading inerrantists unknowingly and unintentionally have violated the principles that they endorsed in those two documents. They have thereby undermined the inerrancy and authority of the Bible that they sincerely love and defend.

Keywords: inerrancy, hermeneutics, young-earth, old-earth, naturalistic, uniformitarian, assumptions, interpretations

In 1978, about 300 Christian leaders and scholars gathered in Chicago for what became known as the International Council on Biblical Inerrancy (hereafter ICBI). It was at that point the largest interdenominational gathering of evangelical scholars in the history of the church. They met to defend the doctrine of the inerrancy of Scripture in the face of the growing liberalism in the church. After their initial meeting, they continued to meet several other times over the next ten years. As a result of their meetings in 1978, they published the “Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy” (hereafter CSBIInerrancy). This carefully worded document is worthy of our thoughtful consideration for it is solidly biblical, but it also contains some tiny defects of significant importance that need to be addressed. Those tiny defects are like cracks in a dam which have allowed numerous false ideas to flood the church.

I begin with a few statements from the preface of that document. The 1978 preface to the CSBIInerrancy states the following:

The authority of Scripture is a key issue for the Christian Church in this and every age. Those who profess faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior are called to show the reality of their discipleship by humbly and faithfully obeying God's written Word. To stray from Scripture in faith or conduct is disloyalty to our Master. Recognition of the total truth and trustworthiness of Holy Scripture is essential to a full grasp and adequate confession of its authority.

Amen! That is an excellent statement and is faithful to both Scripture and historic, orthodox Christianity. In the preface they also say,

We gladly acknowledge that many who deny the inerrancy of Scripture do not display the consequences of this denial in the rest of their belief and behavior, and we are conscious that we who confess this doctrine often deny it in life by failing to bring our thoughts and deeds, our traditions and habits, into true subjection to the divine Word.

That is so true on both accounts. We are all inconsistent people. We all profess to believe things and yet at times act, speak, or think in ways that are contrary to our professed beliefs. I am very aware of this in my own life as I press on to grow in my relationship with Jesus Christ. I will return to this helpful ICBI confession at end of this essay.

The CSBIInerrancy also contains many statements that are related to the question of origins and the correct meaning of Genesis. We need to look at those carefully. As I will explain and document in what follows, the many old-earth signers of the CSBIInerrancy were and are confused about (1) the nature of science, (2) the interpretation of the “scientific data,” and (3) the nature of “general revelation.” As a result, they have unintentionally violated their own principles of interpretation and unintentionally undermined the inerrancy and the authority of Scripture.

The ICBI's Strong Statements on Inerrancy and Hermeneutics

In Article 12 of the CSBIInerrancy we read, “We affirm that Scripture in its entirety is inerrant, being free from falsehood, fraud, or deceit.” To make sure that we clearly understand that affirmation, they provide a denial statement:

We deny that Biblical infallibility and inerrancy are limited to spiritual, religious, or redemptive themes, exclusive of assertions in the fields of history and science. We further deny that scientific hypotheses about earth history may properly be used to overturn the teaching of Scripture on creation and the flood.

As a biblical, young-earth creationist, I couldn't agree more with those carefully worded statements. But we should not jump to conclusions about what the signers of that document believed about evolution and the age of the creation.

In 1982 the ICBI produced another document called the "Chicago Statement on Biblical Hermeneutics" (hereafter CSBHermeneutics) to give the church the ICBI's principles for how to correctly interpret the inerrant Word of God. In Article 15 we read,

We affirm the necessity of interpreting the Bible according to its literal, or normal, sense. The literal sense is the grammatical-historical sense, that is, the meaning which the writer expressed. Interpretation according to the literal sense will take account of all figures of speech and literary forms found in the text.

And then to clarify they add, "We deny the legitimacy of any approach to Scripture that attributes to it meaning which the literal sense does not support."

In Article 17, they further say, "We affirm the unity, harmony and consistency of Scripture and declare that it is its own best interpreter." To avoid misunderstanding they add, "We deny that Scripture may be interpreted in such a way as to suggest that one passage corrects or militates against another. We deny that later writers of Scripture misinterpreted earlier passages of Scripture when quoting from or referring to them."

And in Article 20 we learn,

We affirm that since God is the author of all truth, all truths, Biblical and extrabiblical, are consistent and cohere, and that the Bible speaks truth when it touches on matters pertaining to nature, history, or anything else.

But to prevent any misunderstanding they add, "We deny that extrabiblical views ever disprove the teaching of Scripture or hold priority over it." Then in Article 22, we read,

We affirm that Genesis 1–11 is factual, as is the rest of the book. We deny that the teachings of Genesis 1–11 are mythical and that scientific hypotheses about earth history or the origin of humanity may be invoked to overthrow what Scripture teaches about creation.

I do not think these statements could be any clearer. And I would affirm them wholeheartedly.

ICBI Inerrantists and Belief in Millions of Years

Sadly, however, most of the 334 scholars and leaders who signed (library.dts.edu/Pages/TL/Special/

ICBI_1_typed.pdf) the document on inerrancy (and many of them who also signed the document on hermeneutics) and a great many inerrantist scholars and leaders both before them and still today have done or are doing exactly what this statement says we should not do, as I will document below. They are using evolutionary scientific hypotheses about earth history, cosmic history, and human origins to overthrow what Scripture plainly teaches about Creation, the age of the earth, the Flood and in a growing number of cases, what it teaches about Adam and Eve.

On November 10–13, 1982, ICBI participants met for Summit II in Chicago to discuss and define principles of hermeneutics. At that meeting a number of papers were presented and later published in a single volume. One essay in that volume dealt with the relationship between Scripture and natural science (Bradley and Olsen 1984). It was written by Walter Bradley, then professor of materials science at Texas A&M University, and Roger Olsen, an expert in geochemistry and in the management of a consulting engineering company at the time. In accepting the millions of years advocated by the scientific majority, they argued for the day-age view of Genesis 1; namely, the days of Creation were not literal, 24-hour days but figuratively represented hundreds of millions or billions of years each.

In response to that essay, Gleason Archer, then Old Testament professor at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, wrote an affirming old-earth response. He too was a day-age proponent. Henry Morris from the Institute for Creation Research countered with an excellent response from the young-earth perspective.

But Bradley, with whom I've had personal conversation on a number of occasions, told me once that as far as he knew probably 90% of the signers of the CSBInerrancy held to some old-earth view (e.g., gap theory, day-age view, framework hypothesis, etc.). And given my knowledge of the history of this controversy over the past 200 years, I do not doubt Dr. Bradley's assessment. Norman Geisler, a very prominent leader in the ICBI and an old-earth proponent until his death in July 2019, confirms this when he said,

Most of the founders and framers of the early inerrancy movement of the 1900s (e.g., Warfield and Hodge) and the contemporary movement of the 1970–80s (e.g., the International Council on Biblical Inerrancy) held firmly to inerrancy but saw no necessary tie of it to a Young Earth view (Geisler 2013).

Those well-known leaders and scholars involved with the ICBI included Gleason Archer, Bill Bright, James Montgomery Boice, W.A. Criswell, Wayne

Grudem, Walter Kaiser, J.P. Moreland, J.I. Packer, and R.C. Sproul. The executive committee of the ICBI had 15 members, at least seven of whom were old-earth creationists.¹ As far as I know, none of them were young-earth creationists.

How could so many godly scholars and leaders sign such clear statements in defense of inerrancy and the proper interpretation of Scripture and yet accept the evolutionary scientists' claims about millions of years of geologic and cosmic history? How could they affirm that the Bible is inerrant in matters of history and science and insist that no scientific hypothesis should be allowed to overthrow the teaching of Scripture and yet embrace old-earth views of earth history?

Two reasons, I believe. First, they do not think the Bible teaches young-earth creation. We will come back to that later. Secondly, some wording in the ICBI documents opened the door for their old-earth interpretations, which we now must consider.

Scientific Data or Faulty Interpretations of the Bible?

Article 20 of the 1982 Chicago Statement on Biblical Hermeneutics (CSBHermeneutics) says, "We further affirm that in some cases extra-biblical data have value for clarifying what Scripture teaches, and for prompting correction of faulty interpretations." This wording is problematic, though it seems to be protected by Article 20's denial statement: "We deny that extra-biblical views ever disprove the teaching of Scripture or hold priority over it." That caveat seems strong enough. But we need to consider carefully the somewhat ambiguous wording in the affirmation of this twentieth Article because it indeed opens the door to all the old-earth views represented by those who signed this document. It says,

We further affirm that in some cases extra-biblical data have value for clarifying what Scripture teaches, and for prompting correction of faulty interpretations.

Notice the words that I highlighted in italics. The word "data" is an ambiguous or misleading word. Not everything that is claimed to be scientific "data" is really data. Often what is labeled "data" or "facts" is actually an *interpretation* of some data, and those interpretations are driven by *assumptions* (presuppositions). For example, what the different rock layers in the Grand Canyon are made of is data—i.e., facts—that all geologists (evolutionist or creationist) agree on. No one disagrees that the top

layer, the Kaibab, is *limestone* and that the bottom layer, the Tapeats, is *sandstone*. That is incontestable data. But the statement "The layers of the Grand Canyon were deposited over the course of 300 million years, and the canyon was carved in about 5 million years by the Colorado River"² is not giving us data. Rather it is an *interpretation* of some of the observational evidence (data). This interpretation is driven by uniformitarian, naturalistic assumptions that have controlled geology for over 150 years, which is an important point I will address later below. So, we must not confuse *data* with *interpretations* of data.

But in the above ICBI affirmation we also need to note that extra-biblical sources are said to "prompt correction of faulty interpretations." I would agree that extra-biblical sources may shed light on some word or verse of Scripture regarding historical context or geography or the meaning of a very rare word in the Bible, for example. But I would contend that they add or should be allowed to add only some color to a black and white picture that is derived from careful exegesis of the biblical text and comparing Scripture with Scripture. An extra-biblical source might correct an interpretation of some relatively minor point. But we must be extremely careful to not let those sources significantly change the picture derived from Scripture alone. Let me illustrate.

Radically Changing the Picture

Here is a photograph of me (fig. 1). Now, if you were told that this was an accurate picture of what the photographer shot the day he did, you might



Fig. 1. The author, Dr. Terry Mortenson.

¹ The list of men on the Executive Committee of the ICBI is in Geisler 1980, x. Old-earthers on the Executive Committee were at least these (along with their known or likely view on Genesis 1 at that time): Gleason Archer (day-age), James M. Boice (leaned toward day-age), Norman L. Geisler (appeared to lean to day-age), James I. Packer (appeared to lean to day-age), Earl D. Radmacher (leaned to day-age), Francis A. Schaeffer (unsure but appeared to lean to day-age), and R.C. Sproul (favored the Framework view at that time—but in 2006 rejected that view and affirmed belief in literal days; although, until his death he never claimed to hold a young-earth view [see later in this article]). I'm not aware if any of the others were/are young-earthers: Edmund P. Clowney, John H. Gerstner, Jay H. Grimstead, Harold W. Hoehner, Don E. Hoke, A. Wetherell Johnson, Kenneth S. Kantzer, and Robert D. Preus.

² This statement summarizes what evolutionary geologists and park rangers teach to the millions of visitors to Grand Canyon each year.

interpret it to mean that I like gray shirts, gray slacks, and dark gray ties, that I part my hair on the left side of my head, and that I naturally always cross my right arm over my left arm. But what if you later obtained an outside source of information? You talked to an eyewitness who was there when the photo was taken. He told you that on the day the photo was taken I was actually wearing a sky-blue shirt, a red tie, and khaki pants, that I parted my hair (as always) on the right side, and that as always it was my left arm that was crossed over my right arm. Those are minor details: they add color and correct some wrong interpretations. But they do not really change the picture, not in any significant way.

But what if that outside source of information said that actually the picture in fig. 2 is what the photographer was looking at through his camera when he took that picture? Now in this case, the outside source of information has radically changed the picture you have of the past photo shoot! To be sure, there are similarities. My beloved dog has hair, just like I have hair. We both have four appendages that we can call arms and legs, and we both often wear something around our neck. But fig. 2 is a radically different picture than fig. 1.



Fig. 2. The author's dog.

That degree of discrepancy between the picture of me and the picture of my dog is, I submit, the degree of discrepancy between the picture of creation based on what Genesis says and the various pictures developed in old-earth views. Old-earth proponents have used an outside source—namely, what the *majority of scientists* say is the truth about the origin, age and history of the creation—to interpret Genesis 1–11. As a result, they have radically “changed the picture”

(changed the meaning) of Genesis 1–11. They have changed the picture (interpretation of the biblical text) from the “picture” (or meaning) derived from careful exegesis of the biblical text which has been confirmed by the vast majority of godly Christian interpreters for the first 18 centuries of church history and many others over the past 50 years.³

Changing the Order of God's Acts of Creation

As represented in fig. 3, the evolutionary view of the history of the universe starts with a big bang about 13.8 billion years ago. The first stars formed by natural processes (by time and chance and the laws of physics and chemistry) about 10–12 billion years ago. Our sun was formed, they say, from a collapsing gas cloud about 5 billion years ago. Shortly after that (about 4.5 billion years ago) our earth (formed from a ring of gas and dust around the sun) was a hot molten blob. It slowly cooled and developed a hard crust. Eventually, they claim, it evolved an atmosphere and oceans, and over billions of years it became the habitable planet that we live on today (with thousands of meters of sedimentary rock layers containing billions of dead plants and animals that have become fossils).

But this evolutionary view totally changes the picture from the one that Genesis presents to any reader who is not trying to harmonize it with any scientific claims. Genesis 1 says that the earth was the first thing created and it was completely covered with water for two days. Then God made dry ground appear and covered it with all kinds of plants. Then He made the sun, moon, and stars. God supernaturally performed all of these creative acts in four days that seem like normal days with literal evenings and literal mornings. So, by attempting to harmonize Genesis 1 with the big bang theory, you must radically change the picture that Genesis presents.⁴ But the statements we have considered from the CSBIrrancy and the CSBHermeneutics *seem* to make that unacceptable, if we believe the Bible is inerrant and the supreme authority for determining truth.

Regarding plants and animals (fig. 4), evolutionists dogmatically claim that the order of the history of life is this: fish evolved millions of years before land plants, and the first dinosaurs evolved millions of years before the first birds. But the Bible says, no, God created all the land plants on Day 3 before He created the fish on Day 5, and He created the birds

³ See chapters 1–3 in Mortenson and Ury (2008).

⁴ Hugh Ross has influenced many evangelical lay people and Bible scholars to believe that the big bang theory is compatible with Genesis 1. To do so he attempts to make a distinction between the Hebrew word *bara* (create) and the Hebrew word *asah* (make), and he says that God created the stars and sun in Genesis 1:1 (which represents about 9.2 billion years) which due to heavy cloud cover on the earth only became visible on the fourth non-literal day. None of these views can be harmonized with Scripture. See Terry Mortenson 2007; 2013.



Fig. 3. A pictorial summary of the evolutionary view of the history of the universe beginning with the big bang 13.8 billion years ago (top row), compared to the biblical account (bottom row).

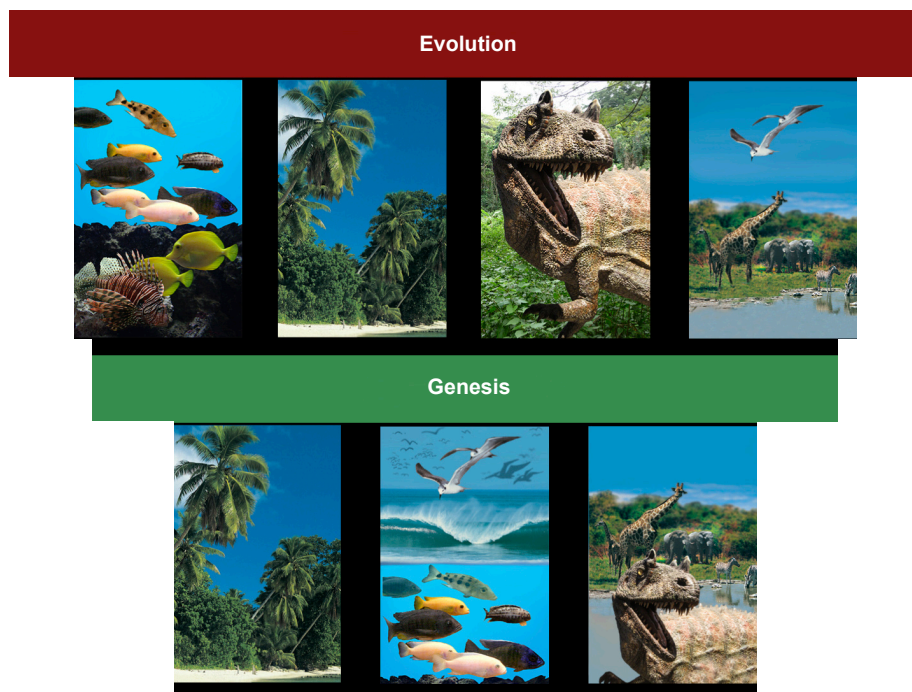


Fig. 4. A pictorial summary of the evolutionary view of the order in which animals and plants evolved (top row), compared to the order in which God created them according to the biblical account in Genesis (bottom row).

with the fish on Day 5 before He made the dinosaurs, which are land animals made on Day 6. So, the evolutionary order is wrong again. We cannot change the picture, without doing serious violence to the inerrant, authoritative biblical text. To accept any

old-earth view, we must conclude that God not only seriously miscommunicated about how long He took to create, but that He also did not even come close to accurately explaining the order in which He created things.⁵

⁵ For a layman’s refutation of various old-earth views (e.g., gap theory, day-age view, framework view), see Ham (2013). For more in-depth refutations, see Jordan (1999); Mortenson and Ury (2008); and Sarfati (2011).

Changing the Nature of the Fall

As illustrated in fig. 5, there is another way that all old-earth views (day-age, progressive creation, framework hypothesis, gap theory, cosmic temple functionality view, theistic evolution, etc.) radically change the picture. They do so by accepting the millions of years of death, bloodshed, violence, disease, and extinction in the animal world, as well as hurricanes, earthquakes, etc., before Adam. In other words, all those old-earth views accept millions of years of what philosophers call “natural evil.”

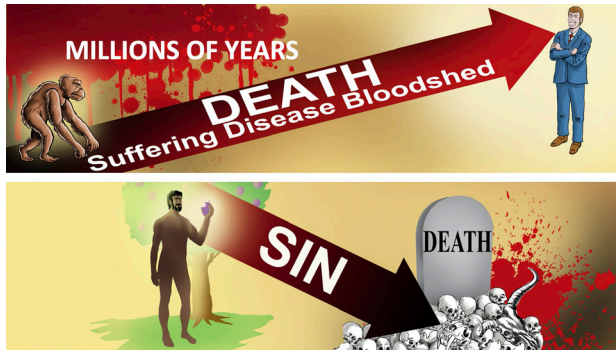


Fig. 5. All old-earth views accept the millions of years of death, bloodshed, violence, disease, and extinction in the animal world before Adam (top image), in contrast to historic Christian orthodoxy that *both* moral *and* natural evil are the result of Adam’s sin and God’s resulting curse on the creation (bottom image).

The Bible teaches, and historic Christian orthodoxy has always affirmed, that both moral evil (caused directly by man: murder, adultery, theft, war, etc.) and natural evil (hurricanes, tornados, earthquakes, animal predation and disease, extinction, etc.) are the result of Adam’s sin and God’s resulting curse on the creation. So, we do not live in the original “very good” creation (Genesis 1:31), but we now live in a “cursed” creation (Genesis 3:14–18; Genesis 5:29; and Revelation 22:3), which is in bondage to corruption waiting eagerly to be liberated at the second coming of Jesus Christ (Romans 8:18–25).

Evolutionists do not simply insist that animal disease, predation, and death have occurred for over 500 million years. They confidently claim that there have been five major mass extinction events (or periods) when 60–90% of all species living at the time perished as a result of a natural disaster.⁶ We cannot accept the evolutionary view of death and other

natural evils without radically changing the picture that the Scriptures present to us. Therefore, we cannot accept any old-earth views, all of which incorporate the evolutionary view of the history of death. To put millions of years of death and other natural evils before the Fall is simply a very subtle way of saying that the Bible errs when it obviously teaches the opposite. It is simply impossible to say with any biblical and logical consistency that Scripture is inerrant when it speaks about the historical reality and cosmic impact of the Fall, but that millions of years of death and natural evil occurred before Adam was created. Such a radical reinterpretation of Genesis and other biblical passages is *in effect* a denial of scriptural inerrancy, despite old-earth passionate claims of belief in inerrancy. Some old-earth proponents try to remove this problem by saying that the curse of death only applies to humans. But such a position does not stand up to scrutiny when considering all the relevant Scriptures and is not consistent with historic Christian orthodoxy.⁷

Another Major Problem: Misunderstanding About “General Revelation”

Not only have most old-earth proponents (whether laymen, scientists, or theologians) ignored or changed the order of God’s creative acts in Genesis 1 and ignored or changed the cosmic impact of the Fall, but most of them also seem to be very confused about “general revelation.” In Article 21 of the CSBHermeneutics we read,

We affirm the harmony of special [revelation] with general revelation and therefore of biblical teaching with the facts of nature. We deny that any genuine scientific facts are inconsistent with the true meaning of any passage of Scripture.

Again, there’s problematic language here. Of course, biblical teaching will never be contradicted by truly factual statements gleaned from the study of the natural world. However, not all so-called “facts of nature” are truly facts, and not all “scientific facts” are genuine facts. And as I will explain, old-earth inerrantists have accepted many things as “facts of nature” (which are really *interpretations* of some of the observed facts of nature) and have used those “facts” to reinterpret Genesis to try to accommodate the idea of millions of years of natural history. We

⁶ The names and approximate evolutionary dates of the supposed five major extinction events are these: Late Ordovician (440 Million Years Ago, 100+ families of marine invertebrates perished, www.park.org/Canada/Museum/extinction/ordmass.html), Late Devonian (365 MYA, 70% of marine invertebrates perished along with other marine life, www.park.org/Canada/Museum/extinction/devmass.html), Permian-Triassic (245 MYA, greatest mass extinction event, 90% of marine species and 70% of land vertebrate species went extinct, http://www.sciencedaily.com/articles/p/permian-triassic_extinction_event.htm), Late Triassic (210 MYA, at least 50% of species went extinct, www.wikipedia.org/wiki/Triassic%E2%80%93Jurassic_extinction_event), Cretaceous-Tertiary (65 MYA, second largest mass extinction, 85% of all species, including all dinosaurs, www.park.org/Canada/Museum/extinction/cretmass.html). The Canadian web site bases its information on leading evolutionist Stanley (1987).

⁷ On this important issue of no animal death, disease, and extinction, or other natural evils before the Fall, see this in-depth discussion: Mortenson 2012. See also Mortenson and Ury (2008), chapters 13 and 14. Hugh Ross’ view on this subject is thoroughly refuted in chapter 6 of Sarfati (2011).

also need to understand that there is an enormous amount of confusion in the church, even among our most respected theologians, over what is called here “general revelation.” That term is never used in the Bible, but it is the label theologians use to describe the evidence in creation by which God reveals Himself to mankind.

What Is General Revelation?

We need to be very careful here to note what Scripture says the creation reveals. The Bible teaches that creation clearly reveals *God*; it reveals *His existence* and at least some of *His attributes*. Romans 1:18–20 explains clearly that creation reveals those truths about God *infallibly to all people in all times and all places* regardless of their age, education level, culture, or religion. That is why it is called *general revelation*: it is revealed truth known generally, accessible globally and ever since the beginning of creation. Therefore, all people are without excuse for failing to worship and thank God, for they are suppressing the truth in unrighteousness. Paul adds in Romans 2:14–16 that all Gentiles who have never even seen God’s moral law written in Scripture will be guilty before God for their sins because God’s law is written in their conscience. So, the creation reveals our Holy Creator infallibly.

The atheist is a fool (Psalm 14:1) because he denies the obvious, which is seen all over creation. And every idolater is a guilty fool for worshipping anything or anyone other than the God revealed in creation, who is the same God revealed in Scripture: the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God of the apostles, and the God who became man as our Lord Jesus Christ. Job saw this truth of God’s existence 2,000 years before Paul (Job 12:7–10) and David and another psalmist saw it about 1,000 years later (Psalm 19:1 and 97:6). Everyone living 2,000 years ago at the time of Jesus and the apostle Paul saw it. And all people who have ever lived have seen this evidence regardless whether they lived in an atheistic, pantheistic, polytheistic, Jewish, Muslim, or Christian culture. God has given a witness of Himself to all the pagan nations throughout history (Acts 14:15–17). So, we need to have this clear in our minds: Scripture says creation reveals *the Creator*. And that is what orthodox Christians have always taught and believed. That is what general revelation is. Now we can contrast this with what general revelation is *not*.

What General Revelation Is NOT

General revelation is *not* the collection of truth claims believed by the majority of modern scientists

and understood only by a fraction of humanity that understands twentieth-century science. Those truth claims would only be known by *some* people, not generally by *all* people in *all* times and *all* places. Furthermore, the history of science assures us that many things that the majority of scientists believe as “established truth” today (even in the area of origins) will be rejected in the future as false.

Also, nowhere does Scripture teach that nature is infallible in teaching us about the history and origin of the world. The story of evolution and millions of years is *not* general revelation. The claims of the majority of geologists that the earth is 4.5 billion years old is *not* general revelation. The claims of the majority of cosmologists that the universe is the result of the big bang and 13.8 billion years of cosmic evolution is *not* general revelation. Put another way, creation is *not* the 67th book of the Bible, as Hugh Ross erroneously teaches.⁸ General revelation is the truth about *God* that is revealed in creation to *all* people in *all* times and *all* places, *not* the truth claims of unbelieving scientists that only a fraction of people alive today understand.

What Is Special Revelation?

Truth that is revealed only to *some* people at *some* times and in *some* places is what theologians call “special revelation.” Special revelation is given by God’s grace and sovereign choice. The person or persons who receive it do not deserve to receive it. Examples of special revelation are an audible statement by God or a dream given by God to a man (e.g., Adam, Abraham, Joseph, Daniel). Special revelation includes any miracle done by Jesus or an apostle or an Old Testament prophet in the presence of some human witnesses. Special revelation is also the books of the Bible (God’s written word) given through and to some Jews and Christians. The supreme special revelation is Jesus Christ—the living Word, the exact representation of God (Hebrews 1:1–3)—who only a small part of humanity ever saw and heard when He walked on the earth.

Mass Confusion About General Revelation

Many Christians, including many evangelical theologians and scientists, are very confused and mistaken about general revelation. They equate general revelation with what scientists have “discovered” about the world. So, when they use the evolutionary view about origins (especially regarding the age of the creation) to reinterpret Genesis, they think they are using general revelation (which they think is truth) to interpret special revelation (the Bible). But actually, they are using sinful man’s fallible

⁸ See Richard Mayhue’s thorough refutation of Ross’s view in chapter 4 of Mortenson and Ury (2008).

and ever-changing *hypotheses* and *interpretations* of some of the observations of a fallen, *cursed* creation to reinterpret God's infallible, inerrant, holy Word. *This is a truly serious error in their theological thinking and handling of Scripture.*

So, we must be clear: general revelation is *not* the consensus view of scientists about origins. General revelation is *not* what the majority of scientists claim about Darwinian evolution, or the evolution of man from apes, or the formation of the Grand Canyon over 300 million years, or the formation of the solar system from a gas cloud. The big bang theory is *not* a truth of general revelation.

According to Scripture, creation infallibly reveals *the Creator*. Scripture does not teach that the creation reveals the history and origin of the world. The Bible does not say that by studying the creation itself we can figure out when and how God created stars, planets, the Moon, plants, animals, and people and what the history of the earth has been since its initial creation. Certainly, scientists can discover things that are consistent with and confirm what God has revealed in His Word about the origin and history of creation. But no Bible verses teach that people can study the creation apart from the revealed truth of Scripture and arrive at a correct view of origins.

General revelation through the conscience and the created world confronts all people at all times with the reality and character of *God*. To be sure, no human sees all that creation and conscience reveal about God, and some people see more of it than others see. For example, a PhD scientist can see the witness to the existence and attributes of the Creator in the design and mind-boggling complexity of the DNA molecule, whereas a tribesman in the Amazon jungle may not even know that DNA exists. But all people in all places, cultures, and times have been exposed to a great and sufficient amount of general revelation. Therefore, as Paul says, they are without excuse for not thanking and worshipping the true and living God (Romans 1:18–20). The truth of general revelation is just as infallible in its message as is all special revelation. And all people are responsible for their response to the general revelation of truth, whether they have any exposure to special revelation or not.

The Continuing Attack on Inerrancy Today

It has been over 40 years since the International Council on Biblical Inerrancy began to meet, and we are still in need of defending the doctrine of inerrancy, because it is increasingly under attack even by professing *inerrantist* evangelicals.

A new defense of inerrancy in the church is a web site called "Defending Inerrancy," started by the late

Dr Norman Geisler. On that website Christians are urged to sign this statement: "I affirm that the Bible alone, and in its entirety, is the infallible written Word of God in the original text and is, therefore, inerrant *in all that it affirms or denies on whatever topic it addresses*" (italics added).⁹ I agree wholeheartedly with that statement and have signed my affirmation on the web site.

Prior to his death in 2019, the author of that statement (Geisler) was a prolific author, seminary professor of philosophy and theology, former president of the Evangelical Theological Society, and a signer of and a leading authority about the International Council of Biblical Inerrancy's statements on inerrancy and hermeneutics. He greatly helped the church through his teachings and many writings. He further says on this website:

Inerrancy is foundational to all other essential Christian doctrines. It is granted that some other doctrines (like the atoning death and bodily resurrection of Christ) are more essential to salvation. However, all soteriological (salvation-related) doctrines derive their divine authority from the divinely authoritative Word of God. So, epistemologically (in a knowledge-related sense), the doctrine of the divine authority and inerrancy of Scripture is the fundamental of all the fundamentals. And if the fundamental of fundamentals is not fundamental, then what is fundamental? Fundamentally nothing! Thus, while one can be saved without believing in inerrancy, the doctrine of salvation has no divine authority apart from the infallibility and inerrancy of Scripture.¹⁰

That is vintage Norman Geisler rhetoric, and I totally agree with him. But until his death, he did not believe Genesis regarding the age of the creation. He accepted the millions of years. He said in his *Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics*, "The problem is deepened by the fact that there is *prima facie* evidence to indicate that the days of Genesis are indeed 24 hour periods." But Geisler did not believe the days of creation were literal (like our days), because, he said, "...scientific dating has demonstrated that life emerged gradually over many millions of years....Most scientific evidence sets the age of the world at billions of years" (Geisler 1999a, 270, 272). We will come back to his views on this point later.

Another recent effort to defend inerrancy was the Shepherds' Conference at John MacArthur's Grace Community Church on March 3–8, 2015. I am very encouraged that the whole Shepherds' Conference was devoted to this subject. Many of the messages preached at that conference were brought to the

⁹ "Sign the Petition," <http://DefendingInerrancy.com>.

¹⁰ "What's the Big Deal?" <http://DefendingInerrancy.com>.

wider Christian community through the multi-author book, *The Inerrant Word* (MacArthur 2016). Based on the messages I have listened to and the chapters I have read, I have no doubt that they all are extremely helpful. But of all the topics covered, the book (and the conference messages, I assume) missed the “elephant in the living room.” The greatest assault on biblical inerrancy over the past 200 years has been the teaching of evolution and millions of years.

In his introduction to the book, MacArthur discusses six contemporary assaults on Scripture under the heading “Scripture Is Attacked, and We Are Called to Defend It.” Those six attacks on the truth and authority (and therefore the inerrancy) of Scripture, according to MacArthur, are Roman Catholic tradition, theologically liberal higher criticism, modern cults, Pentecostalism, clinical psychology, and market-driven churches (MacArthur 2016, 12–15). He clearly affirms that “the Bible comes with God’s absolute authority” (MacArthur 2016, 15). Under the heading “Scripture Is Accurate, and We Are Called to Demonstrate It,” he discusses the accuracy of the Bible regarding science. He says,

Scripture presents the most plausible understanding of the origins of the universe and the existence of life. The Bible’s teaching that God created the world makes far more sense than the notion that everything spontaneously generated from nothing, which is what the atheistic presuppositions of evolution require. (MacArthur 2016, 17)

But in what follows he only affirms that Genesis 1:1 is true, that Scripture is consistent with the first and second laws of thermodynamics, that the Bible is correct about the number of stars being countless, and that the earth is suspended in space. He says the Bible “is accurate whenever it addresses scientific phenomena” (MacArthur 2016, 18). That is all true, and I am grateful for his strong statements. I am also encouraged that he has elsewhere expressed his belief in young-earth creation.

But the greatest challenge to the Bible’s inerrant truth and authority concerns the age of the creation (God created in six literal, 24-hour days around 6,000 years ago), Noah’s Flood (it was a global, yearlong catastrophe), and the origin of man (Adam was made supernaturally from dust, and Eve was made supernaturally from Adam’s rib). These clear teachings of Scripture are the specific truths that are challenged and rejected by most people who believe in the authority of the majority view in science over the authority of Scripture. And this is not just a challenge in America but in every country of the world, as I know partly from speaking on creation in 35 countries on five continents over the last 30 years and also from my

interactions with other AiG staff who have spoken in many other countries.

In *The Inerrant Word*, Stephen Nichols provides a helpful survey of how we arrived at the modern challenge to biblical inerrancy from 1880 to the present (MacArthur 2016, 170–182). But the challenge started much earlier. It is rooted in the Enlightenment’s elevation of human reason to be the supreme authority for determining truth and the promotion of naturalism (i.e., deism and atheism) through modern science. Deistic and atheistic writers insisted that we must remove God and the Bible from our thinking when we are doing scientific research and seek to understand everything by *time plus chance plus the laws of nature* (the laws of physics, chemistry, and biology). This naturalistic worldview was not only applied to repeatable, observable experimental science that is used to find cures for diseases and to develop new technology. But this naturalistic worldview was also applied to historical sciences that seek to reconstruct the history of the creation from the beginning of time. I will explain historical science later.

This naturalistic thinking infected geology first in the late 1700s and early 1800s resulting in a rejection of Noah’s Flood and the biblical chronology. This in turn paved the way for the widespread acceptance of Darwin’s theory of biological evolution in the late 1800s and of the big bang theory in the early twentieth century. Fifty years before Darwin published his famous *On the Origin of Species* (1859), most of the church had quickly accepted the idea of millions of years. The “scriptural geologists” (who were the object of my PhD research) opposed the old-earth ideas in the first half of the nineteenth century (Mortenson 2004).¹¹ But by 1859 virtually all the opposition was gone. Subsequently, great Bible teachers such as Charles Spurgeon, Charles Hodge, C.I. Scofield, B.B. Warfield, and the contributors to *The Fundamentals* (1910–1915) affirmed the inerrancy of Scripture while at the same time promoting in the church (primarily through the gap theory and day-age theory) the acceptance of the millions of years claimed as fact by the scientific majority. Stephen Nichols’ chapter missed these critically important historical facts.

The book *The Inerrant Word* does include the ICBI Statement on Biblical Inerrancy. But given the above-mentioned weaknesses in that document, the book should have also included the supplement and corrective to the ICBI statement published in an appendix to the multi-author book edited by Mortenson and Ury (2008) and at the end of the article at answersingenesis.org/answers/

¹¹ See also my chapter 4 in Mortenson and Ury (2008), my DVD lecture “Millions of Years: Where Did the Idea Come From?” <https://answersingenesis.org/media/video/age-of-the-earth/millions-of-years/>.

affirmations-denials-christian-worldview/ (where those who agree with the statement can join the list of signatories). Unfortunately, based on my knowledge of these authors, I suspect that at least some of the contributors to *The Inerrant Word* could not sign that supplementary document, which affirms young-earth creation.

R. C. Sproul on the Age of the Creation

R. C. Sproul (1939–2017) was one of the speakers at that 2015 Shepherds' Conference and wrote the foreword to *The Inerrant Word*. In 2012 he was interviewed by Tim Challies on his popular blog website. Challies asked Sproul, "Have you ever had second thoughts about the stand that you took in favor of a six-day creation and a young earth, especially in view of all the new material on the subject that has come out since 2006?"¹²

By way of historical context to Challies' question, in 2006 Sproul published his book, *Truths We Confess*, which was a commentary on the Westminster Confession. In that book, he acknowledged that for most of his theological career he had favored the framework hypothesis,¹³ but that recently he had come to believe that the days of Genesis 1 are literal days. But he said in that book, "Although the Bible clearly says that the world was created in six days, it gives no date for the beginning of that work" (Sproul 2006, 121). We should also note here that Sproul also was the only president of the International Council on Biblical Inerrancy during its ten years (when he favored the framework hypothesis) and he was the original framer of the affirmations and denials of the Chicago Statement on Inerrancy.

But now back to the interview with Challies. Sproul responded to Challies' question this way:

Well, that's kind of a complex question because when I took the stand, I took the stand on a six-day creation. I didn't take a stand on a young earth. I don't know how old the earth is. I didn't know then. I still don't. And what do we mean by "young earth"? If you're thinking six thousand years, I doubt that. If you're thinking 12 billion years, I doubt that, too. All I was speaking about was the understanding of what the Scriptures teach regarding the six days of creation.

And I'm not even sure it's correct to say that I took a stand. I said that's what my view was. When you say you have a view, it's one thing to say, "I think that this is the way it is." It's another thing to take a stand where you say: "Here I stand. I'm going to die on this mountain." I could be wrong in my understanding of Genesis. It's very difficult to deal with the literary genre in the opening verses of the beginning chapters of Genesis. I think there has to be some room for some flexibility on it. (Sproul 2006, 121)

Room for flexibility on the genre of early chapters of Genesis? In *Coming to Grips with Genesis*, (Mortenson and Ury 2008) two chapters (5 and 6) provide abundant evidence that Genesis 1 is historical narrative. It is not poetry. It is not a parable. It is not some kind of semi-poetic, non-literal text as so often asserted. It is historical narrative, beautifully written to be sure, but no more beautiful than many other historical passages of Scripture. And Genesis 2–11 is also historical narrative, just like the rest of Genesis.¹⁴ However, this genre issue is a bit of a "red herring" argument. Even if Genesis 1 was poetic, that would not mean that it is not also conveying literal history, just as Psalm 78 and 136 recount key events in the history of Israel in literal historical statements in chronological order set in the form of a poem.

But why was Sproul hesitant about the age of the earth and open to being shown he is wrong about the length of the days of creation? (As far as I know, until his death in late 2017 he never changed his view on these matters.) Well, just a few months before that interview, Ligonier Ministries (which he founded and led) had a national conference, and Sproul explained why he was hesitant about the age of the earth.

For some people, it's an all or nothing issue. When people ask me how old the earth is, I tell them I don't know. Because I don't. And I'll tell you why I don't. In the first place, the Bible does not give us a date of creation. Now it gives us hints and inclinations that would indicate in many cases, a young earth. And at the same time, you get all this expanding universe and all this astronomical dating and triangulation and all that stuff coming from outside the church that makes me wonder.¹⁵

¹² Tim Challies, "An Interview with R. C. Sproul." <https://www.challies.com/interviews/an-interview-with-r-c-sproul/>, 23 July 2012.

¹³ This view says that Genesis 1 is not a literal historical account of six 24-hour days of creation but is rather a non-literal literary framework to teach us that God created and other theological truths. As such its proponents believe that scientists are free of any biblical constraints in hypothesizing about cosmic origins. For a layman's critique McCabe and Chaffey 2011. For an in-depth critique see McCabe 2007.

¹⁴ Some recorded speech in Genesis fits the character of Hebrew poetry: e.g., certainly Jacob's blessing of his twelve sons (49:2–27), probably Adam's exclamation after he awoke and saw Eve (2:23), possibly God's curse at the Fall (3:14–19), God's warning after the Flood (9:6–7), Noah's declaration about his sons (9:25–27), and Melchizedek's blessing of Abram (14:19–20). Scholars identify poetry by (1) parallelism (one idea stated in two different ways), (2) unusual word order, (3) words omitted, (4) few sequential verbs, and (5) imagery/word pictures in similes and metaphors. These things are more apparent in longer sections than in just a few verses, hence the less-than-certain classifications above. In any case, the poetic statements were made by real persons in time-space history.

¹⁵ "Ligonier Ministries, "Science, Scripture, and the Age of the Universe," <https://vimeo.com/41386833>, accessed 2020 August 28. The 4-minute clip of Sproul is part of the answer to the last question in the Questions and Answers #2 session of the 2012 Ligonier National Conference.

So, is it astronomy that made him wonder about the meaning of Genesis and how long ago those days of creation were? No, it is not astronomy or astrophysics. It is rather the *naturalistic evolutionary interpretations* of some of the astrophysical observations that made him wonder. Scientists have not observed an expanding universe. Rather, they have observed a correlation between galaxy redshift and distance (the Hubble relation) and *interpreted* those observations as evidence of an expanding universe. But the big bang interpretations are based on naturalistic *assumptions*.¹⁶ And even Edwin Hubble, who proposed that interpretation in 1929 based on his naturalistic worldview, cautioned that it may not be the correct interpretation.¹⁷ But the secular scientists have not proven that this interpretation is correct. And in a form of circular reasoning, their dating methods are based on the assumption that the big bang theory is proven fact, which is based on their naturalistic evolutionary worldview.¹⁸ I will return to this point later.

Furthermore, contrary to what Sproul said, Scripture gives more than a *hint* of the age of the creation. Of course, it does not give us a *date* of creation. The Bible also does not say, “The creation is X years old.” If it did, it would be wrong the year after that statement was written in the Bible. But it does give us much information in the chronological genealogies of Genesis 5 and 11 and in other passages to *calculate* a reasonably accurate date (to within a few years or decades) (Mortenson 2016).¹⁹

Sproul went on in the next three and a half minutes of that Ligonier conference discussion to give what I think is a very confusing discussion of special revelation and general revelation, both of which he says are infallible. But ironically, despite being a great theologian, he failed to mention what general revelation infallibly reveals (namely, the existence and at least some of the attributes of the Creator) and what it does *not* reveal (the order and

timing of creation events). *Once again, nowhere does Scripture say that the physical creation infallibly reveals how, and how long ago, God created.* It is the special revelation of Scripture that clearly reveals those truths.

Other Leading Inerrantists Who Are/Were Old-Earth Proponents

There are many other Christian leaders and scholars that I could mention who in a similar way embrace the doctrine of inerrancy wholeheartedly and yet have not accepted what the Bible inerrantly teaches about the Creation Week, the Flood, or the age of the earth. Consider just a few more very influential men.

B.B. Warfield was a great defender of inerrancy. His book *The Inspiration and Authority of the Bible* (1948) is a wonderful text and gives a powerful defense of the inerrancy of Scripture. But B.B. Warfield was an ardent evolutionist until his conversion to Christ at about age 18. He struggled with evolution all his life and wrote quite a bit on the subject. It seems to me and many other readers of Warfield’s writings on Genesis 1–11, including the two scholars who collected his most important writings on this subject and who are not young-earth creationists, that Warfield’s writings indicate that he was open to evolution as long as God was guiding the process. In those writings he did not discuss Exodus 20:11 (God’s own commentary on Genesis 1) and never dealt with Noah’s Flood, both of which are critical to the question of the age of the earth. Why would an inerrantist not comment on such relevant and important portions of Scripture? Part of the reason he was open to the millions of years was the influence of Old Testament scholar William Henry Green (one of Warfield’s colleagues at Princeton Theological Seminary). Green argued in a now-famous and enormously influential paper in 1890 that the genealogies of Genesis 5 and 11 have no chronological value. Citing Green’s article,

¹⁶ Oard (2000), McIntosh and Worraker (2000), and Faulkner (2017), 16–19, 241–244, and 253–264.

¹⁷ Edwin Hubble wrote in 1935: “. . . the possibility that red-shift may be due to some other cause, connected with the long time or distance involved in the passage of the light from the nebula to observer, should not be prematurely neglected.” Hubble and Tolman (1935, 302). Quoted in John G. Hartnett (2015). “Hubble initially interpreted his redshifts as a Doppler effect, due to the motion of the galaxies as they rushed away from our location in the universe. Later in 1947 he became disillusioned with the recession interpretation: ‘. . . it seems likely that red-shifts may not be due to an expanding Universe, and much of the speculation on the structure of the universe may require re-examination.’ He said that what became known as the Hubble Law could also be due to ‘some hitherto unknown principle of nature’, but not due to expansion of space—now called cosmological expansion.” Quoted in Hartnett (2011). Quotes are from Hubble (1947).

¹⁸ Wikipedia is not reliable on many topics. But I am confident that it is accurate on topics related to evolutionary theories because (1) Wikipedia obviously believes those theories are truth, and (2) the articles on these subjects are always footnoted with the latest secular scientific literature. Wikipedia tells the public, “Calculating the age of the universe is accurate only if the assumptions built into the models being used to estimate it are also accurate. In physical cosmology, the age of the universe is the time elapsed since the Big Bang. . . . Measurements of the cosmic background radiation give the cooling time of the universe since the Big Bang, and measurements of the expansion rate of the universe can be used to calculate its approximate age by extrapolating backwards in time.” https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Age_of_the_universe (italics added). Observe that the dating is based on the assumption that the Big Bang theory is true. But that theory is based on a naturalistic worldview.

¹⁹ Even if one were to favor the Septuagint’s patriarchal ages and a long sojourn of 430 years in Egypt (instead of 215 years), it would only add about 1,600 years to earth’s overall age, which provides no assistance to those seeking to harmonize the Bible with millions of years.

Warfield therefore wrote,

... it is precarious in the extreme to draw chronological inferences from these genealogies. The genealogies of Scripture were not constructed for a chronological purpose, and any appearance they present of affording materials for chronological inferences is accidental and illusory. (Noll and Livingstone 2000, 217)

Green's erroneous argument has recently been decisively refuted based on the Hebrew text (Sexton 2015).

In his book *Genesis in Space and Time*, **Frances Schaeffer**, another great proponent of inerrancy, had only *one* paragraph on the length of the creation days, and he said he did not know how long they were (Schaeffer 1972, 57). Like Warfield and Sproul and so many others, he too was influenced by Green to believe that the genealogies in Genesis 5 and 11 give us no information about the age of the earth.

Respected Old Testament professor **Gleason Archer** wrote in his influential *Survey of Old Testament Introduction* (1994), "From a superficial reading of Genesis 1, the impression would seem to be that the entire creative process took place in six twenty-four-hour days." Many equally competent Hebrew scholars would contend that not just a superficial reading—but also in-depth exegesis—indicates these were literal days like our days. But Archer did not believe that. He held to the day-age view until his death in 2004. Why? He continues in the very next sentence, "If this was the true intent of the Hebrew author (a questionable deduction, as will be presently shown), this seems to run counter to modern scientific research, which indicates that the planet earth was created several billion years ago" Archer 1994, 196). After this he discusses two "biblical" reasons for his old-earth view.²⁰ But before that in the quote above we see the real driving force behind his old-earth interpretation of Genesis 1: "scientific research." No, actually, it was not the scientific *research*. It was the anti-biblical worldview *assumptions* that were used to *interpret some* of the observations made in that scientific research.

Bruce Waltke, another very famous inerrantist Old Testament scholar, said, "The days of creation may also pose difficulties for a strict historical account. Contemporary scientists almost unanimously discount the possibility of creation in one week, and

we cannot summarily discount the evidence of the earth sciences" (Waltke 2001, 77). No, it is not "the evidence of the earth sciences." It is the anti-biblical *assumptions* used to *interpret some* of the geological evidence.

In his book *Genesis Unbound*, **John Sailhamer** argued that Genesis 1:1 is referring to the creation of everything except man and maybe a few other things. But from verse 2 through the rest of the chapter, he contended, the Hebrew word *eretz* should be translated as "land" (not "earth") and refers to the creation of the Promised Land and the things in and around and above the Promised Land, which he equated with the Garden of Eden. His view has influenced many others (including John Piper²¹) to be very open to accepting the millions of years. But it is not the biblical text really that was controlling Sailhamer's interpretation.²² He tells his readers, "I'm convinced that the arguments I cite in Part Two not only point the way to a proper understanding of the first two chapters of Genesis, but they also enable us to live in peace with the findings of modern science" (Sailhamer 1996, 15). No, it is not "the findings" of modern science. It is the *interpretations* of *some* scientific observations based on *anti-biblical assumptions* that Sailhamer unknowingly lived with in peace.

C. John Collins, an Old Testament professor at Covenant Seminary in St. Louis and editor of the Old Testament notes for the ESV Study Bible, says in his book *Science and Faith: Friends or Foes?* (where he advocates for the analogical day view, which is similar to the day-age view),

I conclude, then that I have no reason to disbelieve the standard theories of the geologists, including their estimate for the age of the earth. They may be wrong, for all I know; but if they are wrong, it's not because they improperly smuggled philosophical assumptions into their work. (Collins 2003, 250)

But that is precisely what the early nineteenth-century geologists did: they smuggled philosophical assumptions into their work. And nearly all geologists ever since have knowingly or unknowingly interpreted the rocks in light of those assumptions. It is not the rocks and fossils that speak of millions of years. It is the naturalistic, uniformitarian, philosophical *assumptions* imposed on the geological evidence for the last 200 years that lead geologists

²⁰ First, he argues that the non-literal use of "day" in Genesis 2:4 means that we do not need to take the days of Genesis 1 as literal days. I refute this argument in point 4 ("The 'Day' of Genesis 2:4 Cannot Be 24 Hours Long") in Mortenson 2015. Second, Archer argues that too much happened on the sixth day to fit into 24 hours. I refute this argument (also found in another book by Archer) in my section headed "The Sixth Day Too Short?" in Ham and Mortenson 2009.

²¹ See Piper 2010.

²² A thorough biblical critique of Sailhamer's "biblical" arguments for his position is given in Jordan 1999, 131–170. This chapter was based on a previously published series of four articles: <http://www.biblicalhorizons.com/biblical-chronology/9-4-john-sailhamer-weights-in-part-1/>, <http://www.biblicalhorizons.com/biblical-chronology/9-5-john-sailhamer-weights-in-part-2/>, <http://www.biblicalhorizons.com/biblical-chronology/9-6-john-sailhamer-weights-in-part-3/>, <http://www.biblicalhorizons.com/biblical-chronology/9-7-john-sailhamer-weights-in-part-4/>, accessed 2020 August 28.

to believe the earth is billions of years old, as I have documented elsewhere.²³

William Dembski, former philosophy professor at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, and Southern Evangelical Seminary (schools that require all faculty to be inerrantists) wrote a book that is endorsed by many prominent inerrantists.²⁴ As he argues for the acceptance of millions of years, he says, “I myself would adopt [young-earth creation] in a heartbeat except that nature seems to present such strong evidence against it” (Dembski 2009, 55). However, it is not the geological or astrophysical *evidence* that proves millions of years. Rather, it is the philosophically naturalistic, evolutionary *interpretations* of some of that evidence in nature that are against what the Bible clearly teaches. I can only wonder why this brilliant philosopher does not see this philosophical mind-control in geology and astronomy, because he clearly sees it controlling biology. He writes elsewhere:

Why does Darwinism, despite being so inadequately supported as a scientific theory, continue to garner full support of the academic establishment?...Why must science explain solely by recourse to undirected natural processes? We are dealing here with something more than a straightforward determination of scientific facts or confirmation of scientific theories. Rather we are dealing with competing worldviews and incompatible metaphysical systems. In the creation-evolution controversy we are dealing with a naturalistic metaphysic that shapes and controls what theories of biological origins are permitted on the playing field in advance of any discussion or weighing of evidence. This metaphysic is so pervasive and powerful that it not only rules alternative views out of court, but it cannot even permit itself to be criticized. The fallibleness and tentativeness that are supposed to be part of science find no place in the naturalistic metaphysic that undergirds Darwinism. (Dembski 1999, 114)

But that same naturalistic metaphysic undergirds and controls geology and astronomy and is what produced the millions-of-years story about the origin of the earth and the universe. It is this naturalistic worldview that prevents the biblical worldview of young-earth creation and the global Noachian Flood from being permitted on the “playing field of serious academic discussion,” even in many inerrantist seminaries. The biblical view of earth and cosmic history is ruled out of court before the biblical and scientific evidence is ever

examined, and the story of millions of years cannot be permitted to be criticized.

In all three editions (spanning 30 years) of his highly regarded systematic theology text, **Millard Erickson** says, “At present, the view which I find most satisfactory is a variation of the age-day theory. There are too many exegetical difficulties attached to the gap theory, while the flood theory involves too great a strain upon the geological evidence” (Erickson 1983, 382; 1998, 407; 2013, 352). In those three editions over 30 years he shows no evidence of having read any recent young-earth creationist literature that would show him that it is not the “geological evidence” that rules out the global Flood of Genesis. It is the *naturalistic worldview* controlling the minds of most geologists and geological journals that rules out the Flood *a priori*, before the evidence is examined.

Similarly, **Gordon Lewis** and **Bruce Demarest** at Denver Seminary hold to the day-age view, concluding in their theology text that “ultimately, responsible geology must determine the length of the Genesis days” (Lewis and Demarest 1996, 29). By “responsible geology,” they surely mean what most geologists say is true about the history and age of the earth. But should not responsible *exegesis* of the inerrant Word of God determine the length of the creation days? And how do two theologians judge what is or is not “responsible geology”? Furthermore, with this kind of reasoning, should we insist that “responsible biology” (the evolutionary majority view) should determine the meaning of the account of the origin and Fall of Adam and Eve or the accounts of the virgin birth and resurrection of Jesus? After all, “responsible biology” says man evolved from ape-like creatures, virgins do not have babies, and dead men do not rise from the dead. Thankfully, these theologians reject what the majority of biologists (“responsible biology”) say about Adam and Jesus. As we saw earlier, Article 22 of CSBHermeneutics “denies that scientific hypotheses about earth history or the origin of humanity may be invoked to overthrow what Scripture teaches about creation.” But why resist “responsible biology” that overthrows what Scripture teaches about Adam and Jesus and yet allow “responsible geology” to overthrow what Scripture teaches (just as clearly) about Creation, the Flood and the age of the earth?

Wayne Grudem was one of my favorite professors in seminary and is a truly gifted scholar. His widely used *Systematic Theology* (1994) has been translated into at least 12 major languages with six more languages in the works.²⁵ In it he says, “Although

²³ See resources in footnote 11.

²⁴ Endorsers include Frank Turek, Douglas Groothuis, Gary Habermas, Josh McDowell, Sean McDowell, Norman Geisler, John Warwick Montgomery, and C. John Collins.

²⁵ As of April 24, 2016: <http://www.waynegrudem.com/how-can-i-find-your-book-systematic-theology-in-other-languages/>.

our conclusions are tentative, at this point in our understanding, Scripture seems to be more easily understood to suggest (but not to require) a young-earth view, while the observable facts of creation seem increasingly to favor an old-earth view” (Grudem 1994, 307). At the time he wrote that, he apparently leaned toward the day-age view, but more recently he has indicated that he favors John Lennox’s gap-day-gap-day view (Grudem 2017).²⁶ It is not the “observable facts of creation” but rather the naturalistic *interpretations* of *some* of the facts that *seem* to favor an old-earth view. I have been trying to engage him privately and publicly on this issue since he was my supervising professor in seminary (1989–1992). But he has not been willing to discuss the biblical (much less the scientific) problems with his (and all other) old-earth views which I presented in a paper at the annual meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society in 2006, a copy of which he requested and received (Mortenson 2009).

It would take many volumes to document all the inerrantist theologians, Old Testament scholars, philosophers, apologists, and other evangelical leaders who have written or said similar things. All these influential inerrantist scholars are doing the very thing they said or affirmed in the ICBI statements on inerrancy and hermeneutics that we should not do.

Letting Science Hold Priority over Scripture

As we saw earlier, the ICBI signatories said in Article 20 of the CSBHermeneutics (1978), “We deny that extra-biblical views ever disprove the teaching of Scripture or hold priority over it.” But their own statements show that their reinterpretations (i.e., rejection) of Genesis regarding the days of creation, the age of the earth, and Noah’s Flood are based on the extra-biblical truth claims of the secular scientific *majority*, which supposedly disprove the literal young-earth interpretation. It is those extra-biblical (and anti-biblical) views that hold priority over the authority of Scripture for so many evangelical inerrantist leaders and scholars.

But reinterpreting Genesis to accommodate millions of years, based on the outside authority of the secular scientific majority, is simply a subtle and unrecognized way of saying that the Bible is in error in what it clearly teaches. It simply does not teach that Noah’s Flood was a myth or was a large but localized

flood in the Mesopotamian valley. Nor does it teach that the creation is millions and billions of years old. Nor does it teach that God created the universe over the course of billions of years. Nor does it teach that there were millions of years of animal death, disease, and extinction, and other natural evils before Adam sinned. All of those ideas are blatantly opposed to the clear teaching of Scripture.

For over 20 years I have been an active member of the Evangelical Theological Society (ETS), which has about 4,500 members. Every year we are required to sign a doctrinal statement that we believe that “The Bible alone, and the Bible in its entirety, is the Word of God written and is therefore inerrant in the autographs.” Yet based on my reading, personal interactions, seminary experience, and my involvement in the ETS, it seems to me that most members of the ETS hold to some old-earth view (some even embrace theistic evolution), or they are sitting on the fence regarding the age of the earth. They also do not think it matters, which is why most of them appear to have never seriously investigated the issue. And the reason they do not think it is important and the reason they accept the millions of years or lean towards that view is because they believe the scientific majority is telling us the truth (i.e., proclaiming to us “general revelation”). But from my reading and interaction, it would appear that most of them have not studied Genesis 1–11 carefully or studied much, if any, scholarly literature by leading inerrantist young-earth scientists and theologians. Nor apparently have they read any writings (e.g., Mortenson 2004) related to the philosophy of science and the fact that old-earth geological theories are based on interpretations of data rather than on raw data.

Evolution: A Three-Part Naturalistic Theory of Origins

So, for the last 200 years, since the idea of millions of years was developed by atheist, deist, and nominally Christian geologists, the geologists and later the cosmologists have said in various ways, “You can’t believe the Bible, we’ve proven the earth, and indeed the whole universe is billions of years old” (fig. 6). The vast majority of Bible scholars and Christian leaders over the last two centuries have uncritically accepted or tolerated that claim, in part, because they have failed to see that naturalistic philosophy controls all of science today.

²⁶ Page 63, footnote 3. In Lennox’s attempt to fit millions of years into Genesis 1, he contends that there is an indeterminate (and great) amount of time before the first day of creation (which he says starts in Genesis 1:3) and that there is an indeterminate (and great) amount of time between each of the literal six days of Genesis 1. But Exodus 20:11 proves Lennox wrong on both counts. Since God says he made the earth (along with the heavens, the sea and all that is in them) in six days, and since Genesis 1 says God made the earth in verse 1, then the first creation day begins in Genesis 1:1, not in Genesis 1:3. So there is no time before the first day of creation. For more on this, see Lyon (2019). Furthermore, since there is no time between the days of the Jewish week (Exodus 20:8–11), and since God equates their days of the week with His days of creation, then there can be no time between the days of creation. Lennox’s attempt to fit millions of years into Genesis 1 fails, for this and many other reasons.



Fig. 6. Most scientists over the last two centuries have undermined the truth of Scripture and the vast majority of Bible scholars and Christian leaders have capitulated.

Every old-earth creationist view (gap theory, day-age view, framework view, theistic evolution, progressive creation, etc.) is an attempt to harmonize the Bible with anti-biblical, naturalistic myths about origins.

We need to understand that evolution is not simply about biology. Most Christians and probably most old-earth proponents in the church today would say they reject evolution. What they mean is that they reject biological, Neo-Darwinian evolution as an explanation for the origin of plants, animals, and man. But the problem is that evolution does not simply apply to the origin of plants, animals, and man.

Evolution is a three-part story to explain the origin and history of physical reality: biological evolution, geological evolution, and cosmological (or cosmic) evolution (fig. 7). Biological evolution is the story to explain the origin of all living things over millions of years. Geological evolution supposedly explains the origin of the earth and its rock layers, fossils, and topography over millions of years. Cosmological evolution is the explanation for the origin of planets, stars, galaxies, and the universe itself over the course of billions of years.

As explained earlier, according to evolutionary cosmologists, after the big bang formed helium and hydrogen gas clouds, some of those gas clouds collapsed and evolved into stars. Stars gravitationally attracted each other and evolved into galaxies. Gas clouds around stars evolved into rings, which evolved into planets.

Evolutionary geologists say that the earth evolved from a hot, molten ball. Then over millions of years it developed a hard crust, evolved an atmosphere and oceans, and eventually rock layers with fossils formed to become the planet we live on today.

Similarly, according to the evolutionary biologists, the first living cell evolved from non-living matter and then evolved over about 3.5 billion years into all the different plants, animals, and people represented in the fossil record and alive today.

So the story goes. And the scientific majority says that the whole story of cosmological-geological-biological evolution is incontrovertible scientific fact!

While these adjectives are not generally applied to “evolution,” evolutionists do speak of the evolution of the earth and the evolution of stars and evolution of galaxies, even on the covers of their books (Henricksen 2008; Kippenhahn, Weigert, and Weiss 2012; Oswalt and Barstow 2013; Prialnik 2009; Prothero and Dott 2009; Tayler 1994; Wicander and Monroe 2012). George Abell, a famous astronomer at UCLA and expert on galaxies, put it this way:

The big-bang hypothesis implies that the universe has a finite age—at least since the explosion. Since no galaxy could have a greater age, all galaxies would be aging, and *evolving*, together. Models based on some version of the big-bang theory, therefore, are usually called *evolutionary* models or *evolutionary* cosmologies (italics added) (Abell 1964, 583).

An online course at Harvard University uses a diagram (fig. 8) to visualize “Cosmic Evolution: From the Big Bang to Humankind.” The very influential American geneticist and evolutionary biologist Theodosius Dobzhansky (1900–1975) accurately describes the theory of evolution when he says,

Evolution comprises all the stages of the development of the universe: the cosmic, biological and human or cultural developments. Attempts to restrict the concept of evolution to biology are gratuitous. Life is a product of the evolution of inorganic nature, and man is a product of the evolution of life (Dobzhansky 1967, 409).²⁷

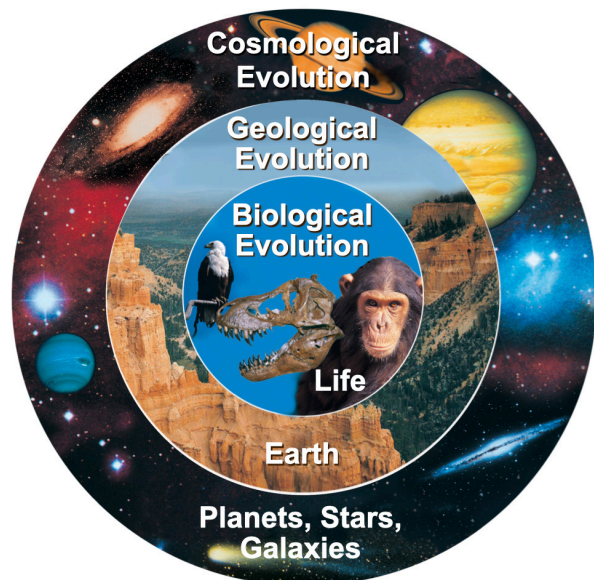


Fig. 7. Evolution is a three-part story to explain the origin and history of all physical reality: biological evolution, geological evolution, and cosmological (or cosmic) evolution

²⁷ Born in Ukraine, he taught at Columbia, Cal Tech, Rockefeller University, and UC Davis. He was a theistic evolution identifying himself with the Eastern Orthodox Church.

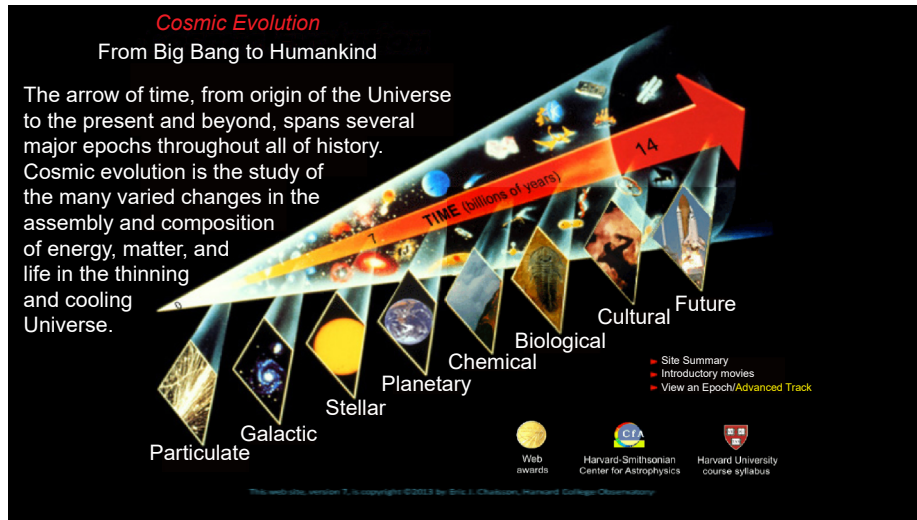


Fig. 8. Diagram to visualize “Cosmic Evolution: From the Big Bang to Humankind” that is used in a Harvard University online course (obtained from Harvard University Extension Course, Spring 2014: “ASTR E-8 Cosmic Evolution: The Origins of Matter and Life,” https://www.cfa.harvard.edu/~ejchaisson/cosmic_evolution/docs/splash.html, accessed 2020 July 11).

All of these stories—cosmological evolution, geological evolution, and biological evolution (which includes human evolution)—are driven by a set of assumptions which philosophers call naturalism. This philosophical worldview has two key assumptions:

1. nature is all that exists and
2. everything can, and indeed must, be explained by *time plus chance plus the laws of nature* working on matter.

Another name for naturalism is materialism or atheism. These are the assumptions that control the thinking of the vast majority of scientists today.

Now, not every scientist is an atheist. Many scientists believe in some kind of God or gods. But most scientists do *their scientific work* and their theorizing *as if* (i.e., they *assume* that) nature is all that exists. They might believe in God on Sunday or Saturday, or whenever they are reading their religious books. But *when they do their scientific work*, they do it as if nature is all that exists.

The second *assumption* controlling science today is that if we have enough time (millions and billions of years), chance, and the laws of nature (the laws of physics, chemistry, genetics, etc.), then we can explain the origin of everything. We can explain the origin of stars and galaxies and the origin of our solar system. We can explain the origin of the earth, the origin of the rock layers and fossils, and the origin of the creatures that became fossils. We can explain the origin of man and the origin of language. We just need enough time, chance, and the laws of nature. George Wald, professor of biology at Harvard University for over four decades

and winner of the “Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine” in 1967, put it this way in 1954,

Time is in fact the hero of the plot. The time with which we have to deal is of the order of two billion years. What we regard as impossible on the basis of human experience is meaningless here. Given so much time, the ‘impossible’ becomes possible, the possible probable, and the probable virtually certain. One has only to wait: time itself performs the miracles. (Wald 1954, 48)

Geological Evolution: A Naturalistic Myth

So, we live in an age when the majority of geologists tell us that the earth is about 4.6 billion years old. But for the first 1,800 years of church history, the almost universal belief of the church was what we call today “young-earth creation” (Mortenson 2004, 25–44). This view was defended in the early nineteenth century by a group of authors who collectively became known as the “Scriptural geologists.”²⁸ Many of them were very geologically competent by the standards of their day (both by reading geological literature and by personal investigation of the geological evidence). They raised biblical, geological and philosophical arguments against various old-earth views developing at the time. As represented in fig. 9, they believed there was a supernatural creation week (SCW) of six literal days, followed by Noah’s Flood (F) about 1,600 years later, and then the Earth recovered from the catastrophe up to the present (P), which is about 6,000 years after the beginning.

²⁸ Even the old-earth geologist at Calvin College, Davis Young, acknowledged (though he was off by a century, as I show), “It cannot be denied, in spite of frequent interpretations of Genesis 1 that departed from the rigidly literal, that the almost universal view of the Christian world until the 18th century was that the Earth was only a few thousand years old. Not until the development of modern scientific investigation of the Earth itself would this view be called into question within the church.” Young (1982, 25).

But in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, another view of earth history developed, which became known as the “catastrophist view” and was advocated by Georges Cuvier in France, William Smith in England, and others (fig. 9). These catastrophists believed the earth was much, much older than 6,000 years and that God created the first forms of life in a supernatural beginning (SB). But, then after a long period of time, there was a catastrophic flood of a continental or global scale (C) that wiped out most or all of those creatures and buried many of them in sediments where they became fossils. This, it was claimed, happened many times with great spans of time between each major catastrophic flood over the course of untold ages. They were clearly thinking of millions of years.

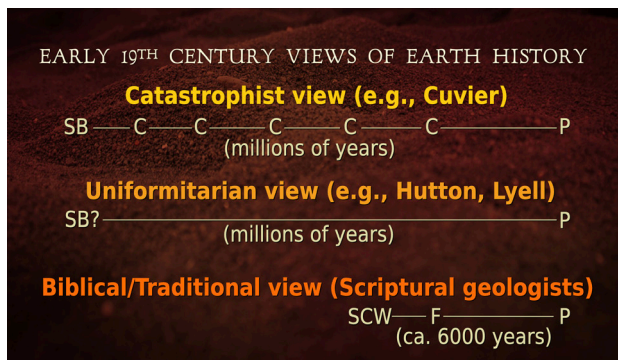


Fig. 9. Early nineteenth century views of earth history.

Another view that developed at this time became known as the “uniformitarian view,” which was advocated preeminently by James Hutton in Scotland and Charles Lyell in England (fig. 9) Their thinking can be summarized this way:

Maybe there was a beginning to the world; maybe there wasn't. But there have never been any catastrophic floods of a continental or global scale. Oh, a little flood here, a little flood there, no problem. But nothing on the level or the scale that the catastrophists and the Bible-believing Christians imagine.

Now from about 1840, the uniformitarian view became the ruling dogma in geology. That meant that every student who went to the university to study geology was trained to think like this. Slow gradual processes will explain the rock record, that is, slow gradual erosion, slow gradual deposition, and slow fossilization. And the man who was most responsible for that idea becoming the ruling dogma of geology was Charles Lyell.

Writing in a letter to a fellow uniformitarian in 1830, Lyell said that he wanted to “free the science [of geology] from Moses.”²⁹ So, Lyell had a deliberate anti-biblical agenda. Now, I would not have a problem with this approach to geology, if the Bible did not speak of any geologically significant, global events. But it does so twice. First, the third day of Creation Week when God caused dry land to appear, presumably by raising part(s) of the crust of the earth above sea-level of the previous global ocean, which would have been a major erosion and sedimentation event. However, we would not expect any fossils to be found later in those sediments because God had not yet made any plants, animals or people. Second, the Bible describes the global, yearlong, catastrophic Flood of Noah's day, which was designed to destroy all the land animals, birds, and people not in the ark, along with the surface of the earth (Genesis 6:7, 13). By implication, it would have ripped up all the vegetation on the land and destroyed countless sea creatures and buried many of those plants, animals, and people in sediments, which would later become fossils.

Another problem with Lyell's statement is that geology is part of what can be called origin science (or historical science), which also includes fields such as paleontology, archeology, cosmogony, and forensic science.³⁰ These are sciences that are trying to reconstruct the unobservable and unrepeatable past to explain what we see in the present. They seek to answer questions like these: When and how did the Grand Canyon form? When and how were the pyramids of Egypt built? When and how did the first dog come into existence? Or who shot President John F. Kennedy?

Whenever we are trying to reconstruct the past, we have two possible sources of information: (1) eyewitness testimony or historical writings by non-eyewitnesses who we have reason to believe are reliable historians of others' eyewitness testimony, if any is available, and (2) presently observable physical evidence produced by unobservable, unrepeatable events in the past whether those events were caused by humans or natural processes (such as wind, rain, floods, earthquakes, glaciers, etc.).

The fundamental difference between creation scientists and evolutionary scientists is this. Creationists accept the history recorded in the inerrant, eyewitness testimony of the Creator (Scripture, especially but not exclusively Genesis

²⁹ Charles Lyell, quoted in Lyell (1881, 268). The quote is from Lyell's letter on 14 June, 1830, to fellow uniformitarian geologist George Poulett Scrope (also a member of Parliament), whom Lyell was encouraging and instructing on how to write his article for the *Quarterly Review* to accomplish what Lyell prescribed above so that the British church leaders would accept the millions of years and reject Genesis.

³⁰ For more on origin (historical) science that tries to reconstruct the unobservable, unrepeatable past and how it is significantly different from operation (experimental or observational) science that by observable, repeatable experiments in the present produces our technology and finds cures for disease, see Ham and Mortenson (2007).

1–11) and use it as the key to correctly interpret the presently observable physical evidence produced in the unobservable past. But evolutionists (whether secular or professing Christian) reject or ignore God’s inerrant eyewitness testimony. Otherwise, creationists and evolutionists are looking at the same physical evidence in the present and using the same observational and experimental methods to try to understand the past. In other words, they are looking at the same evidence, but interpreting it on the basis of two different worldviews: a biblical worldview versus an anti-biblical worldview.

So, by “freeing the science [of geology] from Moses,” Lyell was attempting to silence God’s eyewitness testimony (the inspired, inerrant Word of God) about when the creation took place, about how long it took, and about Noah’s Flood. Lyell and all the geologists who since Lyell have been enormously influenced by him have not gone out and looked at the world of rocks and fossils with an open or empty mind. They have been interpreting the geological evidence within a decidedly anti-biblical worldview: uniformitarian naturalism. This view is based on the two religious/philosophical (unscientific) naturalistic assumptions discussed above. But it also adds a third: all the processes of geological change (erosion, sedimentation, volcanos, earthquakes, etc.) have always happened in the past at the same rate, frequency, and power as we observe today on average per year. Essentially, geological change has been very slow and gradual over millions of years.

From the late 1830’s Lyell’s naturalistic uniformitarianism controlled the thinking of geologists well into the latter part of the twentieth century. Heavily influenced by Lyell, Darwin applied the same naturalistic worldview to biology in developing his theory of evolution. In 1844 he wrote,

I always feel as if my books came half out of Lyell’s brains and that I never acknowledge this sufficiently, nor do I know how I can, without saying so in so many words—for I have always thought that the great merit of the *Principles [of Geology]*, was that it altered the whole tone of one’s mind & therefore that when seeing a thing never seen by Lyell, one yet saw it partially through his eyes (Darwin 1987, 55).³¹

But by the 1970s, some evolutionary geologists began to question and reject Lyell’s uniformitarian assumptions. One was Derek Ager, a famous geology professor at University College Swansea in Wales. During his life he visited 57 countries studying geological formations, wrote 7 books and

200 journal articles on geology, and was president of the British Geological Association (1988–1990). He became a “neo-catastrophist,” as the title of his last book, published posthumously, made clear: *The New Catastrophism* (Cambridge University Press, 1993). In an earlier book, in a chapter on the history of geology, he remarked to his fellow evolutionary geologists about the early nineteenth century,

My excuse for this lengthy and amateur digression into history is that I have been trying to show how I think geology got into the hands of the theoreticians [i.e., uniformitarians] who were conditioned by the social and political history of their day more than by observations in the field. In other words, we have allowed ourselves to be *brain-washed* into avoiding any interpretation of the past that involves extreme and what might be termed “catastrophic” processes (*italics added*) (Ager 1981, 46–47).

In *The New Catastrophism*, Ager gave many examples of rock formations which had traditionally been interpreted as forming over millions of years but which he argued had formed in hours or days or weeks. He rejected the Bible and never believed in Noah’s Flood and, based on statements in his last book, I suspect he died as an unbeliever.

But we really need to reword Ager’s last sentence above to reflect reality in geology and in much of the church today: “In other words, we’ve allowed ourselves to be *brain-washed* into avoiding any interpretation of the geological evidence that involves God’s inerrant eyewitness account of Noah’s global, year-long, catastrophic Flood.” For 200 years the scientific community has been saying, “That event never happened. It’s a myth. Therefore, it is irrelevant to the interpretation of rock layers and fossils as we try to decipher the past history of the earth.” And during those last 200 years, most of the church has agreed, openly or by ignoring the Flood and the issue of the age of the earth.

In textbooks and museum displays, the geological record is often pictured by charts similar to fig. 10, and evolutionists say it represents the history of life over millions of years. But creation geologists have marshaled many lines of evidence to show that most of those sedimentary layers were deposited by Noah’s Flood. Some layers at the bottom of the chart are pre-Flood deposits (formed sometime in the roughly 1,600 years from creation to the Flood). Some at the top are geographically limited post-flood deposits. But there really is no geological evidence used to support the millions of years story that cannot be better explained by the Creation/Flood model derived from Scripture.³²

³¹ Letter 772, to his good friend Leonard Horner, 29 August, 1844.

³² See for example, Morris 2007 or Snelling 2007; 2009.

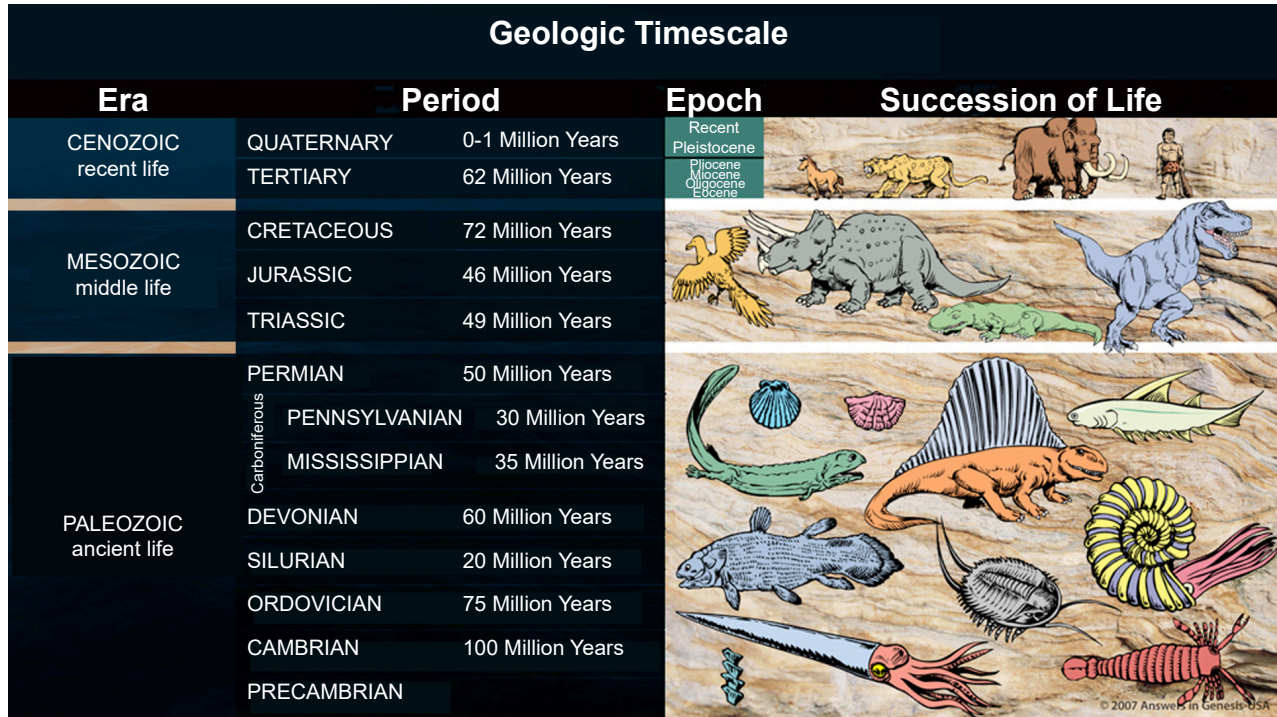


Fig. 10. An example of a typical chart of the geologic column and timescale depicting the evolutionary history of life.

**Cosmological Evolution:
Another Naturalistic Myth**

What about cosmological evolution over the course of supposedly 13.8 billion years? We are told that the big bang theory is a proven scientific fact. But there are many secular scientists who contend that it is not.

In 2004, Eric Lerner, an internationally known astrophysicist, wrote an article called “Bucking the Big Bang” for *New Scientist*, which is a secular science magazine (Lerner 2004). The article was simultaneously posted on the Internet. When it was published, it was initially signed by 34 scientists from ten countries, all of whom were professors at major universities or researchers at important scientific institutions. By 2011 over 400 scientists (many from prestigious universities or institutes) from 50 countries had added their names in agreement. Lerner wrote:

Big bang theory today relies on a growing number of hypothetical entities, things that we have never observed—inflation, dark matter and dark energy are the most prominent. Without them, there would be fatal contradictions between the observations made by astronomers and the predictions of the big bang theory. In no other field of physics would this continual recourse to new hypothetical objects be accepted as a way of bridging the gap between theory and observation. It would, at the least, raise serious questions about the validity of the underlying theory.³³

Then in the April 2011 edition of *Scientific American*, a cover story appeared, “Quantum Gaps in Big Bang Theory: Why our best explanation of how the universe must be fixed or replaced.” The article was written by Paul Steinhardt, who is the Albert Einstein Professor in Science and Director of the Princeton University “Center for Theoretical Science.” He too raised serious objections to the big bang theory and offered an alternative explanation for the origin of our universe, which is equally naturalistic (and even more absurd, in my opinion): a series of expansions and contractions of multiple universes over trillions of years! But his theory shows how problematic he thinks the current big bang theory is.

Halton Arp is another one who until his death in 2013 rejected the big bang. A world-famous astrophysicist at the Max Planck Institute in Germany and an expert on quasars and galaxies, he informed us, “Scientists, particularly at the most prestigious institutions, regularly suppress and ridicule findings which contradict their current theories and assumptions....astronomers now feel compelled to fit the observations to the theory and not vice versa” (Arp 1998, 12).

So, the reason that the big bang theory appears to be a proven fact is because its proponents are controlling the scientific community and are suppressing contrary views.

³³ Lerner 2004. The whole article with the listed signatories is at <https://web.archive.org/web/20140401081546/http://cosmologystatement.org/>.

Cosmological, geological, and biological evolution: the whole story is a myth because it is all based on philosophical naturalism. Theistic evolutionists have accepted the whole three-part myth and assert that God used time and chance and the laws of nature to create everything. They are therefore 3/3 evolutionists. Old-earth creationists (of various stripes), who reject biological evolution and believe that God supernaturally created different kinds of plants and animals and Adam and Eve, are 2/3 evolutionists, for they accept millions of years of geological and cosmological evolution.

But none of these views can be harmonized with Scripture. Evolution and millions of years cannot be found in the Bible. They are naturalistic ideas imposed on the Bible. All old-earth views in the church are in violation of Article 20 of CSBHermeneutics: they are allowing “scientific hypotheses about earth history ... to overthrow what Scripture teaches about creation.” Scripture clearly teaches young-earth creation (Mortenson 2011). The theistic evolutionists (aka, evolutionary creationists) essentially ignore the biblical text, while claiming that it is divinely inspired.³⁴ All old-earth creationists ignore many of the relevant biblical texts or use amazing hermeneutical gymnastics to evade the obvious meaning of the text regarding the Flood and the age of the creation (Kulikovsky 2009; Mortenson and Ury 2008; Sarfati 2011). As demonstrated earlier from their own words, the majority of these scholars, did not arrive at their old-earth views by careful exegesis or other relevant passages of Scripture. Rather, it was their assumption that “science” has proven millions of years that controls their interpretation of Genesis.

In spite of and contrary to their sincere intentions and passionate affirmations about biblical inerrancy, old-earth creationists and theistic evolutionists are subtly undermining the inerrancy of the Bible and thereby undermining its authority.

We Are All Flawed

Before I give an example of hermeneutical gymnastics (i.e., eisegesis) by a prominent inerrantist, I want to remind you of a fact you know but which bears repeating: namely, godly men can and do make mistakes.

In fact, every godly Christian has made mistakes. Every pastor has made mistakes. Every seminary professor has made mistakes. You would not have to be with me or the other staff at Answers in Genesis very long to know that we make mistakes. We do not have a perfect understanding of God’s Word.

We do not live perfectly consistently with even the Scriptures we do understand correctly. The only person who never made any mistakes and never said anything false was the Lord Jesus Christ. We really need to grasp this fact. And we have some good examples in the Bible to sober us and guard us from pride and the foolishness of completely trusting in any man or group of men, even those who are respected, inerrantist, evangelical scholars.

In Matthew 16:13, Jesus asked the disciples, “Who do people say that the Son of Man is?” Peter got the right answer. He got an “A” on his theology exam. He said, “You are the Christ, the son of the living God.” Then Jesus began to tell the disciples that he was going up to Jerusalem and would suffer and die at the hands of sinful men but then would rise from the dead. But Peter essentially replied, “No, you’re not, Lord.” Scripture then tells us, “And he [Jesus] turned and said to *Peter*, ‘Get behind me, *Satan!* You are a stumbling block to me. For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man.’” (Matthew 16:23; italics added).

Peter had just passed his most important theology exam. And within minutes he had become a mouthpiece for Satan! Do you realize that no matter how orthodox you are, you could become a mouthpiece for Satan? How? By setting your mind on the things of man, rather than the things of God, just as Peter did. By thinking like the world, rather than thinking biblically. Well, you say, “That was before Pentecost, before Peter received the Holy Spirit. So that’s at least somewhat understandable.” But now turn to Galatians 2:11–14 where we read:

But when Cephas [Peter] came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned. For before certain men came from James, he was eating with the Gentiles; but when they came, he drew back and separated himself, *fearing the circumcision party*. And the rest of the Jews acted *hypocritically* along with him, so that even Barnabas was led astray *by their hypocrisy*. But when I saw that their conduct was *not in step with the truth of the gospel*, I said to Cephas before them all, “If you, though a Jew, live like a Gentile and not like a Jew, how can you force the Gentiles to live like Jews?” (italics added)

Paul publicly confronted Peter. What was the problem? Peter was not eating with the Gentile Christians. He was just eating with Jewish Christians. Why was it “a big deal” who Peter ate with? It seems like such an insignificant action. But Paul saw it as a threat to the gospel, so serious that he decided to

³⁴ BioLogos, the most influential promoter of theistic evolution in America, says that they “believe the Bible is the inspired and authoritative word of God.” But they do not affirm its inerrancy, and their handling of Scripture and the scientific “evidence” certainly does not reveal that Scripture is more authoritative than the proclamations of the scientific majority. See <https://biologos.org/about-us/what-we-believe/>.

confront Peter, not privately, but publicly “before them all.” And why was Peter doing this? It was not a deliberate, intentional act of Peter. He was not trying to undermine the gospel. Paul says it was because Peter was “fearing the circumcision party.” In other words, Peter was caving into peer pressure and the fear of man. As a result, he was committing the sin of hypocrisy and influencing others, even respected Christian leaders such as Barnabas, to do the same.

We can all succumb to peer pressure or cultural pressure. The fear of man is a powerful force. If we are not careful and courageous, we can all be conformed to the world in some ways; we can be squeezed into the world’s mold (contrary to Romans 12:2). We can also cave into pressure by Christians, even respected Christian leaders, to do or think what is contrary to Scripture and even undermines the gospel. This secular-cultural or Christian-cultural pressure can be extremely difficult to resist.

Peter, the man who saw the transfiguration of Jesus, who walked on water to Jesus, and who got an “A” on his theology exam, became a mouthpiece for Satan, not intentionally, not knowingly, but because he was thinking like the world. Peter was the man who gave the birthday sermon of the church (Acts 2). He supernaturally healed a man who was lame from birth (Acts 3). He led some of the first Gentiles to Christ (Acts 10) and was miraculously liberated from prison (Acts 12). But this great apostle unknowingly and unintentionally compromised the gospel and led others into wrong behavior. So, it is possible for someone to be very godly and mightily used by God to advance the gospel and strengthen the church (as Peter did) and yet unknowingly and unintentionally undermine the gospel and become a mouthpiece for Satan, not overall but in certain instances.

Another sobering example is in John 12:42–43, where many among the Jewish rulers who believed in Jesus did not confess Him openly for fear of being placed outside the synagogue (the place of respectability). Why? “For they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God.” The same temptation exists today, even in the evangelical academic world. Scholars do not want to be marginalized; they want to be viewed as intellectually respectable.

It is possible for a wonderful Christian to give in to the fear of man (i.e., pressure from what the majority thinks—whether it is the majority of scientists or the majority of modern evangelical theologians) and thereby undermine very important truths of Scripture.

We need to remind ourselves that we do not have any evangelical popes. And we do not have (or should not have) an evangelical college of cardinals. Our

favorite Bible teacher or Christian leader or author should not be our evangelical pope. We can and should appreciate and learn from these teachers or leaders. But we should listen to their sermons or lectures or read their writings with an open Bible and with our minds engaged because the best Bible teachers make mistakes. We need to be like the Berean Jews who carefully examined the Scriptures to see if what the apostle Paul was teaching was true (Acts 17:11).

Norman Geisler:

One of Many Inconsistent Unlimited Inerrantists

To drive home my points, I return to Norman Geisler, that late, great philosopher and apologist for orthodox Christianity, who did so much good for the Church, especially in defense of the inerrancy of Scripture. He is only one of many prominent examples I could discuss.

On his *DefendingInerrancy.com* website he says, “I affirm that the Bible alone, and in its entirety, is the infallible written Word of God in the original text and is, therefore, inerrant in all that it affirms or denies on whatever topic it addresses.” He explains that the signers of the ICBI statement on inerrancy believed in “unlimited inerrancy” and that this is what is meant in the doctrinal statement of the Evangelical Theological Society. He says, “Unlimited inerrancy affirms that the Bible is true on whatever subject it speaks—whether it is redemption, ethics, history, science, or anything else.” But he warns that many ETS members hold to “limited inerrancy,” which “affirms that the Bible’s inerrancy is limited to redemptive matters.”³⁵

But Geisler and all other old-earth, “unlimited inerrantist” philosophers, apologists, theologians, and Bible scholars, fail to realize that in their handling of Genesis 1–11 they are *in effect* acting like limited inerrantists. As James 2:14–26 teaches, it is not our profession of faith but rather our actions of faith that truly reveal our faith. It is possible to profess faith in the total inerrancy of Scripture but deny or undermine that truth by the way we handle (interpret) the text. Let me illustrate with one of Geisler’s own books.

In his 2001 book *Unshakable Foundations: Contemporary Answers to Crucial Questions About the Christian Faith*, co-authored with Peter Bocchino, he dealt with the question of origins. He says, “In terms of the order of nature and appearance of new life forms, the fossil record indicates that they appear in the following order” (Geisler and Bocchino 2001, 173). On that page, he tells us what mainstream scientists (i.e., the evolutionists) say about the order in which creatures have appeared in history:

³⁵ <http://defendinginerrancy.com/unlimited-vs-limited-inerrancy/>.

1. Age of Invertebrates
2. Age of fishes
3. Age of amphibians
4. Age of reptiles
5. Age of mammals
6. Age of Humans

Well, first of all, those “Ages” are grossly oversimplified, because, for example, there are jawless (vertebrate) fish buried in the early Cambrian rocks (dated about 550 million years ago), which is supposedly the “Age of the Invertebrates.” And there are billions of invertebrates all the way through the fossil record up to the present. In fact, most of the fossils throughout the geological record are invertebrates (e.g., various shell creatures, corals, etc.). Furthermore, many mammals and birds are in the rock layers labeled “Age of the Reptiles,” and there are great numbers of reptiles and amphibians in the “Age of Mammals” and “Age of Humans.” But also notice that Geisler left out the plants and the birds in his list! That is a significant omission, as we will see.

He continued, “Now, let’s *assume* that the order of appearance is correct but that the corresponding dates, as proposed by gradualist macroevolutionary geologists, are in error” (italics added) (Geisler and Bocchino 2001, 173). But why should we assume that the *order* given by the evolutionists is correct but that the *dates* they give are wrong? In fact, Geisler did not believe the dates are in error, for they are a major reason he rejected the young-earth creation view. But he continued:

In presenting the design model [i.e., Geisler’s progressive creation, old-earth view], we are not interested in assigning exact dates and ages to all of these events; we will leave that up to you to decide. We will offer a suggested time scenario later, but our purpose right now is to show that *the Genesis account of the origin of living things is essentially in accord with modern science.* (italics added) (Geisler and Bocchino 2001, 173)

The readers of his book can decide the exact dates and ages of the appearance of creatures? Really? Non-experts can decide these matters? Would not his readers just go to an evolutionist website or book and assume that both the evolutionary order and the dates are correct? If not, how are Geisler’s readers supposed to figure out the correct ages and dates? In this book, Geisler never gave a suggested time scenario other than to indicate later in some diagrams that he accepted the evolutionary time scenario. Furthermore, in his creation model he

simply *asserted* (with no exegetical justification from the Bible—because there is none) that there were long *overlapping* periods of God’s acts of creation. But he continued immediately in the next sentence on this page with this statement and the following list: “Consider the following order of creation as described in Genesis 1” (Geisler and Bocchino 2001, 173).

1. Universe/Earth (1:1)
2. Sea (1:6)
3. Land/Plants (1:9, 11)
4. Sea Animals (1:20)
5. Land Animals (1:24)
6. Humanity (1:27)

Immediately after this list, he says, “Of course, Genesis 1 was not written from a modern scientific perspective, but it does offer an *extremely accurate* account of the order of creation as compared to the discoveries of modern science” (Geisler and Bocchino 2001, 173–174) (italics added). But notice that he left out the expanse (or firmament), which was made on Day 2. He left out the sun, moon, and stars, which were made on Day 4. And he omitted the birds, made on Day 5! He left out key details of the inspired, inerrant text! Furthermore, God did not make the sea on Day 2. Water was made on Day 1, but the “seas” were formed on Day 3 with dry land (in verse 9–10, not in verse 6)! The “sea” is not even mentioned in verse 6. This is a very sloppy handling of the inerrant Word of God in order to harmonize it with the supposed evolutionary history of the order of life.

But look at the two 6-point lists above that Geisler gave his readers. Does Genesis 1 “essentially accord with modern science” [i.e., with the evolutionist interpretation of the geological evidence]? Does it offer us “an extremely accurate account of the order of creation” compared to the evolutionary view controlling cosmology, geology and biology? Sure, it does, but *only if* you leave out critical details and do not look carefully at the lists, as brilliant, “unlimited inerrantist” Geisler has done!

In fact, the order of appearance in the evolution story contradicts the order of creation events in Genesis 1 in dozens of points (Mortenson 2006). As I showed earlier, contrary to Genesis 1, evolutionists say that the sun, moon, and stars evolved billions of years before the earth and all plants. They say that sea creatures evolved millions of years before any land plants, and land animals (including the first dinosaurs) evolved before any birds. And contrary to Genesis, evolutionists say that the earth had dry land before seas formed and the earth has never been completely covered with water.³⁶ We must also not

³⁶ Recently a few evolutionists have claimed that they have found evidence in some rocks in Australia that the earth was completely covered by water about 3.2 billion years ago (Ng 2020). But this is not the majority view, and this does not fit with the Bible anyway. This supposed global ocean was 1.6 billion years after the formation of the earth and it was long before the “Cambrian explosion” of macroscopic creatures began to evolve (supposedly about 550 million years ago). So, this supposed global ocean does not correspond to the first two days of creation in Genesis 1 or with Noah’s Flood in Genesis 6–8.

overlook or forget that other extremely important point of historical order: the Bible teaches that all moral and natural evil came *after* and *as a result of* Adam’s sin, not for millions of years *before* Adam (as evolutionists assert).

Geisler claimed to believe in unlimited inerrancy, and I have no doubt that he sincerely believed this all the way to his death. But to show that the Bible is inerrant in history and science (as he believed), he made two mistakes. First, he erroneously equated “science” with the naturalistic evolutionary *interpretations* of some of the observational evidence. Second, he left out vital details of the biblical text to make it say what it simply does not say. Geisler did not realize it, but this *in effect* very subtly, implicitly, and indirectly says that the Bible is in error about scientific questions: when and in what order God created things.

In other words, you can deny the scientific and historical inerrancy of Genesis 1 *directly* by *openly* saying that it is just plain wrong. That is what evolutionists do. Or you can deny the scientific and historical inerrancy of Genesis 1 *subtly* and *indirectly* by knowingly or unknowingly, intentionally or unintentionally, ignoring details or moving details in the text to make the Bible say what it simply does not say, thereby giving the illusion that Genesis 1 is inerrant while really showing that it is wrong. Such eisegesis fools many Christians, but it does not fool informed non-Christians. The latter know that the

order of Genesis 1 seriously contradicts the order of evolution.

A few pages later, Geisler showed his “Progressive Design Model of Origins” (Geisler and Bocchino 2001, 184) (fig. 11) with “bursts of creation,” each of which “allows for long periods of overlapping creation time frames” (Geisler and Bocchino 2001, 179). He claimed that “the basic order of the stages of creation as described in Genesis 1 fits *very nicely* with the order of nature as depicted by the paleontological record and with the geological time divisions” (italics added) (Geisler and Bocchino 2001, 178).

But once again he leaves out the plants and the birds from the boxes under the timeline, which is nevertheless a gross distortion of the fossil record since invertebrates lie all through the fossil record and there are fish in rocks with reptiles and mammals. And he leaves out the birds in his “bursts of creation” above the timeline. Also, in the “bursts of creation,” vegetation comes before invertebrates, but, in the boxes below the timeline, invertebrates appear earlier than the beginning of the vegetation “burst,” and plants are not mentioned in the boxes at all! What kind of handling of the inerrant Word is this?

Furthermore, his notion that each burst of creation spanned three “stages” of creation and that these bursts overlapped each other flies in the face of the biblical text. With the repetition of “there was

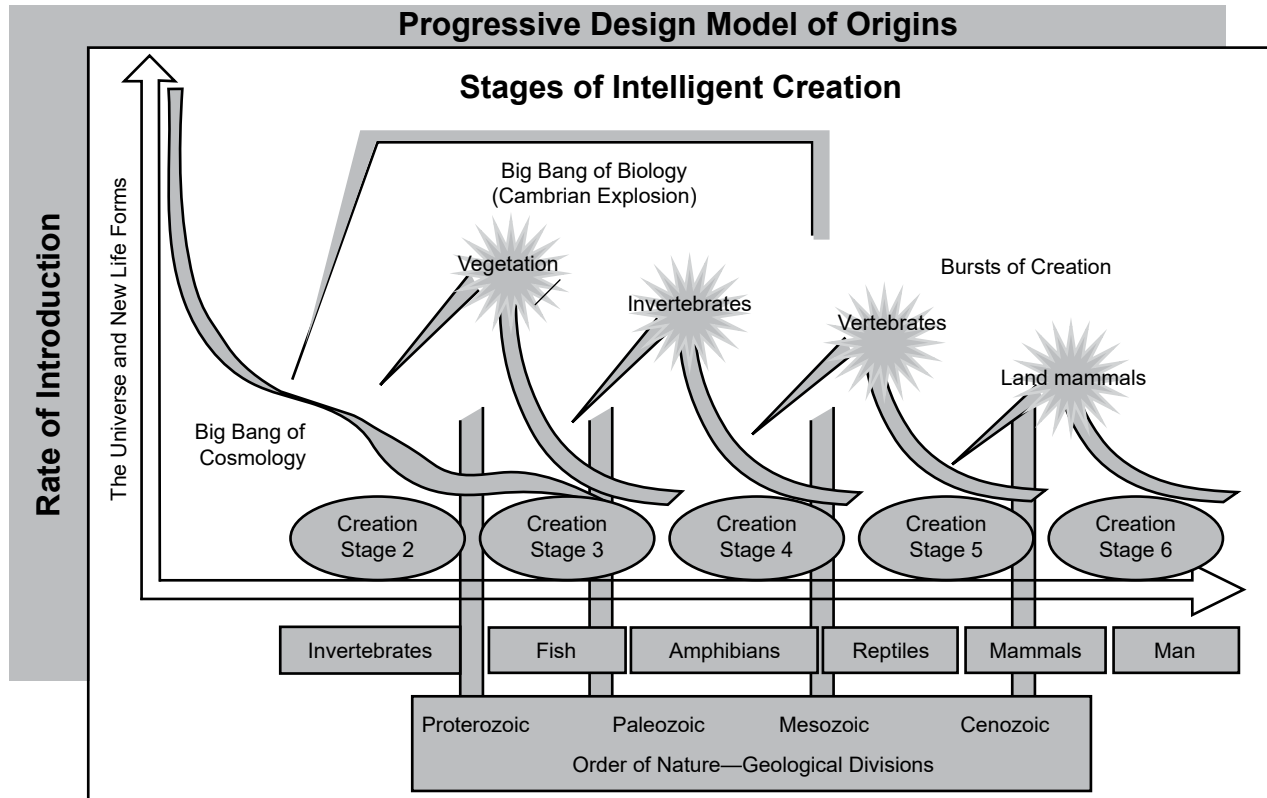


Fig. 11. The chart depicting Geisler’s “Progressive Design Model of Origins,” reproduced from Geisler and Bocchino 2001, 184.

evening and morning, the ___ day,” “and God said,” “and it was so,” and “God saw....it was good,” it is abundantly clear in Genesis 1 that God completed His acts of creation on each day *before proceeding to the next day’s creation work*. So, He made all the land plants on Day 3 before He made the sun, moon, and stars on Day 4 and before He made all the sea creatures and birds on Day 5, which was before He made all the land animals and man on Day 6.

So again, to say that Scripture is inerrant and is extremely accurate and in agreement with what evolutionists say about the order of appearance of life, while ignoring the details of the biblical text, is an unintentional way of saying that the Bible is in error. His hermeneutical gymnastics are *in effect* a denial of the inerrancy of Genesis 1. I do not doubt that Geisler passionately believed in the inerrancy of Scripture in matters of history and science, and he spent his life fighting to defend inerrancy. But in many of his writings, his less-than-careful handling of Scriptures related to the age of the creation was inconsistent with his belief in inerrancy. He therefore unknowingly and unintentionally did damage to this doctrine and to many Christians’ trust in and submission to the authority of God’s Word. When Geisler said that the *prima facie* reading of Genesis 1 implies a literal, six-day Creation and a young earth but then departed from that interpretation due to the claims of “science,” he *in effect* was assigning a higher authority to secular scientific claims about the age of the earth than to the Scriptures—exactly what he fought against when he defended the inerrancy of Scripture in matters of history and science.

Geisler further remarked about his old-earth view, “After carefully considering all the evidence, the progressive view of the design model (or something like it) appears to be a viable model of origins. Three independent fields of study support its integrity: cosmology, molecular biology and paleontology” (Geisler and Bocchino 2001, 184). Well, it does appear to be a viable model, *as long as* you leave out many key details in the evolutionary view and many key details in Genesis 1. *But the majority of biologists say that biological evolution is a fact, just as the majority of geologists and cosmologists say billions of years are a fact*. So why did Geisler not believe what the majority of biologists say when he did believe what the majority of geologists and astronomers say? He was just picking and choosing which scientists he was going to believe.

Geisler, the Philosopher, Missed the Anti-biblical Philosophy

As I have shown, this whole evolutionary story is based on the assumptions of philosophical naturalism, which Geisler, the brilliant evangelical philosopher should have seen. In fact, he did see this partially, at least with respect to geology. Sadly, he did not apply what he saw.

In 1998, Geisler was the president of the Evangelical Theological Society. As such he delivered the presidential address at the November annual meeting of the ETS. In that lecture (Geisler 1999a) he warned of a number of dangerous philosophies that are assaulting the church and having considerable influence. He memorably said, “Beware of philosophy by being aware of philosophy.” The first dangerous philosophy he discussed is naturalism (both methodological and philosophical naturalism), which he said has been one of the most destructive. Therefore, he devoted more attention to it than to any of the other philosophies that he discussed. As far as it goes, his ETS address is a very helpful warning about the dangers of naturalism. He even said in it that “James Hutton (1726–1797) applied [David] Hume’s anti-supernaturalism to geology, inaugurating nearly two centuries of naturalism in science” (Geisler 1999a, 5).

Five years later Geisler published his *Systematic Theology* text (2003). There he correctly wrote, “Naturalistic evolution believes there is no God involved in creation—things emerged by purely natural processes. Carl Sagan (1934–1996) and Isaac Asimov (1920–1992) are examples of adherents to this view” (Geisler 2003, 634). But the astronomer Carl Sagan advocated for the big bang theory, which is a naturalistic evolutionary story of the origin of the universe. What is terribly ironic and disappointing is that by accepting billions of years, Geisler was accepting (and encouraging many other Christians to accept) the naturalistic interpretation of starlight, dust clouds, planets, stars, and galaxies. Tacking God onto the front end of the big bang story does not change the fact that story is an attempt to explain the origin of the planets, stars, and galaxies by purely natural physical and chemical processes.

Also, during his life Geisler repeatedly endorsed the writings of Hugh Ross,³⁷ who ardently promotes naturalistic assumptions and thinking in the church by persuading undiscerning Christian laypeople and theologians to accept billions of years and the big bang theory as scientific fact.³⁸ Ross is now “Adjunct Professor of Scientific Apologetics” at the inerrancy-

³⁷ For example, Geisler’s endorsements appeared on the covers of Ross (1994) and Ross (2008) and he approvingly refers to Ross’s writing in Geisler and Bocchino, (2001, 105, 179, and 401). Appendix 4 of Geisler (2003, 637–647) is his “biblical” and scientific defense of his old-earth, day-age view of Genesis 1, which clearly reflects Ross’s arguments for the same view.

³⁸ Ross’ terrible handling of Scripture and of the scientific evidence and promotion of the naturalistic big bang cosmology is thoroughly exposed in Sarfati (2011).

affirming Southern Evangelical Seminary (SES), which Geisler co-founded and presided over for many years. Before Geisler's death, SES declared him to be "President Emeritus" and named the SES graduate school of apologetics after him, which understandably promotes his old-earth views. The one who warned ETS members about the danger of naturalism, ironically and unintentionally promoted naturalism's myth of millions of years of cosmic and earth history. And his legacy continues through the two leading apologetics schools that he helped found: SES and Veritas International University.

In Geisler's own *Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics* (Geisler 1999b), published in the year *after* his ETS presidential address, he told his readers in an affirming way that "most scientific evidence sets the age of the world at billions of years" (Geisler 1999b, 272). But as I have shown, it was not the *evidence* that set the age at billions of years, but rather the naturalistic, uniformitarian *interpretations* of some of the evidence that led to millions of years. Because of this confusion—equating evidence with the *assumption-controlled interpretations* of evidence—Geisler rejected the literal-day interpretation of Genesis 1 and believed that the genealogies of Genesis 5 and 11 have gaps of thousands of years, even though he says that "*prima facie* evidence" in Genesis indicates the days were literal and there are no genealogical gaps in Genesis.³⁹ After laying out various old-earth reinterpretations of Genesis (which young-earth creationists have thoroughly refuted for years), he mistakenly concluded, "There is no necessary conflict between Genesis and the belief that the universe is millions or even billions of years old" (Geisler 1999b, 272). In an article a few years later I exposed Geisler's and others' inconsistency and compromise with naturalistic ideas (Mortenson 2005).

On his Defending Inerrancy website, Geisler has a lecture on "15 reasons to reject Greco-Roman Genre as a way of interpreting the New Testament."⁴⁰ There he refers to the CSBI Inerrancy. Reason #4 says in its entirety (and Geisler says little else when reading this single slide, 10:10–11:54 in the video),

Fourth, the historical-grammatical method of interpretation affirms the use of one scripture to interpret another since they both have the same authoritative author (God). *But never is a non-inspired external authority allowed to have hermeneutical authority over Scripture. "Scripture is to interpret Scripture" (CSBI, Article XVIII).*⁴¹ The role of extra-biblical sources can be "helpful," but it is *never* hermeneutically *determinative*. It can be

helpful to illuminate the *significance* of a biblical text, but it is *never* the final word in interpreting the *meaning* of a text. If it were, it would violate the principle of *sola Scriptura* (the Bible alone).

If hermeneutical authority is given to an extra-biblical source, then not only is the Bible not the last word on the topic, but the question is: which authority should be accepted? ICBI is clear, "We deny the legitimacy of any treatment of the text or quest for sources behind it that leads to relativizing, dehistoricizing, *or discounting its teaching, or rejecting its claims to authority*" (CSBI, Article XVIII). However helpful they may be, nothing outside the Bible takes precedence over the Bible—whether it is Hebrew Midrash, Greco-Roman genre, *or whatever*. (Italics is Geisler's emphasis; bold italics is mine)

But as I have shown, and contrary to Geisler's passionate and correct teaching here, the ICBI was *not* clear on this issue. Geisler and nearly all the signers of the ICBI Statements on Inerrancy and Hermeneutics violated this valid reasoning in their acceptance or tolerance of the idea of millions of years of cosmic and earth history. What applies to use of (pagan) Greco-Roman literature in the interpretation of the New Testament should also apply to use of the (equally pagan) modern evolutionist literature in the interpretation of Genesis. Both should be rejected.

Geisler was one of the most influential apologists and theologians of the last 100 years. His voluminous writings, his many devoted students who learned apologetics from him at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, Dallas Theological Seminary, Southern Evangelical Seminary, and Veritas International University, and his leadership in the defense of inerrancy are monumental achievements for the truth of Christianity. But it is precisely because of these achievements and his promotion of the acceptance of millions of years, that I cannot think of anyone else who has done more to influence the modern church to *not* believe what God's inerrant Word teaches about Creation, the Flood, the Fall and the age of the earth. It is very sad.

And so, we have a grand theory of evolution, a three-part theory, which I can also represent as a three stranded rope (fig. 12). The theory is the result of the dogmatic application of philosophical naturalism to the study of nature and the interpretation of the presently observed evidence in the process of attempting to reconstruct the unobservable, unrepeatable past about the origin and history of creation.

³⁹ Geisler 1999b, 270 (on days) and 267 (on genealogies).

⁴⁰ <http://defendinginerrancy.com/norm-geisler/>.

⁴¹ In Geisler's PowerPoint slide from which he is reading, he has the italicized part of this quote in yellow font for emphasis as the rest of the text is in white.

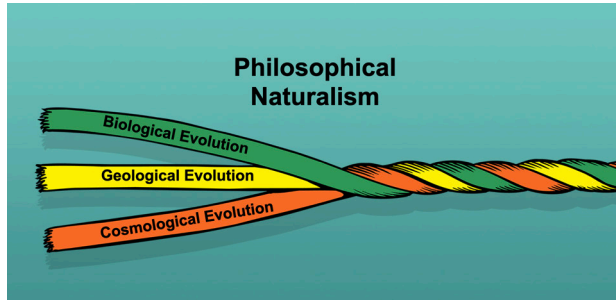


Fig. 12. The grand theory of evolution based on philosophical naturalism consists of biological evolution, geological evolution, and cosmological evolution bound together like three strands in a rope.

The theistic evolutionists are tied up in the assumptions of philosophical naturalism because they accept all three aspects of evolution and say, "God used evolution to create" (fig. 13).



Fig. 13. Theistic evolutionists are captive to philosophical naturalism.

All the various old-earth creationists in the church reject *biological* evolution, but by accepting the millions of years they still embrace *geological* and *cosmological* evolution, whether they realize it or not (fig. 14). In their writings they will sometimes say that they are fighting naturalism in science. They reject naturalism's control of biology and thereby think they are free from naturalism. But they are not! They are still accepting the naturalistic story (and timeline) about the earth and the cosmos, and thereby they are using exegetical gymnastics to evade the plain truth of God's inerrant Word.

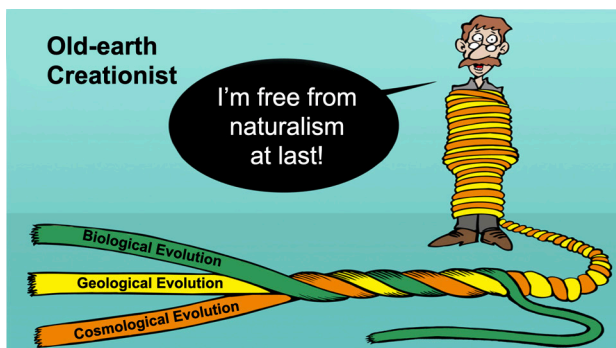


Fig. 14. All old-earth creationists are still captive to philosophical naturalism.

It is only the Bible-believing young-earth creationist who is truly free from naturalism (fig. 15). He is free because he believes the literal and inerrant history of Genesis 1–11 (and the other inerrant Scripture verses that clearly affirm that the early chapters of Genesis are literal history).

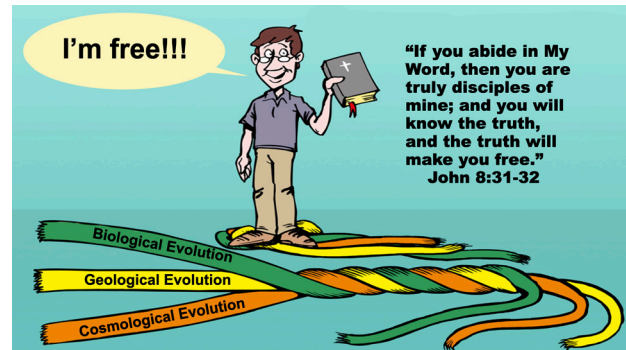


Fig. 15. By rejecting biological, geological, and cosmological evolutions, the Bible-believing, young-earth creationist is truly free from naturalism.

Geisler said (DefendingInerrancy.com), "I affirm that the Bible...*is...inerrant...on whatever topic it addresses.*" Well, one of the topics that the Bible addresses is found in 2 Corinthians 10:4–5 (NASB):

For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses. We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ.

The inerrant Word of God says we are involved in a war. It is a war against ideas (speculations and imaginations and arguments) raised up against the knowledge of God and therefore raised up against God's Word, which is where we get the knowledge of God. For the last 200 years, most church leaders and scholars have been saying "What war? We have nothing to fear from science. The idea of millions of years is nothing to worry about. It doesn't matter how old the creation is, as long as you believe in God and in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord." Or they have even been aiding the enemy by telling the church we need to accept those speculations and imaginations and arguments that are masquerading as "scientific fact."

The ICBI's Helpful Confession

As we saw at the beginning of this essay, the preface to the Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy includes these words:

We gladly acknowledge that many who deny the inerrancy of Scripture do not display the consequences of this denial in the rest of their belief and behavior, and we are conscious that we who confess this doctrine often deny it in life by failing to bring our thoughts and deeds, our traditions and habits, into true subjection to the divine Word.

I appreciate that honest confession. It is true, and I have given you some of the evidence that it is true: old-earth inerrantists have failed to bring their thinking, writing and speaking into true submission to the divine Word. Most old-earthers will earnestly protest: “The issue is not the inerrancy of Scripture but the correct interpretation of Scripture!”

But if someone’s interpretation of Scripture is controlled by what the majority of scientists today say is true, then he is submitting the authority of Scripture to the higher authority of the consensus view among scientists, which makes man the authority over Scripture and indirectly accuses the Bible of errors. In this case, the Christian is using an errant source of truth claims (the fallible and changing opinions of scientists) to interpret the inerrant text (Bible). This is *in effect*, a denial of the inerrancy of the biblical text and an affirmation that the claims of the scientific majority are inerrant. We cannot divorce the authority of Scripture from the inerrancy of Scripture. Our hermeneutics reveal our real commitment to the authority and inerrancy of Scripture. I can only *consistently* maintain the inerrancy and supreme authority of Scripture if I interpret Scripture by Scripture, not by the dominant naturalistic claims of geologists or cosmologists.

So, I am thankful for that confession in the CSBI inerrancy. I and all other young-earth creationists I know would also gladly confess that we are not perfectly consistent either. We are all flawed. But when our inconsistency is exposed, we should repent and seek God’s help to change.

The preface to the Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy also said,

We invite response to this Statement from any who see reason to amend its affirmations about Scripture by the light of Scripture itself, under whose infallible authority we stand as we speak. We claim no personal infallibility for the witness we bear, and for any help which enables us to strengthen this testimony to God’s Word we shall be grateful.

Well, a group of fourteen inerrantist scholars (most of them Bible professors) did respond to this invitation. In the appendix of *Coming to Grips with Genesis: Biblical Authority and the Age of the Earth* (Mortenson and Ury 2008), we produced a statement of affirmations and denials to supplement the inerrancy statement of the ICBI. That statement is also on the AiG web site (<https://answersingenesis.org/answers/affirmations-denials-christian-worldview/>).

At the bottom of the online statement, you can sign your name to that document, as all of the authors of *Coming to Grips with Genesis* did, if you have a master’s degree or higher in some field of theology. But as far as I know, to date there has not been any old-earth proponent who has reviewed *Coming to Grips with Genesis*, much less refuted any of its arguments, even though it has been advertised and sold at many of the annual meetings of the Evangelical Theological Society. It seems that the book has been largely ignored by old-earth proponents.

So, is it *possible* to believe in inerrancy *and* also believe in microbe-to-microbiologist evolution and/or millions of years? *Absolutely!* Thousands of seminary and Christian college professors, pastors, and other Christian leaders do say they believe in those things. But the real question is not: “Is it possible?” The real question is: “Is it consistent?” Is it *consistent* to truly believe in inerrancy AND in microbe-to-microbiologist evolution and/or millions of years? *Absolutely Not!* That inconsistency undermines the authority of God’s Word!

Earlier I commented on the book, *Hermeneutics, Inerrancy, and the Bible*. In it, Old Testament professor Gleason Archer wrote a response to the paper by Bradley and Olson (who advocated the day-age view of Genesis 1). Archer said,

The more serious difficulty with the 24-hour theory [i.e., the young-earth creation view] is that it gives rise to an insoluble contradiction with Genesis 2. Since this contradiction is easy to prove, it results in a fatal undermining of the inerrancy of Scripture to which all consistent evangelicals are committed. *The surrender of inerrancy is too high a price to pay for the preservation of the 24-hour day theory.* (italics added) (Archer 1984, 325)

But holding to young-earth creation does not create a contradiction between Genesis 1 and 2. The *apparent* contradiction can be easily resolved by paying careful attention to the text, without denying the literal days of Genesis 1.⁴² In his article and in other places, Archer argued that too much happened on the sixth day of creation to happen in 24 hours (Archer 1985, 192). But that assertion is also easily refuted.⁴³ It is not young-earth creationists who are surrendering inerrancy. It is old-earth proponents, like Archer, who *in effect* (despite their contrary claims) have surrendered both the inerrancy and the authority of Scripture in their attempt to fit millions of years into Genesis 1.

⁴² In my response to Justin Taylor’s old-earth arguments in <https://answersingenesis.org/age-of-the-earth/a-response-to-a-gospel-coalition-blog-on-the-age-of-the-earth/>, see point 5 where I discuss Genesis 2:5–7. The other verse that seems contradictory to Genesis 1 in many translations is Genesis 2:19, which suggests that man was created before the land animals. This is easily resolved by the fact that in Hebrew the verb does not convey the time sense (other words in the context do that). So contrary to many translations that read something like, “Out of the ground the Lord God formed...” (NASB, NKJV, KJV, etc.), the Hebrew can just as legitimately be translated “Out of the ground the Lord God had formed...” (ESV, NIV, etc.). Therefore, there is no contradiction with Genesis 1.

⁴³ See Ham and Mortenson 2009. Moreland’s use of Archer’s argument is refuted under the heading “The Sixth Day Too Short?”

In *Searching for Adam* (Mortenson 2016), I discuss the moral and gospel consequences of denying a literal Adam and Fall and the Bible's teaching about the age of the creation. There I also say that theistic evolution is a Trojan Horse. But really, all old-earth views have been a stampede of Trojan Horses bringing all kinds of wrong ideas into the church and paving the way for the acceptance of theistic evolution. And it is Christian leaders and scholars that have pulled those Trojan Horses into the holy city of God. As the church has abandoned the authority of Genesis 1–11 regarding origins, America (indeed the whole former Christian West) and much of the professing church have rejected biblical morality and the gospel. Undermining the authority and inerrancy of Genesis regarding Creation, the Fall, the Flood, and the age of the universe has undermined the authority and inerrancy of the Bible's teaching about abortion, gender, marriage and sex (resulting in the widespread acceptance of divorce, adultery, pornography, homosexuality, pedophilia, bi-genderism, transgenderism, polygamy, polyamory, etc.).

Now, 500 years after the Protestant Reformation, we need another reformation. A great many Christian leaders who cry "*sola Scriptura*" today are unknowingly and unintentionally undermining the truth and authority of Scripture by their toleration of or compromise with the evolutionary claims about millions of years. When it comes to Genesis 1–11 and the question of origins, these Christian leaders and scholars are not holding to *sola Scriptura* but really in varying degrees they are holding to *sola Scientia*. For these leaders and scholars, what the majority of secular scientists claim as the truth about the origin and history of the creation is the supreme authority for interpreting Scripture.

John Piper has written a very helpful book, *A Peculiar Glory*, in which he defends the truth of Scripture by pointing to the glory of God revealed in Scripture and the internal witness of the Holy Spirit in the heart of every believer. In his introduction, he addresses the question of inerrancy by asking, "Is the Bible completely true?" His answer? "All of it. Is it so trustworthy in all that it teaches that it can function as the test of all other claims to truth? This book is about how the Bible gives good grounds for the answer yes. The Bible is completely true" Piper 2016, 11). I wholeheartedly agree with his argument and his conclusion in the book, where he says,

This also implies that the Scriptures are the supreme and final authority in testing all claims about what is true and right and beautiful. In matters not explicitly

addressed by the Bible, it implies that what is true and right and beautiful is to be assessed by criteria consistent with the teachings of Scripture. All of this implies that the Bible has final authority over every area of our lives and that we should, therefore, try to bring all our thinking and feeling and acting into line with what the Bible teaches. (Piper 2016, 281)

But the Bible *explicitly* teaches creation in six literal days about 6,000 years ago, a cosmos-impacting curse at the Fall, and a year-long, global, catastrophic Flood. It simply does not teach that God created over millions of years using exploding stars and the death and disease and extinction of billions of plants and animals before He created man. It does not teach that some centuries or millennia after He created man He destroyed only a part of Noah's world by a large flood localized in the Middle East.

What the Bible teaches must be the final authority for testing the truth claims of the scientific majority. But, sadly, Piper is not applying his wonderful conclusion to this issue of the age of the creation. He evidently still follows the view of John Sailhamer (who followed the scientific majority). Therefore, Piper says that "the earth is billions of years old, if it wants to be, whatever science says it is, it is. But man is young, and Adam was good, and he sinned, and he was a real historical person."⁴⁴ However, there simply is no exegetically consistent way to argue for those truths about mankind and Adam and also believe that statement about the age of the earth. The things Piper says about man are biblically true. What he says about the age of the earth is contrary to Scripture and the result of letting "science" (i.e., the majority view among scientists) be the final authority. We must be clear. Science does not say anything. It is *scientists* who say things, and not all PhD scientists agree that the earth is billions of years old. That is only the view of the scientific majority. But majority vote never can be the means of determining truth. And on this issue and all others, God and His Word trump what the scientific majority says.

Conclusions

The inspired, inerrant, infallible Word of God is abundantly clear that Genesis 1–11 is literal history. Those who profess faith in inerrancy but accept millions of years and say it does not matter are, with sincere intentions to the contrary, undermining the inerrancy and the authority of the Word of God, thereby causing great harm to the worldwide church.

If Scripture is the only inerrant book, and it is, then it must be the supreme authority over all other sources of truth claims. And as the ICBI made

⁴⁴ Piper's 4-minute statement about his views was posted on 1 June 2010: http://www.desiringgod.org/ResourceLibrary/AskPastorJohn/ByTopic/99/4630_What_should_we_teach_about_creation/. Having accessed it on 17 February 2020, I assume his position remains the same.

very clear, it must be that supreme authority in everything that it teaches—not just in matters of faith and practice (morals, theology, the life of the church, etc.), but also in its historical statements and its truth claims that are relevant to scientific truth claims. We cannot separate the Bible's inerrancy from its authority.

And if Scripture is inerrant, then we must interpret Scripture with Scripture, not with the fallible, ever-changing opinions and theories of scientists, most of whom are spiritually lost in rebellion against their Creator and using naturalistic philosophy to interpret the world. If we are consistent, then belief in the inerrancy of Scripture and the attendant principles of sound hermeneutics (minus the mistaken loophole about scientific “data”) advocated by the ICBI requires that, with graciousness and firm boldness, we stand for the literal truth of Genesis 1–11. *No other view upholds the supreme authority of God's inerrant Word.*

God says through the prophet Isaiah:

Thus says the LORD, “Heaven is My throne and the earth is My footstool. Where then is a house you could build for Me? And where is a place that I may rest? For My hand made all these things, thus all these things came into being,” declares the LORD. “But to this one I will look, to him who is *humble and contrite of spirit, and who trembles at My word.* (Isaiah 66:1–2, NASB)

True humility is demonstrated when we tremble at the Word of God. It is a great sadness to me that most inerrantist Bible scholars and theologians and other Christian leaders over the past 200 years have been in a very real sense trembling at the words of men (namely scientists), rather than trembling at the Word of God. God help us to follow with appreciation the ICBI's defense of inerrancy but not their example of inconsistent teaching of compromised ideas about origins that undermine the Bible's inerrancy and authority.

Let us believe and boldly proclaim and defend what God says so plainly in Genesis 1–11, which is foundational to the rest of Scripture and to the truth of the gospel. As America and the rest of the once-Christian West sinks deeper into moral insanity and wickedness and animosity toward Bible-believing Christians, may God help us to be faithful in the tremendous battle over the truth of God's inerrant and supremely authoritative Word.

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