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A Reply to Bruce Gordon's Biblical Critique of Young-Earth Creationism

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Abstract

This paper is a response to the biblical criticisms recently leveled by Bruce Gordon against young-earth creationism. It explains why his arguments against a young-earth creationist understanding of the Creation Week, the origin and age of mankind, the consequences of the Fall, the extent of Noah's Flood, and the scope of the judgment over the Tower of Babel are unpersuasive. Gordon shows little proficiency in the grammatical-historical approach he rebukes young-earth creationists for not properly employing. He routinely advances dubious and historically anomalous interpretations of Scripture while pronouncing his approach sophisticated and that of young-earth creationists naïve.

Keywords: Gordon; Genesis; days of creation; Creation Week; Day Seven; Day Six; Day Four; analogical days; age of the earth; extent of the Flood; pre-Fall world; origin of mankind; genealogies

Introduction

Dr. Bruce Gordon, an old-earth creationist, recently published a lengthy critique of the biblical and scientific claims of young-earth creationism (Gordon 2014). I limit this reply to his biblical criticisms, which constitute the bulk of his paper. Though I have a decent layman's familiarity with the relevant science, I think responding to the criticisms of young-earth creation science is best left to experts in the disciplines.

As Gordon sees things, young-earth creationists are theological and scientific hayseeds who are an intellectual embarrassment (a scandal) and a danger to the Christian faith. We leave in our wake a trail of spiritual devastation, driving people to abandon any trust in Scripture when the falsity of our naïve fundamentalism is discovered.[1] If only we would accept the powerful intellectual tool of modern science and stop abusing it in service to our troglodytic interpretive method, we could all sing in the old-earth creationist chorus and get about the Lord's business.

I wish I could say the superciliousness of this article is uncharacteristic of old-earth creationist critiques of young-earth creationism, but that is not the case. They often are condescending, using disrespect as a rhetorical strategy much like materialists do when addressing the claim of intelligent design. The thought seems to be that treating the opposing view as a rational option would lend aid and comfort to the enemy, so the view is dismissed as utter foolishness that should give no reasonable person a moment's pause. As one who made the journey from old-earth creationism to young-earth creationism, I think that perception and characterization are inaccurate.

According to Gordon, young-earth creationists interpret the early chapters of Genesis with a naïve literalism rather than a sound grammatical-historical approach that is cognizant of the ancient Near Eastern context of biblical revelation. We supposedly pay little attention to how Hebrew vocabulary and literary devices structure and affect interpretation and no attention at all to things like phenomenological language or the claim that the first chapters of Genesis are a theological correction of pagan misinterpretations of Creation and the Flood.

Before turning his attention to the days of creation, Gordon assures the reader that Genesis 1–11 is a theological polemic embedded in an ancient world view that is not to be read as an account of actual historical events.[2] Yet he insists that these chapters contain an "historical core" that rests on real events in world history, including the historicity of Adam and Noah. This core, he claims, can be ferreted out by a keen theological and exegetical eye, but the specific justification for picking and choosing various elements of that core is never made clear.

[1] Those who cast such stones often are oblivious to the harm they can do in teaching people that the truth of Scripture can be preserved only by straining its interpretation beyond the breaking point, by exceeding any fair sense of the inspired writer's communicative intent.

[2] Of course, the dichotomy of "a theological polemic" or "an account of actual historical events" is a false one. Parts of Genesis may indeed be a polemic against certain ancient beliefs, but as Hasel has pointed out such an emphasis "does not diminish in the least the biblical author's intention to write an account that has a literal intent to provide factual and historical information" (Hasel 1994, p. 36, n. 77).

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The Days of Creation

Appeal to church history

Gordon begins his defense of interpreting the days of creation as something other than ordinary days by claiming that Justin Martyr in *Dialogue with Trypho the Jew* and Irenaeus in *Against Heresies* argued that the sixth day of creation was something other than an ordinary day. But neither Justin nor Irenaeus made such an argument.

Justin in the referenced text (Chapters LXXX–LXXXI) was speaking of the millennial reign of Christ, which he and others in the early church understood as a literal, earthly reign centered in Jerusalem. In defending his belief in that doctrine, he said a statement in Isaiah ("According to the days of the tree [of life] shall be the days of my people; the works of their toil shall abound") "obscurely predicts" a thousand years because "days" can refer to such a lengthy period. In support of that claim, he cited the fact Adam was told that in *the day he ate of the tree* he would die and then died before he was a thousand years old (so the "day" of a thousand years had not yet ended).

So Justin was not giving his view of the length of one of the *days of creation*, which carry markers of a literal meaning (e.g., there was evening, there was morning), but his view of the length of "day" in the phrase "in the day he ate." Justin almost certainly accepted that Adam ate the forbidden fruit on a literal day (days as we have known them since the Creation) but believed that the "day" in which Adam was promised to die for doing so was a divine day of a thousand years.

Irenaeus (Book V, Chapter 23) said that Adam and Eve died on the very day they ate in the sense they were at the moment of their disobedience handed over to the power of death (became forfeit to death). Irenaeus placed this act of disobedience on the sixth day of creation and stated that Jesus recapitulated this by Himself dying on the sixth day (the day before the Sabbath), the very day on which Adam died. Since Irenaeus understood both Adam and Christ to have died on the sixth day, and Christ died on a literal sixth day, it seems that for Irenaeus the day of Adam's death likewise was a literal day.

Irenaeus acknowledged that some other people made sense of the statement that Adam would die in the day he ate by taking "day" in that text in a figurative sense of a thousand years based on the biblical texts "a day of the LORD is as a thousand years." (Justin would fall in that category.) Irenaeus does not indicate, however, whether those employing a figurative reading of "day" in that text considered Adam to have eaten on the sixth day of creation, and even if they did, the sixth day of creation could be literal (as Irenaeus held) and the day of Adam's death still be figurative.

A few chapters after the discussion noted above (Book V, Chapter 28), Irenaeus wrote:

> For in as many days as this world was made, in so many thousand years shall it be concluded. And for this reason the Scripture says: "Thus the heaven and the earth were finished, and all their adornment. And God brought to a conclusion upon the sixth day the works that He had made; and God rested upon the seventh day from all His works." This is an account of the things formerly created, as also it is a prophecy of what is to come. For the day of the LORD is as a thousand years; and in six days created things were completed: it is evident, therefore, that they will come to an end at the sixth thousand year.

In saying the world was made in six days and will be concluded in 6000 years, he clearly distinguished the days of creation from the ages of duration. He understood the six literal days of creation as a prophecy of the duration of creation, the key to which was that "For the day of the LORD is as a thousand years." For Irenaeus, the literal days of creation are a prophetic figure of the duration of creation.

It is true that Clement of Alexandria and Origen interpreted the days of creation symbolically, but that is not surprising given that both were heads of the Catechetical School of Alexandria where allegorical interpretation was the order of the day. Why chastise young-earth creationists for allegedly failing to employ "a sound grammatical-historical approach" and then applaud those who unquestionably failed to do so? Moreover, Clement of Alexandria, like Origen and Augustine after him, taught that God created everything in an instant not over eons as old-earth creationists claim. Indeed, I am not aware of a single early interpreter who held such a view.

Against the symbolic interpretation of the days of creation offered by Clement and Origen and later by Augustine (who was largely dependent on a Latin translation), the large majority of early Christian leaders understood creation to have occurred over the course of six ordinary days. This includes men like Theophilus of Antioch, Methodius, Lactantius, Victorinus of Pettau, Ephrem the Syrian, Basil of Caesarea, Cyril of Jerusalem, and Ambrose of Milan. This was the standard view among Christians, as demonstrated by the fact Celsus (1987), a pagan critic of Christianity in the late second century, attacked that understanding:

> Silly as that may be, sillier still is the way the world is supposed to have come about. They allot certain days to creation, before days existed. For when heaven had not been made, or the earth fixed or the sun set in the heavens, how could days exist? Isn't it absurd to think that the greatest God pieced out his work like a bricklayer, saying, "Today I shall do this, tomorrow that," and so on, so that he did this on the

third, that on the fourth, and something else on the fifth and sixth days! (p. 103).

How is it that such a majority of early Christians failed to grasp what Gordon insists is the better understanding of the days of creation and none understood God to be saying that He created over long ages? And how did this blindness, this theological and exegetical naivety, take such deep and wide root and continue for so many centuries, beyond the time of Aquinas and the time of the great Protestant Reformers? (see, e.g., Hall 2008.) As Feinberg (2001) concludes, "Though at various times in church history some questioned whether the days of creation were literal solar days, the predominant view at least until the 1700s was that the days of creation were six twenty-four hour days" (p. 597). Dembski (2009) likewise admits, "Indeed, the history of biblical interpretation until the rise of modern science in the seventeenth century overwhelmingly supports a young-earth view. Young-earth creationism was the dominant position of Christians from the Church Fathers through the Reformers" (p. 52). After supplying some relevant quotes, he adds, "Aquinas was therefore, a six-day, six-thousand year young-earth creationist!" (p. 53).

Genesis 1:1–2 and the Creation Week

Gordon sees Genesis 1:1–2 as a description of events occurring *before* the first day of creation in Genesis 1:3. He notes this "allows an unspecified length of time to have passed before the Creation Week gets underway, opening the possibility that the universe is quite old." But if, as recognized by a broad range of scholars (see, e.g., Currid 1991, p. 31; Eichrodt 1967, p. 104; Hamilton 1990, p. 103, n. 2; Harrison 1975, p. 1022; Jewett 1991, p. 457; Keil and Delitzsch 2006, p. 29; Kelly 1997, pp. 45, 79; Mathews 1996, p. 129; Ross 1988, p. 106; Sailhamer 1990, p. 23; Sarna 1989, p. 5; Skinner 1910, p. 14; Von Rad 1972, p. 48; Waltke 1975, p. 218; Wenham 1987, p. 15; Westermann 1984, p. 101; Young 1964, p. 9) and Gordon himself, the phrase "the heavens and the earth" in Genesis 1:1 is an expression (known as a merism) signifying *everything, the totality of creation*,[3] then the creation done by God "in the beginning" cannot be restricted to the material and state described in verse 2. It necessarily includes all the things created in verses 3–31, meaning the verse functions as an introductory encapsulation the details of which are elaborated upon throughout the chapter.[4] Therefore, all attempts to separate Genesis1:1–2 from the Creation Week are misguided.

Four facts confirm this conclusion. First, Genesis 1:1 and 2:1–3 serve as an inclusio in which key terms of 1:1 are repeated in 2:1–3 in reverse order. This ties the account together thus linking the creation in verses 3–31 to 1:1. Wenham (1987) observes, "2:1–3 echoes 1:1 by introducing the same phrases but in reverse order: 'he created,' 'God,' 'heavens and earth' reappear as 'heavens and earth' (2:1) 'God' (2:2), 'created' (2:3). This chiastic pattern brings the section to a neat close which is reinforced by the inclusion 'God created' linking 1:1 and 2:3" (p. 5). Second, Genesis 2:4 uses the phrase "the heavens and the earth" in a restatement of the work of creation throughout the six days. Third, Exodus 31:17 (see also Exodus 20:11) states explicitly that "the heavens and the earth" were made in six days. Fourth, the Lord Jesus places the creation of mankind, which occurred on Day 6, in "the beginning" (Matthew 19:4; Mark 10:6).

The merism of Genesis 1:1 encompasses the material as well as the form so the notion of ex nihilo creation is implicit in it. As Keil and Delitzsch (2006) explain, in Genesis 1:1 "the existence of any primeval material is precluded by the object created: 'the heavens and the earth.'…[I]f in the beginning God created the heaven and the earth, 'there is nothing belonging to the composition of the universe, either in material or form, which had an existence out of God prior to this divine act in the beginning' (*Delitzsch*)" (p. 29). Many subsequent scholars echo the point (e.g., Barclay 1988, p. 177; Copan 1996, p. 88, n. 51; Copan and Craig 2002, p. 111; Feinberg 2001, p. 554; Grudem 1994, pp. 262–263; Mathews 1996, p. 143). Mathews (1996) states, "As in the case with the subsequent creative events (vv. 3–31), the origin of the 'earth' in vv. 1–2 can be attributed to divine fiat that is best reckoned with the first day" (p. 144). So the meaning of Genesis 1:1–2 may be paraphrased: In the beginning God created everything over the course of six days. As initially created from nothing, the earth was formlessness and emptiness; and

[3] Sarna (1989) paraphrases the merism as "the totality of cosmic phenomena" (p. 5); Kelly (1997) as "everything that exists" (p. 45); Von Rad (1972) as "absolutely everything" (p. 48); and Wenham (1987) simply as "everything" (p. 15). Sailhamer (1996) writes: "By linking these two extremes into a single expression—'sky and land' or 'heavens and earth'—the Hebrew language expresses the totality of all that exists. Unlike English, Hebrew doesn't have a single word to express the concept of 'the universe'; it must do so by means of a merism. The expression 'sky and land' thus stands for the 'entirety of the universe.' It includes not only the two extremes, heaven and earth, but also all that they contain—the sun, the moon, and the stars; every seen and unseen part of the universe; the seas, the dry land, and the plants and animals that inhabit them (p. 56).

[4] Boyd et al. (2014) illustrate and explain the grammatical concept this way: "'Harry took his family on a great day trip. He drove them up the coast, explored a state park with them, treated them to a nice seafood dinner, and drove them back home tired but happy.' This is a classic example of *introductory encapsulation* followed by *Elaboration* with the details. The *day trip* lasted all day. It did not conclude until he pulled into his garage. Within that time all the other eventualities occurred, which happen to be in sequential order" (p. 58).

darkness was over the face of the deep, and the Spirit of God was moving over the surface of the waters.

The seventh day

Gordon finds support for his symbolic-day view in the fact the report of the seventh day is not accompanied by the refrain "there was evening and there was morning." This allegedly shows that the seventh day has no end (i.e., is nonliteral), which, in turn, suggests that the other days also may be nonliteral. This argument fails for several reasons.

First, if the absence of the refrain distinguishes the seventh day as nonliteral, then the presence of the refrain establishes the first six days as literal. One cannot take an implication from the absence of a feature and claim it applies when the feature is present. Imagine that each event in an account of fruit picking ended with "and they used a red basket" but the final event ended simply with "and they used a basket." One would be justified in exploring the significance of the omission of "red" in the report of the final event. But if one concluded it meant that the basket used for the final event was not red, one could not parlay that into a denial that red baskets were used in the earlier events. The conclusion that the final basket was *not* red depends on the conclusion that the others were; the omission serves to *distinguish* the final from the former.

Second, in Exodus 20:8–11 God commanded the people of Israel to rest from their work on the seventh day *because* He previously, at the time of creation, rested from His work on the seventh day (Genesis 2:2). And having commanded that imitation of His seventh-day rest, He then blessed and sanctified the "Sabbath day," the seventh day as a commanded day of rest *for man*[5] (Exodus 20:11), as He had previously blessed and sanctified the seventh day as the day of His rest at creation (Genesis 2:3). If the seventh day of Genesis 2:2–3 was not an ordinary day, a day experienced by the people of Israel, it would make no sense for God to ground His command to rest on that day on His example of having done so. Fretheim (1990) writes:

> The references to the days of creation in Exodus 20:11 and 31:17 in connection with the Sabbath law make sense only if understood in terms of a normal seven-day week. It should be noted that the references to creation in Exodus are not used as an analogy—that is, your rest on the seventh day ought to be like God's rest in creation. It is, rather, stated in terms of the imitation of God or a divine precedent that is to be followed: God worked for six days and rested on the seventh, and therefore you should do the same. Unless there is an exactitude of reference, the argument of Exodus does not work. (pp. 19–20)

Third, it seems apparent that Adam and Eve lived through the seventh day. If that day was a perpetual day it was the same day on which God cursed the ground in consequence of Adam's sin (Genesis 3:17; 5:29), which curse Paul teaches had cosmic dimensions (Romans 8:18–22). This fits quite uncomfortably with God's blessing of the seventh day and making it holy (Genesis 2:1–3), all the more so given, as Ross (1988) states, that God's rest in 2:2–3 describes "the enjoyment of accomplishment, the celebration of completion" (pp. 113–114). See also, Kidner 1967, p. 53.

Fourth, the absence of the refrain is readily explained by the fact the termination of the seventh day was communicated by a different formula. As Kelly (1997) observes:

> Is it not more concordant with the patent sense of the context of Genesis 2 (and Exodus 20) to infer that because the Sabbath differed in quality (though not—from anything we can infer from the text—in quantity), a slightly different concluding formula was appended to indicate a qualitative difference (six days involved work; one day involved rest)? The formula employed to show the termination of the first Sabbath: "And on the seventh day God ended His work which He had made; and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had made" (Gen. 2:2) seems by the normal rules of biblical interpretation to intend an end just as definite as that of "and the evening and the morning were the first day." (p. 111)

Indeed, if the refrain not only closes the preceding day but also opens the way to the next period of creation-specific activity, the next daytime, it would be out of place after that activity was completed. Though days certainly follow, they are not days unique to the creation event, which is the focus of the narrative.

> Moreover, in the sequence of six days, the phrase marks off one day's creative activities from the next, but since the Lord rested from the seventh day onward, why would Moses need to distinguish the first day of rest from a second, third, or hundredth day of rest? Hence, including the formulaic phrase at the end of each creative day makes sense, whereas it makes little sense after the seventh day. (Feinberg 2001, p. 600)

MacArthur (2001) puts it this way:

[5] The word Sabbath (*Shabbāt*), which is the name given to the commanded observance of the seventh day by Israelites, is never used in Genesis. As Jewish scholar Nahum Sarna (1989) observes: "The human institution of the Sabbath does not appear in the narrative. . . . [A]s we read in Exodus 31:13, 16, and 17, the Sabbath is a distinctively Israelite ordinance, a token of the eternal covenant between God and Israel. Its enactment would be out of place before the arrival of Israel on the scene of history" (p. 14).

> Notice, too, that there is a significant omission in the biblical record of day seven. Every other day's record ends with similar words: "And the evening and the morning were the [nth] day" (cf. vv. 5, 8, 13, 19, 23, 31). But no such formula is used to close the seventh day. This does not suggest, as some have asserted, that day seven was a long era that covers all of human history. The omission is by no means an indication that the days of creation were really long epochs. As we have seen repeatedly, the sequence of creation, the language of Genesis, and the clear statements found in such passages as Exodus 20:11 and 31:17 make clear that these were normal twenty-four-hour days. Another day certainly followed this seventh day. But the omission of the formula on day seven suggests that the rest God entered into was a *permanent* rest from His creative works. He ceased creating and was completely satisfied with what He had created. (p. 187)

The attempt to bolster this particular argument by appeal to Hebrews 4:1–11 is misguided. The text does not say that the seventh day of the Creation Week is itself ongoing, continuing to the present day; it merely reveals that God entered into a state of rest from His creative work on the seventh day, which rest functions as a symbol of mankind's eschatological rest. As Kulikovsky (1999) shows, "God's rest should be viewed as a long period of time *beginning with* the seventh day of creation, not as equivalent to the seventh day" (p. 61, emphasis in original).

Similarly, Fretheim (1990) notes, "The occasional appeal to Hebrews 4 cannot be sustained, not least because the language is eschatological. The text simply does not address the question of the length of the seventh day of creation (though it might be noted that "day" is used in its normal way in verses 7–8) or how the seventh day is related to God's eternal rest" (pp. 20–21). Young (1964) agrees: "It should be noted that the seventh day is to be interpreted as similar in nature to the preceding six days. There is no scriptural warrant ever (certainly not Hebrews 4:3–5) for the idea that the seventh day is eternal" (pp. 77–78, n. 73).

The claim that John 5:17 establishes that the seventh day of Genesis 2:2–3 is an ongoing, nonliteral day fares no better. Collins (1999) states the argument this way:

> In John 5:17 Jesus has healed a man on the Sabbath, for which the Jews would persecute him (v. 16); then Jesus claims "my Father is working up to now, and I am working"—and everyone knew that by "my Father" he meant "God." What is the implication? God is still "working," even though it is his Sabbath; and his Son is warranted in doing likewise. (p. 138)

First, the cogency of the Lord's response does not depend on His Jewish antagonists accepting the proposition of Hebrews 4 that God's seventh-day rest at creation has never ended. It is enough that the Jews acknowledged that God worked on the *weekly Sabbaths*, the same Sabbath on which Jesus was accused of working (Weeks 1988, p. 114). In fact, the debate among first-century rabbis was not whether God was justified in working at all in light of Genesis 2:2–3, but whether "such divine activity was broken off on the *weekly* sabbath" (Lincoln 2005, p. 197; emphasis in original). The consensus "was that God works on the Sabbath, for otherwise providence itself would go into *weekly* abeyance" (Carson 1991, p. 247, emphasis in original). As Bruce (1983) expresses the consensus, "God was active all the time, on sabbath days as much as on ordinary days" (p. 127). See also, Burge 2000, p. 176.

Second, even if the LORD had argued from the premise that God's seventh-day rest was perpetual and that God is therefore always working on *His* Sabbath, it would not mean the seventh day of creation was nonliteral. That premise does not address whether the divine rest consists of an extended seventh day of creation or an age that was inaugurated on a literal seventh day.

The sixth day

As a setup for another argument for the symbolic-day view, Gordon asks, "How is it that God created all manner of plants on the *third* day (*Genesis 1:11–12*), yet on the day he creates man in *Genesis 2*, which is the *sixth* day according to *Genesis 1*, 'no shrub of the field had yet appeared on the earth and no plant of the field had yet sprung up' (*Genesis 2:5, NIV*)?" Here are the texts in question:

> Then God said, "Let the waters below the heavens be gathered into one place, and let the dry land appear"; and it was so. [10]God called the dry land earth, and the gathering of the waters He called seas; and God saw that it was good. [11]Then God said, "Let the earth sprout vegetation: plants yielding seed, *and* fruit trees on the earth bearing fruit after their kind with seed in them"; and it was so. [12]The earth brought forth vegetation, plants yielding seed after their kind, and trees bearing fruit with seed in them, after their kind; and God saw that it was good. [13]There was evening and there was morning, a third day. (Genesis 1:9–13. NASU)
>
> This is the account of the heavens and the earth when they were created, in the day that the LORD God made earth and heaven. [5]Now no shrub of the field was yet in the earth, and no plant of the field had yet sprouted, for the LORD God had not sent rain upon the earth, and there was no man to cultivate the ground. [6]But a mist used to rise from the earth

> and water the whole surface of the ground. 7Then the LORD God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being. (Genesis 2:4–7. NASU)

According to Gordon, the way to resolve the seeming contradiction is to understand Genesis 2:5 to mean that on Day 6 there were no plants in *a particular region of land* (taking *'ereṣ* in this more limited sense), not that there were no plants in the entire earth (which would contradict chapter 1). The reason there were not yet any plants in that specific area was that God had not yet brought to that plot the seasonal rains necessary for plants to sprout. This, he claims, shows that Day 6, the day of mankind's creation, was longer than an ordinary day because it encompassed seasonal rain cycles.

This argument misses the mark completely by failing to recognize that "shrub of the field" and "plant of the field" in Genesis 2:5 are different from the vegetation identified in Genesis 1:11–12 as being created on Day 6. Gordon is seeking a solution to a conflict of his own making, which leads him away from a proper understanding of the text. And yet he boldly insists that his tendentious reading is insight.

The structure of Genesis is marked by the initial section on creation (1:1–2:3) followed by 10 *tôlĕdôt* sections: of the heavens and the earth (2:4–4:26); of Adam (5:1–6:8); of Noah (6:9–9:29); of Shem, Ham, and Japheth (10:1–11:9); of Shem (11:10–26); of Terah (11:27–25:11); of Ishmael (25:12–18); of Isaac (25:19–35:29); of Esau, the father of Edom (twice) (36:1–8; 36:9–37:1); of Jacob (37:2–50:26). The word *tôlĕdôt* often is translated as "generations," "histories," or simply "descendants." As a heading for the various sections of Genesis, it announces the historical development from the ancestor and means "this is what became of…" (Ross 1988, pp. 69–72).

So in Genesis 1:1–2:3 the creation is brought into existence, then in Genesis 2:4–4:26 we are told what became of that creation. Day 6 is highlighted with additional details because Adam and Eve, their placement in the Garden, and God's command governing their lives in the Garden are central to what became of the very good creation. In this section, we see that sin entered the world through mankind, the man and woman were sentenced to experience previously unknown hardships (Genesis 3:16–19), the ground was cursed (Genesis 3:17), which included the subjection of all subhuman creation to futility and the bondage of corruption (Genesis 3:17; Romans 8:18–22), and sin spread and worsened.

Genesis 2:5 says only that two specific types of vegetation had not yet sprung up: "shrub (*śîaḥ*) of the field" and "plant (*'ēśeb*) of the field." These are different from the seed-bearing plants and fruit trees mentioned in Genesis 1:11–12; they are post-Fall forms of vegetation. The mention of their "yet" having sprung up contrasts the pre-Fall and post-Fall worlds and points to the impending lapse of mankind and judgment of God. As Umberto Cassuto (1961), a Jewish scholar and renowned Hebraist, explains:

> What is meant by the term שִׂיחַ *śîaḥ* of the field and the עֵשֶׂב *'ēśebh* of the field mentioned here? Modern commentators usually consider the terms to connote the *vegetable kingdom as a whole*; thence it follows that our section contradicts the preceding chapter, according to which vegetation came into being on the third day….All interpretations of this kind introduce into the text something that is not there, in order to create the inconsistency. When the verse declares that these species were missing, the meaning is simply that these kinds were wanting, but *no others*. If we wish to understand the significance of the שִׂיחַ *śîaḥ of the field* and the עֵשֶׂב *'ēśebh of the field* in the context of our narrative, we must take a glance at the end of the story. It is stated there, in the words addressed by the Lord God to Adam after he had sinned: THORNS AND THISTLES *it shall bring forth to you; and you shall eat the* עֵשֶׂב *'ēśebh of the field* (iii 18). The words עֵשֶׂב *'ēśebh of the field* are identical with the expression in our verse; whilst *thorns and thistles*, which are synonymous with the שִׂיחַ *śîaḥ of the field*, are a particularization of the general concept conveyed by the latter (cf. one of the שִׂיחִים *śîḥīm* in Gen xxi 15). These species did not exist, or were not found in the form known to us, until after Adam's transgression, and it was in consequence of the fall that they came into the world or received their present form. (pp. 101–102)[6]

Genesis 2:5–6 means that before creation was cursed as a result of mankind's sin, there were no "desert shrubs" or "cultivated grains."[7] There were no desert shrubs because prior to the curse there

[6] See also, Butler 1999, pp. 152–155 and Sailhamer 1990, p. 40. Some who agree the plants of Genesis 2:5 are distinct from those of Genesis 1:11–12 disagree in other particulars (e.g., Kruger 1997).

[7] Hamilton (1990) says, "the reference is to some kind of desert shrub or bush" (p. 154). Koehler and Baumgartner (1996) includes: "for this see also R. Albertz *Weltschöpfung und Menschenschöpfung* p. 22274: a wild plant growing in the desert or steppe" (p. 1321). Futato (1998) argues cogently that the terms for vegetation used in Genesis 2:5 are very precise and mean "wild shrubs of the steppe" and "cultivated grains" (pp. 3–4). But as Butler (1999) points out: "Later in his article, however, he assumes, without any argument or even comment, that the former stands for *all* non-cultivated vegetation. With this new sense of the term in hand he then assumes, again without any argument or comment, that these two types of vegetation (the non-cultivated and cultivated) together stand for all vegetation. In other words, he takes it as a given that 'wild shrubs' and 'cultivated grain' are to be understood as a merism for *all* vegetation. But this is certainly not the case." (p. 148)

were no deserts. The earth was a lush paradise that was watered thoroughly by streams or springs that flowed up from the ground.[8] It was only after God substituted rainfall, which is sporadic and uneven, for the original paradisiacal watering mechanism that deserts arose. There were no cultivated grains because prior to the Fall man had not been sentenced to backbreaking farming; prior to the Fall, man worked the Garden not the ground.

In saying that these plant forms had "not yet" arisen, the question is raised in the reader's mind, "Well what happened that they arose thereafter?" As the story unfolds, we learn of mankind's sin and God's sentence. In Genesis 3:17–18 we are told that the earth shall be such that it will bring forth "thorns and thistles," which are an example of desert shrubs, and that man will through toilsome labor eat cultivated grains (wheat, barley, etc.), which is the exact phrase used in 2:5 (עֲשֹׂב הַשָּׂדֶה).

Mathews (1996) writes:

> The purpose of this tôlĕdôt section is its depiction of human life before and after the garden sin; the condition of the "land" after Adam's sin is contrasted with its state before the creation of man. Genesis 2:5–7 is best understood in light of 3:8–24, which describes the consequences of sin. This is shown by the language of 2:5–6, which anticipates what happens to the land because of Adam's sin (3:18, 23). When viewed this way, we find that the "shrub" and "plant" of 2:5 are not the same as the vegetation of 1:11–12 (p. 194). See also Kelly 1997, pp. 124–126.

In addition to his mistaken claim that Genesis 2:5 indicates that Day 6 was a symbolic day, Gordon hints that too much activity occurred on Day 6 to fit within an ordinary day. He does so by mentioning Adam's naming of the animals and his realization that he had no partner and then appealing to Adam's supposed statement that "at long last" he had a suitable companion in Eve. But the impression he intends to create vanishes upon analysis.

In naming the animals, Adam realized that none was a suitable helper, one "matching him," but there is nothing to suggest that time beyond that exercise was needed for him to pine for companionship. The text says nothing about him experiencing loneliness over a period of time. Rather, "[t]he narrative *begins with* the striking announcement by God that the man is not yet as God had planned [him] to be" (Ross 1988, p. 125, emphasis in original). Mathews (1996) observes, "Whether the man felt his aloneness at first is not stated; only the divine viewpoint is given" (p. 213). Hamilton (1990) notes, "it is God who makes the judgment about the unsuitability of man's aloneness. Man is not consulted for his thoughts on the matter. At no point does man offer to God any grievance about his current circumstances" (p. 175).

The translation that God "finally" or "at last" brought Eve before Adam does not imply that a lengthy period had elapsed. It was simply Adam's way of contrasting the new creature (woman) to the many animals that had recently been brought before him. The clause in 2:23 can just as easily be translated "This one, this time [*zo't happa'm*] is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh" (Wenham 1987, p. 70). See also Hamilton 1990, pp. 179–180. Another possible reading is simply, "This time, bone of my bones…" (Mathews 1996, p. 218).

With those misconceptions cleared away, the suggestion that too much occurred on Day 6 to fit within an ordinary day is exposed as a mere assertion. The point is made colorfully in Jordan's response to another old-earth creationist's rhetorical question of who can imagine so much activity occurring within a single day. He writes:

> Well, anyone can imagine it:
>
> 6:00 am God makes the animals.
> 6:01 am God takes counsel with Himself to make man.
> 6:02 am God makes Adam. Forming him of dust takes one minute.
> 6:05 am After talking with Adam for a minute or so, God starts to plant the Garden.
> 6:10 am The Garden is completed.
> 6:11 am God puts Adam in the Garden.
> 6:12 am God warns Adam about the forbidden tree.
> 6:13 am Adam has breakfast.
> 6:30 am God reveals His decision to make Eve.
> 6:31 am God brings the animals to Adam to name.

[8] "Mist" is used in AV, RSV, ERV, NASB, NKJV, and ESV (which footnotes "spring" as an alternative). NIV and NRSV use "stream(s)" (NIV footnotes "mist" as an alternative). NEB and JB use "flood," and REB uses "moisture." In specific reference to Genesis 2:6, Koehler and Baumgartner (1994) state, "the subterranean stream of fresh water, groundwater" (p. 11). The two most thorough studies of the meaning of *'ed* are Tsumura 1989, pp. 94–116 and Hasel and Hasel 2000. Tsumura concludes that the word probably refers to subterranean water that comes up to the surface of the earth. Hasel and Hasel agree (p. 324) "Tsumura is correct in deriving the *'ed*-moisture from a source other than the sky and its clouds from which rain falls," but for philological and conceptual reasons, they reject his hypothesis that the ground was watered from a subterranean ocean. They also show that Dahood's interpretation "rain cloud" lacks philological, syntactical, and conceptual credibility. They conclude that *'ed* in Genesis 2:6 is best understood as a mist/dew, which, in distinction to watering from above by rain, watered the ground through a continual rising from below, from the earth. "It seems certain that the watering of the arable land, the >>ground,<< by means of >>mist/dew<< (*'ed*) is radically different from the post-flood watering of the earth by rain (Gen 7,12; 8,2)" (p. 339). Contrary to the suggestion of some, Job 36:27 is not helpful in clarifying the meaning of *'ed* in Genesis 2:6. Since the term in Job 36:27 "appears in relationship to heaven and not to the earth…it does not seem to provide a contextual parallel except in contrast" Hasel and Hasel 2000, p. 323. In addition, the Job passage has its own uncertainties. See Alden 1980, p. 17; Jordan 1999, pp. 237–238; Pope 1973, p. 273; Tsumura 1989, pp. 115–116.

> They are brought by "kinds," so not every specific species, let alone every individual, is brought. Let's say that it takes Adam eight hours to name them all, male and female, with a half-hour lunch break. (This is probably far too long at the time.) This brings us to—
>
> 3:00 pm Adam takes a nap.
> 3:28 pm Adam wakes up and meets Eve.
> 3:29 pm God speaks to Adam and Eve (Genesis 1:28–30).
> 3:30 pm We still have two and a half hours to sunset.
>
> Now, what's so hard about that? (Jordan 1999, p. 47) See also Grigg 1996.

The first three days

Gordon raises the idea that the first three days could not be days of ordinary length because the sun was not made until Day 4, but that is a non sequitur. Just as the eschatological light will not have its source in the sun or moon (e.g., Revelation 21:23; 22:5), neither did the light of creation. God provided the light from a nonsolar source and called the alternating of that light with darkness "day" and "night." He spoke of "evening" and "morning" and identified the cycle as a "day," precisely as He described the days after the creation of the sun. Hamilton (1990) writes:

> It will perhaps strike the reader of this story as unusual that its author affirms the existence of light (and a *day* for that matter) without the existence of the sun, which is still three "days" away. The creation of light anticipates the creation of sunlight. Eventually the task of separating the light from the darkness will be assigned to the heavenly luminaries (v. 18). It is unnecessary to explain such a claim as reflecting scientific ignorance. What the author states is that God caused the light to shine from a source other than the sun for the first three "days." (p. 121)

Mathews (1996) writes, "The source of creation's first 'light' is not specifically stated. Since it is not tied to a luminating body such as the sun (vv. 15–16), the text implies that the 'light' has its source in God himself" (p. 145). Fretheim (1994) remarks, "Inasmuch as the sun had not yet been created, this verse probably refers to a divine manipulation of light as a creative act" (p. 343). According to Lewis (1989), "The rabbis had God create a primeval light not dependent on the sun that came into existence at God's command but was later withdrawn and stored up for the righteous in the messianic future" (p. 449). Sarna (1989) states, "This source of this supernal, nonsolar light of creation became a subject of rabbinic and mystical speculation. Rabba 3:4 expresses the view that this light is the effulgent splendor of the Divine Presence" (p. 7).

The fourth day

Regarding the creation of the sun, moon, and stars on the fourth day, Gordon mentions the framework theory only to reject it as contrary to the inspired writer's portrayal of the creation days as reflecting some kind of sequence. The framework theory has additional warts that justify its rejection (see, e.g., Kulikovsky 2001; McCabe 2006; Pipa 1999), but since Gordon recognizes it is flawed space can be better used addressing other things.

In trying to harmonize his recognition that the days of creation express some kind of sequence with his acceptance of the creation story of modern science, Gordon offers two possibilities for understanding the making of the heavenly bodies on Day 4, both of which deny that the heavenly bodies were created on that day. First, he says the word customarily translated "made" (*'asâ*) could be rendered "appointed," which yields the meaning that on Day 4 God "appointed" the *previously made* heavenly bodies "to *function* as luminaries that would differentiate day from night and mark the flow of time for the sentient creatures he would create on days five and six."

Jordan (1999) rightly asks of the claim, "What does it mean for God to appoint the sun to this task on the fourth day if the sun already had this task from the first day?" (p. 164). That is, if the sun existed prior to Day 4 and was already the light source that defined day and night, it was already appointed by God to that task. Kline (1996) observes, "this minimalist view of day four would share the fatal flaw of all views that eliminate the forming of the luminaries from the happenings of day four: it would leave day four with no new contribution, for all the functions mentioned there are already said to be operative in day one" (pp. 8–9).

Moreover, the phrase "let there be" that is used in Genesis 1:14 is understood to express a new creative act in Genesis 1:3 (creation of light) and Genesis 1:6 (creation of the expanse), so one need not be a naïve fundamentalist to see it as special pleading to deny that meaning in Genesis 1:14. As Kline (1996) points out, arguing for the meaning "appointed" in 1:14 is no more justified than claiming that the statement on Day 2 "that God made the firmament may be reduced to the idea that a previously existing firmament began to perform its stated purpose of dividing between the waters above and below (Genesis 1:6, 7)" (pp. 8–9). Even Sailhamer (1996), who subscribes to the "appointed" view, acknowledges that the creation of the sun, moon, and stars on the fourth day "appears to be the plain meaning of the text" (p. 130).

It is thus not surprising that Keil and Delitzsch (2006) write, "At the creative word of God the bodies of light came into existence in the firmament, as lamps" (p. 35). Young (1963) writes, "That the

heavenly bodies are made on the fourth day and that the earth had received light from a source other than the sun is not a naive conception, but is a plain and sober statement of the truth" (p. 161). Von Rad (1972) labels the fourth day "creation of the stars" (p. 55). Wenham (1987) states that in verses 14–19, "The creation of the sun, moon, and stars is described at much greater length than anything save the creation of man" (p. 21).[9] Hamilton (1990) writes, "Gen. 14ff. is saying that these luminaries are not eternal; they are created, not to be served but to serve" (p. 127). Mathews (1996) writes, "On this day the luminaries are created and placed in the heavens, paralleling 'light' decreed on the first day" (p. 153). And Hartley (2000) writes, "On the fourth day God brought into existence lights in the expanse of the sky…" (p. 45).

Gordon's second proffered explanation for the making of the heavenly bodies on Day 4 is that the *previously made* bodies *became visible* from the surface of the earth on that "day" as the atmosphere cleared so as to allow the light to reach the surface. But again, the expression "let there be" indicates in Genesis 1:3 and 1:6 a new creative act not the revealing of a prior creative act. Feinberg (2001) states, "we need an explanation of why the *fiat* command on this day means existing things are to be revealed when it has no such meaning on the other days, despite the fact that the verb, its force, and form are the same for each day" (p. 612). Mathews (1996) observes "there is no sense that [the luminaries] were once hidden and only now appear; contrast the language of the appearance of dry land in v. 9" (p. 153, n. 155). Kline (1996) is even more forceful in his rejection of this explanation:

> Any such view is falsified by the language of the text, which is plainly that of actual production: "Let there be and God made and God set (lit., gave)." The attempt to override this language cannot be passed off as just another instance of phenomenological description. The proposed evasive tactic involves a very different notion—not just the general denominating of objects according to their everyday observed appearance at any and all times, but the relating of a specific event at a particular juncture in the creation process as though witnessed by an observer of the course of events, someone who at the moment reached on day four is supposed to catch sight of the luminaries, hitherto somehow hidden, perhaps by clouds. Disclaimers notwithstanding, this proposal is guilty of foisting an unwarranted meaning on the language affirming God's making and positioning of the luminaries. In the accounts of the other days, everybody rightly recognizes that the same language of divine fiat and creative fulfillment signifies the bringing into existence of something new, not just a visual detecting of something that was there all the while. There is no more excuse for reducing divine acts of production into human acts of perception in day four than there would be elsewhere. (p. 8)[10]

Analogical days

The fact Genesis 1 is a narrative text (Boyd 2008), coupled with the refrain "there was evening and there was morning" and the references to the days of creation in Exodus 20:11 and 31:17, makes it abundantly clear that the inspired writer was referring to the normal days with which his readers were familiar. One would never know it from Gordon's presentation, but this has been recognized by many eminent Hebraists across the theological spectrum.[11] For example:

- Keil and Delitzsch (2006) write, "But if the days of creation are regulated by the recurring interchange of light and darkness, they must be regarded not as periods of time of incalculable duration, of years or thousands of years, but as simple earthly days" (p. 32).
- Dods (1898) writes, "They are [the Bible's] worst friends who distort its words that they may yield a meaning more in accordance with scientific truth. If, for example, the word 'day' in these chapters does not mean a period of twenty-four hours, the interpretation of Scripture is hopeless" (p. 4).
- Driver (1926) writes: "Here and elsewhere the expression 'creation of man' has been used designedly in order to leave open the possibility that the 'days' of Gen. i. denote periods. There is however little doubt that the writer really meant 'days' in a literal sense, and that Pearson was right when he inferred from the chapter that the world was represented as created '6000, or at farthest 7000,' years from the 17th cent. A.D. (p. xxviii, n. 1).
- Gunkel (cited in Hasel 1994, p. 21) writes, "The 'days' are of course days and nothing else."
- Skinner (1930) writes, "The interpretation of *yom* as *aeon*, a favourite resource of harmonists of science and revelation, is opposed to the plain

[9] The description may be so detailed because it is a polemic against Near Eastern exaltation of astral bodies. But, as previously noted, such an emphasis "does not diminish in the least the biblical author's intention to write an account that has a literal intent to provide factual and historical information" (Hasel 1994, p. 36, n. 77).

[10] On the attempt by Sailhamer 1990, pp. 33–34 to distinguish the syntax of verse 14, see Jordan 1999, pp. 162–165; Kulikovsky 2000, p. 36; Shaw 1999, pp. 210–212.

[11] This is not to say that all of these scholars accept creation as actually having occurred over six literal days. Some do, but some believe the literal days are part of a literary scheme that makes a larger figurative point. Others are content with the notion the Bible affirms cultural misconceptions. But they all see that the days described are ordinary days.

sense of the passage, and has no warrant in Hebrew usage (not even in Ps. 90:4)" (p. 21).

- Leupold (1942) writes: "In the interest of accuracy it should be noted that within the confines of this one verse [v. 5] the word 'day' is used in two different senses. 'Day' (*yôm*) over against 'night' (*láyelah*) must refer to the light part of the day, roughly, a twelve hour period. When the verse concludes with the statement that the first "day" (*yôm*) is concluded, the term must mean a twenty-four hour period….
  There ought to be no need of refuting the idea that *yôm* means period. Reputable dictionaries like Buhl, B D B or K. W. know nothing of this notion" (pp. 56–57).
- Cassuto (1961) writes, "The intention here…is to explain that the two divisions of time known to us as Day and Night are precisely the same as those that God established at the time of creation, the *light* being the Day, and the *darkness* the Night" (p. 27). He specifies on the following page that 'day' of v. 5 is a "calendar day."
- Simpson and Bowie (1952) write, "There can be no question but that by Day the author meant just what we mean—the time required for one revolution of the earth on its axis" (p. 471).
- Von Rad (1972) writes, "The seven days are unquestionably to be understood as actual days and as a unique, unrepeatable lapse of time in this world" (p. 65). Fretheim 1990, p. 14 introduces this quote with "I would agree with Gerhard von Rad."
- Davidson (1973) writes: "The flexibility in the usage of the word *day* is well illustrated in verse 5. In its first occurrence it means day time as distinct from the darkness of night; in the closing refrain it means the whole twenty-four hour cycle embracing both evening and morning. Attempts to make it still more flexible, to mean aeons or stages in the known evolution of the world, and thus reconcile Genesis 1 with modern scientific theory are misguided" (p. 18).
- Barr (1984) writes: "By completely ignoring the literary form of the passage, its emphasis upon the seven-day scheme, and all questions involving the intentions of the writers [the Scofield Bible's interpretation of Genesis 1:1] is as effective a denial of the truth of Genesis as any atheistic writer could produce. The same is true of interpretations which suppose that the seven 'days' of creation are not actual days but long ages, ages of revelation, or the like" (p. 137).[12]
- Wenham (1987) writes, "There can be little doubt that here [verse 5] 'day' has its basic sense of a 24-hour period" (p. 19).
- Ross (1988) writes, "In this chapter, however, ['day'] must carry its normal meaning….It seems inescapable that Genesis presents the creation in six days" (p. 109).
- Stek (1990) writes: "Surely there is no sign or hint within the narrative [of Genesis 1] itself that the author thought his 'days' to be irregular designations—first a series of undefined periods, then a series of solar days—or that the 'days' he bounded with 'evening and morning' could possibly be understood as long aeons of time. His language is plain and simple, and he speaks in plain and simple terms of one of the most common elements in humanity's experience of the world (pp. 237–238).
- Hamilton (1990) writes: "It is highly debatable whether the interpretation of Genesis' days as metaphorical for geological ages can be sustained. For one thing, it allows the concerns of establishing concord with science (ever changing in its conclusions) to override an understanding of a Hebrew word [*yôm*] based on its contextual usage. Furthermore, one would have to take extreme liberty with the phrase, "there was evening, and there was morning—the *x* day" (p. 54).
- Hasel (1994) writes: "The author of Genesis 1 could not have produced more comprehensive and all-inclusive ways to express the idea of a literal 'day' than the ones that were chosen. There is a complete lack of indicators from prepositions, qualifying expressions, construct phrases, semantic-syntactical connections, and so on, on the basis of which the designation 'day' in the creation week could be taken to be anything different than a regular 24-hour day. The combinations of the factors of articular usage, singular gender, semantic-syntactical constructions, time boundaries, and so on, corroborated by the divine promulgations in such Pentateuchal passages as Exodus 20:8–11 and Exodus 31:12–17, suggest uniquely and consistently that the creation 'day' is meant to be literal, sequential, and chronological in nature" (p. 31).
- Sailhamer (1996) writes, "That week, as far as we can gather from the text itself, was a normal week of six twenty-four hour days and a seventh day in which God rested" (p. 95). (He believes the week refers to creation of the promise land).
- And, finally, Walton (2001) writes: "We cannot be content to ask, 'Can the word [*yôm*] bear the meaning I would like it to have?' We must instead try to determine what the author and audience would have understood from the usage in the context. With this latter issue before us, it is

[12] The fact Barr opposes "fundamentalism" does not negate his linguistic expertise. One may claim that his bias is overriding his scholarly judgment, but given the theological diversity of those who share his opinion, that is a difficult point to carry.

> extremely difficult to conclude that anything other than a twenty-four-hour day was intended. It is not the text that causes people to think otherwise, only the demands of trying to harmonize with modern science (p. 81).

In addition, the premier Hebrew and Aramaic lexicon lists Genesis 1:5 as the first entry under the definition "day of twenty-four hours" (Koehler and Baumgartner 1995, p. 399; likewise Holladay 1971, p. 130). And Saeboe (1990), in the acclaimed *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, includes *yôm* in Genesis 1:5 as referring to a "full day" of twenty-four hours (p. 23).

Gordon is presumably aware of this strong scholarly current and is wise enough not to argue in favor of the day-age view, the claim that the "days" of Genesis are chronological sequences of vast ages. Rather, he casts his lot with the "analogical days" view. This allows him to accept that the inspired writer was describing ordinary days (though Gordon never says as much) and still deny that those days were intended to be understood as an actual chronological account of God's creative work. The claim is that God merely couched His creative work in terms of a normal week. That is, He portrayed His work as analogous to a human work week for the purpose of setting a pattern for our own rhythm of rest and work, but He was not revealing anything about the actual time or sequence of what He had done. In this way, the "days" of creation do not conflict with the creation story of modern science even granting that they are in the first instance literal days.

Given that Almighty God is quite capable of creating the entire universe in six literal (human) days in the manner and order described in Genesis, one needs a persuasive reason from the text to conclude that He did not really do so but instead chose simply to describe in that way a creative work that actually spanned billions of years and was done in a contrary order. It is telling that, as far as we know, no one understood Genesis that way until William Shedd in the nineteenth century! If God did in fact intend to communicate that the days of creation were metaphorical portraits drawn to parallel the human work cycle that He would later impose on Israel, one must wonder why that message was so obscure as to escape the perception of the great Jewish and Christian theologians throughout the ages. Were they all without the sophistication that Gordon finds so scandalously lacking in today's young-earth creationists?

Proponents of the "analogical days" view claim there are clues in the text which indicate the days of creation are a literary packaging of God's creative work rather than an account of that work. Collins (1999), for example, cites the refrain "there was evening and there was morning," the absence of the refrain on the seventh day, and the statement in Exodus 31:17 that God, after ceasing His work on the seventh day, "got refreshment" (pp. 137–139).[13] He summarizes their significance this way:

> Once it has become clear to the reader that God's Sabbath is not an "ordinary" day, and that God's rest is not the same but analogous to ours, he will go back and read the passage looking for other instances of analogy. Then he will see what the significance of the refrain is: it too is part of an anthropomorphic presentation of God; he is likened to the ordinary worker, going through his rhythm of work and rest, looking forward to his Sabbath. The days are God's work days, which need not be *identical* to ours: they are instead analogous. Part of our expression of his image is in our copying of his pattern for a work week. The reader will then put the notices about God "seeing" that something was good (e.g. 1:4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25, 31) in this category (as if God were limited by time and sequence like we are, but we know he is not); he will also not be surprised by similar phenomena in 2:7 (God "formed" like a potter does), 22 (God "built" the woman). (Collins 1999, p. 139)

As previously explained, the claim that the seventh day of creation was unending, and thus not an ordinary day, is mistaken. One is thus left with the assertion that the presence of certain anthropomorphic descriptions of God's activities implies that the days are to be understood metaphorically. That is a large and unjustified leap. God is a spirit being who acts in this world in ways that are unparalleled in human experience, so it aids communication to liken His actions to human actions. The same is not true of the days over which God acts. Days are a basic aspect of human experience and do not require a bridge to something more familiar to enhance one's comprehension of them. So the presence of anthropomorphic descriptions of God does not support the claim that other elements of the text are metaphorical; that must be demonstrated rather than asserted. It is noteworthy in that regard that there are no other scriptural examples where time indicators are used in the analogical manner claimed by this interpretation. As Young (1962) said of claims about anthropomorphic language in Genesis 2:7:

[13] To say that God's statement in Exodus 31:17 that he was "refreshed" (*napaś*) is anthropomorphic still leaves the question of what he meant. In what way was he refreshed that is analogous to human refreshment? MacArthur (2001) comments, "To say that God was 'refreshed' does not imply that He was rejuvenated by regaining lost energy. Rather, the sense of it is that He paused to delight in His works. He was 'refreshed' by delight and satisfaction in what He had done" (p. 184). See also Keil and Delitzsch 2006, p. 42; Kelly 1997, p. 238; Pipa 1999, p. 171.

> If the term "anthropomorphic" may legitimately be used at all, we would say that whereas it might apply to some elements of Genesis 2:7, it does not include all of them. In other words, if anthropomorphism is present, it is not present in each element of the verse. The words "and God breathed" may be termed anthropomorphic, but that is the extent to which the term may be employed. The man was real, the dust was real, the ground was real as was also the breath of life. To these elements of the verse the term "anthropomorphism" cannot legitimately be applied. (p. 15)

If God's intent was to communicate in Genesis that His work simply was being couched in terms of six days rather than actually having been done in six days, it would make no sense to appeal to the creation week as the basis for the command to Israel to observe the Sabbath. The command to Israel is essentially "Do this because I did it." It is not "Do this because that is how I figuratively described what I did." To repeat Fretheim's (1990) comment:

> The references to the days of creation in Exodus 20:11 and 31:17 in connection with the Sabbath law make sense only if understood in terms of a normal seven-day week. It should be noted that the references to creation in Exodus are not used as an analogy—that is, your rest on the seventh day ought to be like God's rest in creation. It is, rather, stated in terms of the imitation of God or a divine precedent that is to be followed: God worked for six days and rested on the seventh, and therefore you should do the same. Unless there is an exactitude of reference, the argument of Exodus does not work (pp. 19–20).

Moreover, the analogical days view plays fast and loose with the order of work in the Genesis creation account but provides no justification for doing so. The alleged rationale for God couching His creative work of billions of years in terms of a single human week is to provide a pattern or analogy for our own rhythm of weekly work and rest. But nothing about that rationale requires the work on the various metaphorical days to be presented in a particular order. It requires only that there be six days of work followed by a day of rest. So when adherents of the analogical days view claim that God portrayed His creative work out of the order in which He actually performed it, as they must to accommodate the creation story of modern science, their interpretation offers no reason for His doing so. That is a strong indication they have taken a wrong turn.

In addition, the focus of the account of Genesis 1 is God's creative work. That is what is echoed throughout Scripture. Seeing the days of creation, the entire chapter, as a metaphorical presentation given to establish a pattern for the human work week shifts the emphasis from God's creative work (the content and order of which evaporates in the metaphor) to His interest in the human work week. God at creation certainly set an example for the human work week, but that is better seen as secondary rather than central. This is confirmed by the details of creation provided in the chapter. If the main purpose of Genesis 1 is to convey to readers that God is couching His creative work in terms of a normal human week to establish a pattern for the future, there is a clear sense of overkill in the description of the days.

Gordon's case against the young-earth creationist understanding of the days of creation offers nothing new. His arguments have all been addressed many times over, but he is convinced the only thing keeping people like me from accepting them is ignorance. I have tried to show that is not the case. We are unpersuaded because the arguments made in support of symbolic days strike us as special pleading. We therefore continue in the historical understanding of the church. What puzzles many of us is how people like Gordon can think our understanding is fatuous given its exegetical, theological, and historical strength. We are tempted to think they are twisting the Bible to fit current scientific orthodoxy, but on better days we convince ourselves that, for at least for some of them, it is a genuine disagreement over the meaning of the text.

The Origin of Humanity and the Historicity of the Fall

A multiplicity of humans created

Gordon boldly asserts that Scripture is entirely consistent with the notion that Adam and Eve were not the progenitors of the entire human race. He claims it leaves open the possibility that God in the beginning miraculously created a multitude of humans. Adam and Eve simply were created first and served as representatives or exemplars of the originally created *group of humans*.

Notice that, unlike his discussion of the days of creation, Gordon here does not even try to use church history in support of his argument. That is because no one in church history so read the text, a fact that should give the mightiest of exegetes pause. And notice how Gordon approaches the text. He is not asking what the inspired writer intended to communicate and using "a sound grammatical-historical approach" to get at that question. Rather, he is asking whether there is any way to understand the text, however bizarre or improbable, that leaves room for the creation story of modern science, which story he mistakenly equates with fact. One need not lack theological sophistication to conclude that is no way to handle the word of God.

On Day 6 God created mankind as male and female (Genesis 1:27), the details of which are

provided in Genesis 2:18–25. Prior to the creation of Eve from Adam's side, Adam was alone and without a helper fit for him (Genesis 2:18). So clearly the only two humans in existence immediately after Eve's creation from Adam were Adam and Eve. Gordon's proposal is that after this God separately created a multitude of other humans without saying a word about it.

Gordon bases his argument on the indication in Genesis 4:14–15 and 4:17 that humans other than Cain and Abel were in existence at the time Cain murdered Abel. He recognizes that these other humans could have been descendants of Adam and Eve given that the murder could have taken place more than a hundred years after Cain's birth (Genesis 4:3; 4:25; 5:3), Adam and Eve had been commanded to be fruitful and multiply (Genesis 1:28), and Scripture specifies that they had other unidentified sons and daughters (Genesis 5:4). He finds it preferable, however, to assume that these other humans were unrelated to Adam and Eve, having been separately created by God or descended from those who were separately created, because the alternative requires this population to be rooted in incest between brothers and sisters.

As Gordon notes, incest was later condemned in Leviticus in the strongest of terms, but no such condemnation was in effect in the first generations of humanity. Even as late as the time of Abraham, his marriage to his half-sister Sarah received no opprobrium, though such a relationship would later be expressly condemned (Leviticus 18:9; 20:17). So the incest objection is based on an anachronism and therefore cannot be allowed to override the ready impression that the other humans in existence at the time Cain murdered Abel were descendants of Adam and Eve.

Unlike Gordon's proposal, this answer to the "Cain's wife" objection has a long pedigree. For example, John Chrysostom (1986) wrote over 1600 years ago:

> But perhaps someone will say: How is it that Cain had a wife when Sacred Scripture nowhere makes mention of another woman? Don't be surprised at this dearly beloved: it has so far given no list of women anywhere in a precise manner; instead, Sacred Scripture while avoiding superfluous details mentions the males in turn, though not even all of them, telling us about them in rather summary fashion when it says that so-and-so had sons and daughters and then he died. So it is likely in this case too that Eve gave birth to a daughter after Cain and Abel, and Cain took her for her wife. You see, since it was in the beginning and the human race had to increase from them on, it was permissible to marry their own sisters. (p. 37)

Augustine (2012), a theologian of whom Gordon is fond, offered the following regarding how descendants of Adam found wives:

> As, therefore, the human race, subsequently to the first marriage of the man who was made of dust, and his wife who was made out of his side, required the union of males and females in order that it might multiply, and *as there were no human beings except those who had been born of these two*, men took their sisters for wives,—an act which was as certainly dictated by necessity in these ancient days as afterwards it was condemned by the prohibitions of religion. (p. 392, emphasis in original)

Having completely read into the text what is not there—the notion that God in the beginning specially created a multitude of human beings—based on an anachronistic reading of the incest prohibition, Gordon acts like he has made his case and only needs to mop up by addressing the threats posed to his position by Genesis 3:20 and Acts 17:25–26. His position is without merit regardless of Genesis 3:20 and Acts 17:26, but those texts serve to confirm the point.

Genesis 3:20 states: "And the man called his wife's name Eve, because she was the mother of all living." According to Gordon, this does not mean Eve was the female ancestor of the entire human race. He claims "the mother of all living" parallels the meaning of "the father of…" in Genesis 4:20–21: "Adah bore Jabal; he was *the father of* those who dwell in tents and have livestock. His brother's name was Jubal; he was *the father of* all those who play the lyre and pipe." Just as Jabal and Jubal were "fathers of" those who afterward imitated their conduct, regardless of whether they were actual descendants, so Eve was the "mother of" all who imitated her conduct, regardless of whether they were her actual descendants. Thus Genesis 3:20 should be understood to mean that the first literal mother Eve was a metaphorical mother of all who followed in her steps by being mothers themselves.

The asserted parallel breaks down in that Eve is not said to be merely the mother of all who imitated her, who followed in her steps, but the mother of "all living." This includes the entire subsequent human race; neither males nor females who did not imitate Eve in childbearing are excluded. Mathews (1996) rightly remarks, "She is the 'mother of all living,' for all human life will have its source in her body" (p. 254).

In Acts 17:26 Luke reports Paul's statement to the men of Athens that God "*made from one man* every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth…" According to Gordon, Paul was not in this instance speaking by divine inspiration but simply was giving his own mistaken understanding of human origins. I know of no other occasion in which

a speech by an Apostle that is recorded in Scripture is deemed an unreliable personal opinion, but even after paying that price to shield his proposal Gordon must acknowledge that Paul would be relaying a traditional Jewish understanding of the matter. So his speech at the very least documents that ancient Jews read Genesis in the same way as ancient Christians in concluding that all humanity descended from Adam and Eve.

As for the Fall, Gordon claims that Adam's sin spiritually corrupted not only all his progeny but also all the hypothesized other humans who were independently created, who then passed on this spiritual defect from Adam to their own descendants. The question is how under this scenario Adam transmitted the corruption to the other humans who had been independently created. If, as Gordon seems to accept, this corruption is inherited through biological descent (he writes, "since all of subsequent humanity is *descended* from this aboriginal group, we *inherit* from them the spiritual defect that produces sin in us"), how was it passed from Adam to the independently created humans? Attempting to answer this will require Gordon to pour more speculation into the void of his own making, claiming additional details for this group of humans about which Scripture and tradition know nothing.

Genesis genealogies do not constrain age of humanity

The biblical keys to dating the age of mankind are the genealogies in Genesis 5 and 11. Gordon claims it is an abuse of the genealogies in Genesis to conclude from them that mankind has not existed for the 200,000 years claimed by the scientific establishment. As he sees it, the genealogies provide no constraints on the age of mankind but serve only to establish lines of descent and to emphasize the fact death was a consequence of the sin of Adam and Eve. He is mistaken in that regard.

The genealogies in Genesis 5 and 11 are unique. Only they are in the following formula:

> When A had lived X years, he fathered B. A lived Y years after he fathered B and had other sons and daughters.
>
> When B had lived X years, he fathered C. B lived Y years after he fathered C and had other sons and daughters.
>
> When C had lived X years, he fathered D. C lived Y years after he fathered D and had other sons and daughters.

(The genealogy in Genesis 5 adds after each entry, "Thus all the days of A/B/C were Z [=X+Y] years, and he died.")

The claim is that one cannot determine from this formula the span of time between the ancestors and descendants because "A fathered B" or "B fathered C" or "C fathered D" etc. could mean that "A fathered an unidentified ancestor of B" or "B fathered an unidentified ancestor of C" or "C fathered an unidentified ancestor of D," respectively. In that case, one could not construct a reliable chronology because there are unknown gaps of time between the unidentified ancestor and the actual descendant identified. In other words, if the statement "A fathered B" means "A fathered an ancestor of B" one would have no idea as to the identity of this ancestor and thus no idea how many generations he lived prior the birth of "B."

Though Gordon assures the reader the genealogies in Genesis 5 and 11 contain this ambiguity, the genealogies he cites as containing gaps are not in the form of the Genesis genealogies, which are known as *chronogenealogies*. Specifically, the genealogies Gordon cites do not mention the age of the father at the birth of the next name in the line. Chronogenealogies, on the other hand, are like the brief passages 1 and 2 Kings and 1 and 2 Chronicles where a king is said to have reigned a certain number of years before being succeeded by another. These passages are regularly put together to form generational chronologies that are used to establish dates. Freeman (2004) concludes in his study of the matter:

> [G]ap proponents can give absolutely no evidence, ancient or modern, biblical or extra-biblical, in which a "father's" age at the birth of a certain son was clearly not meant to convey chronological information. Thus no precedent exists for understanding the procreation ages in a nonchronological way….No precedent exists for interpreting the formula "X lives Y years and fathered Z" to mean that "X lived Y years and fathered the line of Z." Such a meaning would in fact contradict many centuries of interpretive history. (pp. 284, 286)

Notice that in the genealogies of Genesis 5 and 11 it is said that the progenitor "had *other* sons and daughters." This makes it unlikely that the specified son refers to someone other than an actual son of the progenitor. This is corroborated in the cases of Adam and Seth, Lamech and Noah, Shem and Arphaxad, and Terah and Abraham and is not demonstrably incorrect in any of the other cases.

Hebrew grammar also supports the idea that the offspring referred to in the Genesis genealogies are direct physical descendants. As Hasel (1980) pointed out:

> The repeated phrase "and he fathered PN [personal name]" (*wayyôled 'et*-PN) appears fifteen times in the OT—all of them in Genesis 5 and 11. In two additional instances the names of three sons are provided (Genesis 5:32; 11:26). The same verbal form as in this phrase (i.e. *wayyôled*) is employed another

> sixteen times in the phrase "and he fathered (other) sons and daughters" (Genesis 5:4,7,10, etc.; 11:11,13,17, etc.). Remaining usages of this verbal form in the Hiphil in the book of Genesis reveal that the expression "and he fathered" (*wayyôled*) is used in the sense of a direct physical offspring (Genesis 5:3; 6:10). A direct physical offspring is evident in each of the remaining usages of the Hiphil of *wayyôled*, "and he fathered", in the OT (Judges 11:1; 1 Chronicles 8:9; 14:3; 2 Chronicles 11:21; 13:21; 24:3). The same expression reappears twice in the genealogies in 1 Chronicles where the wording "and Abraham fathered Isaac" (1 Chronicles 1:34; cf. 5:37 [6:11]) rules out that the named son is but a distant descendant of the patriarch instead of a direct physical offspring. Thus the phrase "and he fathered PN" in Genesis 5 and 11 cannot mean Adam "begat an ancestor of Seth." The view that Seth and any named son in Genesis 5 and 11 is but a distant descendant falters in view of the evidence of the Hebrew language used. (p. 66)

So it is not surprising that no one for millennia read the Genesis genealogies as Gordon proposes. They were always understood, by Jews and Christians, to be sources of genuine chronological information. Shaw concluded from his review of the evidence: "The modern view of the Genesis genealogies, developed since the mid-nineteenth century, is that there is some purpose behind the genealogies apart from chronology, and that chronology is not part of their purpose. However, such a view is a radical shift from the constant view throughout the history of interpretation up to the mid-nineteenth century." Later he wrote, "All chronologists prior to the mid-nineteenth century took the Genesis genealogies as complete and hence adequate for constructing a chronology back to the creation of man" (Shaw 2004, pp. 103, 208–209). Jordan (1999), referring to Green's seminal paper in 1890, says of the claim of gaps: "Such a totally preposterous misreading of the text never occurred to anyone in the entire history of the Church before the late nineteenth century" (p. 99).

Using the Masoretic text, the Genesis genealogies reveal that just under 2000 years elapsed from Adam to Abraham. Alternative textual possibilities from the Septuagint and Samaritan text could expand this another 1400 years or so. See, e.g., Hasel 1980; Young 2003 (suggesting the primacy of Septuagintal ages in Genesis 5). Even granting the possibility of gaps in these genealogies, the extent to which they can further expand the time is limited. It seems clear from Genesis 4–11 that a gap is impossible between Adam and Seth, Lamech and Noah, Shem and Arphaxad, and Terah and Abraham. Jude declares (verse 14) that Enoch was the seventh from Adam, which indicates there also are no gaps between Seth and Enosh, Enosh and Kenan, Mahalalel and Jared, and Jared and Enoch.

When one considers that the genealogies include men (e.g., Kenan, Mahalalel, Serug) about whom no other information is given in Scripture, it is unjustified to assert that vast numbers of generations were omitted for lack of significance. Moreover, the genealogies in 1 Chronicles 1:1–4, 24–27 and Luke 3:34–38 follow those of Genesis precisely, casting further doubt on the notion they are extremely fragmentary.[14] Even Gleason Archer, a favorite of old-earth creationists and one who thinks some names have been omitted from the lists, recognizes it is unreasonable to think that so many have been omitted as to stretch the time back to 200,000 years. He writes:

> Buswell states: "There is nothing in the Bible to indicate how long ago man was created." This appears to be an overstatement, for even allowing the numerous gaps in the chronological tables given in Gen. 5 and Gen. 10 it is altogether unreasonable to suppose that a hundred times as many generations are omitted in these tables as are included in them. (And yet this is what a 200,000 B.C. date for Adam would amount to.) In the genealogy of the Lord Jesus given in Matt. 1:2–17 there are only seven possible links missing as against a total of forty-two given (during the 2000 years between Abraham and Christ), or a ratio of one to six. This is slender ground upon which to build a theory that 1,980 generations were omitted from the list between Adam and Abraham, and only nineteen or twenty were given. It therefore seems a dubious option for one who holds to the accuracy of the Genesis record to accept a date of 200,000 B.C. for Adam. (Archer 1994, pp. 210–211)

Non-modern humans excluded from the Bible story

According to Gordon, the biblical story of God's relationship with humans begins with Adam, a *modern human*, around 200,000 years ago. Realizing that "non-modern humans" are dated much older and conceding that these beings may have born the divine image and had spiritual sensibilities, Gordon is forced to claim that God chose to reveal nothing about these previously existing divine image bearers whom He had created, despite all the detail He

[14] Some manuscripts of Luke 3:36 include an extra generation ("Cainan") between Arphaxad and Shelah. It seems likely, however, that "Cainan" was not in the original of Luke 3:36. It is omitted in P75, a papyrus manuscript from the third century (one of the oldest copies of this text), and in D, a fifth century uncial. Given the presence of "Cainan" (Greek for Kenan) in Luke 3:37, it is understandable how a scribe could have repeated it accidentally in Luke 3:36. See Bock 1994, pp. 358–359.

provides about His creative work prior to Adam. After these non-modern humans had existed for hundreds of thousands of years, God specially created Adam as a slightly modified version of them. He then declared Adam was alone and without a fit helper despite the presence of other divine image bearers, specially created a multitude of other modern humans (see "A multiplicity of humans created") despite the presence of these other divine image bearers, and then told the story of His creation as though Adam and Eve were the first creatures to be made in His likeness and image. This is, quite frankly, rank eisegesis, and if that is what it means to be a sophisticated exegete, young-earth creationists are pleased to be excluded.

Death and the Fall

Gordon asserts that animal death was an original part of God's very good creation and not something that began with Adam's sin. He attempts to justify this assertion in two ways. First, he claims that death and suffering of animals is not an evil because animals are not made in the image of God and are not morally responsible creatures. Since their death and suffering is not an evil, its presence is compatible with God's pronouncement that His completed creation was "very good." In support, he points to texts like Psalm 104:21, 27–28 which he claims demonstrate the compatibility of animal death and the goodness of God's creation. (On this subject generally, see Gurney 2004; Mortenson 2012; Stambaugh 2008; Turpin 2013.)

The fact God originally forbid animals and humans from all carnivory (Genesis 1:29–30) indicates clearly that the killing of animals was contrary to His good creative purpose. That is confirmed by the eschatological image of the lion eating straw like the ox (Isaiah 11:7; 65:25). As carnivory will be inconsistent with redeemed creation, so it was inconsistent with the original very good creation.

Many scholars, ancient and modern, understand Genesis 1:29–30 to be saying that creation in its original state lacked predation. For example, Hamilton (1990) comments:

> What God creates he preserves. What he brings into being he provides for. Man is to have as his food the seed and fruit of plants. Animals and birds are to have the leaves. (The latter point accords with the description of the eschatological age when "the lion shall eat straw like the ox," Isa.11:7; 65:25.) At no point is anything (human beings, animals, birds) allowed to take the life of another living being and consume it for food. The dominion assigned to the human couple over the animal world does not include the prerogative to butcher. Instead, humankind survives on a vegetarian diet. (p. 140)

Keil and Delitzsch (2006) comment:

> From [vv. 29–30] it follows, that, according to the creative will of God, men were not to slaughter animals for food, nor were animals to prey upon one another; consequently, that the fact which now prevails universally in nature and the order of the world, the violent and often painful destruction of life, is not a primary law of nature, nor a divine institution founded in the creation itself, but entered the world along with death at the fall of man, and became a necessity of nature through the curse of sin. (p. 40)

Cassuto (1961) says:

> The Torah presents here a kind of idealized picture of the primeval world situation. Not only man but even the animals were expected to show reverence for the principle of life (see v. 30, which, too, is governed by the verb *I have given* of v. 29). In full accord with this standpoint is the prophetic view that the prohibition was never annulled, and that in the Messianic era it would be operative again and even the carnivorous beasts would then feed only on vegetation (Isa. xi 7; lxv 25: *the lion shall eat straw like the ox*). (p. 59)

Mathews (1996) says, "God is depicted as the beneficent Provider, who insures food for both man and animal life without fear of competition or threat for survival" (p. 175). Wenham (1987) notes that meat eating may be envisaged from the time of the Fall, in which case "9:3 is ratifying the post-fall practice of meat-eating rather than inaugurating it" (pp. 33–34). According to Gerhard von Rad (1972), the universal vegetarianism indicated in these verses is "the only suggestion of the paradisiacal peace in the creation as it came God-willed from God's hand" (p. 61).

This understanding is corroborated by Romans 8:18–22. As Feinberg (2001) explains:

> [Romans 8:18–22] says that the creation was subjected to futility, but not of its own will (v. 20). Moreover, it was subjected in hope of a removal of that futile state when the sons of God are revealed (v. 21). As Moo, Cranfield, and other able commentators explain, this must refer back to the results of the fall in Genesis 3 and the anticipation of the lifting of the curse when believers are glorified and creation is restored in a coming day. But note also what verse 21 says about creation's subjection. It says that the creation is enslaved to corruption or decay, a corruption that will lift with the revelation of the glory of the sons of God. To what does this decay and corruption refer? Certainly not moral corruption, because animals and plants are not moral agents capable of moral decline. It must refer to physical decay, but doesn't that ultimately involve physical death? If not, then what? Certainly whatever it is, it must be rather painful, since Paul talks about the creation groaning and suffering the pains of childbirth as it awaits its restoration. What can such language mean if not that

> there is pain and suffering within the natural order? And the most natural understanding of this is that such decay includes death. Hence, it seem [*sic*] that Adam's sin brought death into the whole world, not just into the human race. (p. 622)

Texts like Psalm 104:21, 27–28 are from a post-Fall perspective. Notice that in the psalm man is cultivating plants to bring forth food from the earth rather than eating fruit of the Garden (verses 14, 23; Genesis 3:17–18), ships are sailing the sea (verse 26), cedars are in the country of Lebanon (verse 16), and sinners are on the earth (verse 35). No one doubts that God governs the post-Fall world so that He is the ultimate source of provision for all His creatures. The question is whether that provision originally did not involve the death of creatures as it does after the Fall. One cannot jump from God's provision of food in a predatory post-Fall world to the conclusion that animal death and suffering were part of creation as it came from God's hand.

The second way Gordon attempts to justify his assertion that animal death was an original part of God's very good creation is by appeal to Dembski's novel claim that animal death and suffering was a *result* of the Fall even though it existed long *before* the Fall. The claim is that the negative judgment for Adam's sin in terms of animal death was administered before Adam actually sinned, which allegedly is analogous to the way forgiveness was bestowed on people in the Old Testament by means of Christ's atoning work prior to His having been crucified. As God forgave in anticipation of Christ's coming, so He condemned in anticipation of Adam's sinning. As much as I respect and appreciate Dembski, we part company on this claim.

Genesis 3 makes clear that the judgment for Adam's sin was meted out after that sin. Paul indicates in Romans 8:18–22 that this judgment included subjection of the non-human creation to corruption and decay, which as Feinberg notes in the quote above, ultimately involves physical death. Contrary to Gordon's assertion, Romans 8:22–24 does not indicate that creation was subjected to frustration "from the start." Rather, it was subjected to frustration by the will of God in the judgment in Genesis 3 following human sin. This is almost universally the view of major interpreters of Romans (Cottrell 1996, pp. 488–489; Cranfield 1975, p. 413; Dunn 1988, pp. 470–471, 487; Fitzmyer 1993, p. 505; Hultgren 2011, p. 322; Jewett 2007, pp. 513–514; Käsemann 1980, pp. 233–235; Kruse 2012, p. 343, Murray 1968, p. 303; Morris 1988, p. 321; Osborne 2004, p. 211; Stott 1994, p. 238; Stuhlmacher 1994, p. 134; Moo 1996, pp. 515–516; Mounce 1995, pp. 184–185; Schreiner 1998, p. 436; Witherington and Hyatt 2004, p. 223. See also Smith 2007). There is no textual reason for thinking God administered the condemnation prior to Adam's sin and thus no reason to think God intended to communicate such a thing. This is unlike the case of the anticipatory benefits of Christ's atoning death because God makes clear in His word that He forgave prior to Christ's death and that all divine forgiveness is based on that death.

Moreover, under this scenario God's creation was under an anticipatory judgment that included death and suffering before Adam was created. So it has God pronouncing as "very good" a finished creation that was already suffering judgment for sin. That completely warps the biblical scheme of restoration of paradise lost. And if animals were subjected to anticipatory condemnation for Adam's sin, why were modern humans subject to death only after Adam's sin?[15] The whole thing seems ad hoc and driven by concerns having nothing to do with Scripture. For full critical reviews of Dembski's position see Hodge 2010; Mortenson 2009; Nettles 2009, 2010.

Noah's Flood

Gordon asserts that Scripture favors the notion of a local rather than a global flood, one that destroyed only the people *living in the region of land* where Noah and his family lived. The universal language should be understood to mean only that the Flood waters covered the land known to Noah as far as his eyes could see. The fact no one understood Scripture that way for millennia gives him no pause; indeed, he fails even to mention it. But as Bradshaw (1999) concludes, after citing to the relevant texts of Philo, Josephus, Justin Martyr, Theophilus of Antioch, Tertullian, Gregory of Nazianzus, John Chrysostom, and Augustine: "It was the unanimous opinion of the Jewish and early Christian writers who wrote on the subject that Noah's Flood was a global event. In this the fathers cannot be said to be simply parroting the commonly held views of contemporary culture, because many used it to counter the local flood view which was held by all the Greek philosophers (except Xenophanes c. 560–c. 478 BC)."

What these countless Jewish and Christian theologians failed to adequately appreciate, according to Gordon, is that God would have used the Hebrew word for the whole earth (*tēbēl*) if he had intended to communicate the Flood was global. But as Davidson (1995) has noted:

> Some have argued that if Moses had wished to indicate the entire world, he would have used the

[15] As far as I know, no one argues that mankind was created *inherently* or *intrinsically* immortal; God alone is immortal in that sense (1 Timothy 6:16). But that does not alter the fact death did not come to mankind until Adam sinned (Romans 5:12, 21; 1 Corinthians 15:21; see also, 1 Corinthians 15:26).

> Hebrew term *tēḇēl*, which means the world as a whole, or dry land in the sense of continents. This word is never used in the Flood narrative. But it should be pointed out that *tēḇēl* is never used in the entire Pentateuch, including the creation account. In fact, the term appears nowhere in the narrative portions of the Hebrew Bible, but only in poetic texts (39 times) *usually as a poetic synonym in parallel with hā'āreṣ* "the earth." Thus this argument from silence does not adequately consider the contextual and poetic use of terminology, and carries little weight (p. 62, emphasis in original.) See also, Smith 2012.

The textual indications that the Flood was global are overwhelming and have been identified many times. That is why everyone for ages understood the narrative to describe a worldwide inundation. Rather than repeat that evidence here, I refer the reader to Davidson 1995; Hasel 1975, 1978; Kruger 1996; Batten et al. 2007, and Lisle and Chaffey 2008, all of which are available online at the links provided in the references section. They will repay your time.

Gordon claims that the reference in 2 Peter 3:6 to the destruction in the Flood of "the world of that time" implies a local flood, but I must say his reasoning escapes me. Peter is writing in the first century to people well aware of a broad world. His reference to "the world of that time" is to the world in the time of Noah. It does not in the least imply any geographical restriction on the scope of the Flood. This appears to be a case of the best defense is a good offense, as the text is quite damaging to Gordon's position.

2 Peter 3:1–7 (ESV) states: "This is now the second letter that I am writing to you, beloved. In both of them I am stirring up your sincere mind by way of reminder, [2]that you should remember the predictions of the holy prophets and the commandment of the LORD and Savior through your apostles, [3]knowing this first of all, that scoffers will come in the last days with scoffing, following their own sinful desires. [4]They will say, 'Where is the promise of his coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all things are continuing as they were from the beginning of creation.' [5]For they deliberately overlook this fact, that the heavens existed long ago, and the earth was formed out of water and through water by the word of God, [6]and that by means of these the world that then existed was deluged with water and perished. [7]But by the same word the heavens and earth that now exist are stored up for fire, being kept until the day of judgment and destruction of the ungodly."

Peter indicates that they are seeing in the false teachers a fulfillment of earlier predictions that mockers would arise in the last days. New Testament writers emphasized that the last days had begun with Christ's redemptive work (e.g., Acts 2:17; Hebrews 1:2), and the false teachers were people who, while indulging their own lusts, scoffed at the idea of Christ's return in judgment. These two things go together: indulging lusts and scoffing at divine judgment. They asserted that the physical world had always been characterized by continuity and stability and thus that it was foolish to expect the kind of radical transformation of the world that was taught would occur in conjunction with Christ's return.

Because of their desire for sin, they chose to be unaware or unappreciative of the fact God by His word previously had a dramatic effect on the physical world. By that word He brought into being the heavens and formed the earth, sculpting it by gathering the covering waters into a place called seas. (He probably is emphasizing water in the creation account because of the following clause dealing with the Flood which reverses the process of making dry land.) Through that same word and water the world (*kosmos*) of Noah's day perished in the Flood. The same mighty word that dramatically affected the physical world in this sweeping judgment of the past has reserved the present heavens and earth for fire in the day of judgment (2 Peter 3:7, 10).

So Noah's Flood serves as a type of divine judgment, the antitype of which is the cataclysmic judgment at Christ's return. Restricting the Flood to a local judgment involving a fraction of the earth misses the parallel of the final judgment's global impact. This parallel is all the more obvious in light of Peter's prior statement (2 Peter 2:5) that God brought the Flood on the world of the ungodly and preserved only eight people through it.

Next Gordon claims that several Scriptures preclude an understanding of Noah's Flood as global. That would be news to the innumerable theologians throughout history who concluded otherwise, but in fact, Gordon is mistaken. The texts he cites—Psalm 104:5–9; Job 38:4, 8–11; Proverbs 8:22–29—cannot bear the weight he is putting on them.

The argument from Psalm 104:5–9 is that these verses are alluding to the initial creation of the land and seas on Day 3 in Genesis 1:9–10. The statement in verse 9 that God set a boundary that they (the waters) may not pass *so that they might not again cover the earth* is taken as a divine promise that there would never be a global flood. Therefore, despite what Genesis 6–9 seems clearly to indicate, the Flood of Noah's day could not have been global because that would violate the commitment expressed in Psalm 104:9.

In arguing that Psalm 104:9 precludes a global flood but not a local flood, Gordon asserts implicitly that the Hebrew phrase in verse 9 (*hā'āreṣ*, "the earth") is being used to distinguish a global flood from a local flood. Yet, he just finished arguing that the use of *hā'āreṣ* in the Flood narrative was suggestive

of a local flood. So he says that a global flood would be a covering of *hā'āreṣ* for the purpose of violating Psalm 104:9 but a covering of *hā'āreṣ* in Genesis 6–9 would not be a global flood.

That inconsistency aside, it is not at all clear that Psalm 104:5–9 relates entirely to the creation account. There are echoes of the Flood narrative in verses 6–9, and some scholars are convinced the focus shifts to the Flood at verse 6. For example, Barker (1986) declares after a lengthy analysis of the psalm's setting, literary structure, and grammar that "vv 6–9 clearly point to the Noahic deluge of Genesis 6–9 rather than the creation account of Genesis 1" (p. 80). See also, Lisle and Chaffey 2008. In that case, verse 9 refers to God's promise after the Flood never again to inundate the earth (Genesis 8:21; 9:11, 15; Isaiah 54:9).

But even if one grants that the psalmist has the creation account in mind throughout verses 5–9, it is a misreading of the text to see it as a divine promise that there would never be a global flood under any circumstance. Rather, it is a reference to God's dominion over the waters, which were viewed in ancient Near Eastern thought as a chaotic and hostile force that had to be overcome in creation. The waters are poetically portrayed as God's foe, something He rebuked and caused to flee (verse 7) and on which He had imposed a limit. In that context, the statement that the waters will not return to cover the earth means they will not reverse God's victory over them; they will not defeat His intention or successfully rebel against His command (Proverbs 8:29) to confine them. That says nothing about whether God will use them as His instrument of judgment on a wicked world. In that case, they remain under His dominion and are doing His bidding every bit as much as in their confinement. The obviously global language of the Flood narrative (see Batten et al. 2007; Davidson 1995; Hasel 1975, 1978; Kruger 1996, Lisle and Chaffey 2008), including the covenant in Genesis 9:8–17, confirms the interpretation.

Neither Job 38:4, 8–11 nor Proverbs 8:22–29 adds anything. These poetical texts simply indicate that God confined the waters at creation to the place He intended. They cannot be parlayed into a divine promise never to use the waters as instruments of judgment on a wicked world. The God who at creation put the sea in its proper place later, when He was grieved in His heart over the sinfulness of mankind (Genesis 6:5–6), "unmade" His creation by again covering the entire earth with water. His having done the former does not preclude His doing the latter. These texts were rightly understood by all expositors for millennia to pose no problem for the global Flood of Noah's day.

Gordon assumes "for the sake of concreteness" that Noah's Flood was around 5600 BC when the Mediterranean poured into the Black Sea. He accepts the standard archaeological dating which has animal domestication appearing by 11,000 BC and flutes appearing by 30,000 BC. Eager to preserve, in the name of evangelicalism, a "core of historicity" from the pre-Flood narrative, he also accepts that Jabal, Jubal, and Tubal-Cain were real human beings. But this raises the question of how Jabal can be called the *father* of those who raise livestock and Jubal can be called the *father* of those who play the flute when people allegedly had been raising livestock and playing flutes for thousands of years before they were born.[16] For Gordon, it is sufficient to suggest they were "the first known by way of the oral tradition behind the biblical text to have performed these activities," but the narrative presents them as the actual originators.

Gordon acknowledges there are stories of a great flood in hundreds of cultures around the world with similarities to the Genesis account, but he assures the reader these were myths rooted in independent local floods and not a garbled recollection of the cataclysmic event of Noah's day. He declares without citing any support that these flood legends invariably have their origin in locations vulnerable to local flooding and reflect only mistaken impressions that the flood was global. But his summary dismissal of these stories ignores how often they have elements in common with the biblical Flood narrative, a fact that points to their being an echo of that event. For example, Morris (2014) has written:

> Over the years I have collected more than 200 of these stories, originally reported by various missionaries, anthropologists, and ethnologists. While the differences are not always trivial, the common essence of the stories is instructive as compiled below.
>
> 1. Was there a favored family? 88%
> 2. Were they forewarned? 66%
> 3. Was the flood due to the wickedness of man? 66%
> 4. Was the catastrophe only a flood? 95%
> 5. Was the flood global? 95%
> 6. Was survival due to a boat? 70%
> 7. Were animals also saved? 67%
> 8. Did animals play any part? 73%
> 9. Did survivors land on a mountain? 57%
> 10. Was the geography local? 82%
> 11. Were birds sent out? 35%

[16] Jabal and Jubal are descendants of Lamech (Genesis 4:19–21), so they cannot predate him. Lamech was certainly the actual father of Noah (not a more distant ancestor) as shown by the fact he is said not only to have fathered Noah but also to have named him (Genesis 5:28–29). Since Lamech was 182 years old when he fathered Noah, and Noah was 600 years old when the Flood began (Genesis 7:11), Jabal and Jubal were born less than 800 years before the Flood, which on Gordon's assumption was in 5600 BC.

12. Was the rainbow mentioned? 7%
13. Did survivors offer a sacrifice? 13%
14. Were specifically eight persons saved? 9%

Putting them all back together, the story would read something like this:

> Once there was a worldwide flood sent by God to judge the wickedness of man. But there was one righteous family that was forewarned of the coming flood. They built a boat on which they survived the flood along with the animals. As the flood ended, their boat landed on a high mountain, and they descended and repopulated the whole earth. See also Lyons and Butt 2003; Roth 1990; Shea 1984.

When comparing the *Atrahasis Epic* and the *Gilgamesh Epic* with the biblical account of the Flood, Gordon recognizes how common elements in the stories point to a common historical origin. He writes, "When we compare these stories to *Genesis*, there are a number of common elements that indicate the three accounts are related in some way. It seems clear that all three accounts derive from a catastrophic flood that took place at an earlier time" (p. 158). That principle works with other flood stories as well.

Gordon jumps from the fact the Genesis Flood account has a literary structure to the conclusion it is nonliteral regarding chronology or specific details, but that does not follow. Chronology and details can be communicated within an artfully composed narrative. Evangelicals would not, for example, jettison as nonhistorical elements in the account of the Hebrew midwives in Exodus 1:15–22 on the basis it has a chiastic structure (see, e.g., Bailey 2007, pp. 68–69). Indeed, Gordon presumably accepts as part of his "historical core" the elements that the Genesis narrative has in common with the *Atrahasis Epic* and the *Gilgamesh Epic*—a principal figure (Noah), a flood, a boat, animals, coming to rest on a mountain, etc.—but insists that the abundant chronological information is bleached out by the literary structure. That is a convenient selectivity.

The Tower of Babel

Gordon accepts conventional dating which places modern humanity on every continent except Antarctica and the Americas by 40,000 years ago and on every continent except Antarctica by 20,000 years ago. Given his working acceptance of 5600 BC as the date for Noah's Flood, he is forced to restrict the miraculous diversification of languages in the account of the Tower of Babel to the small subset of the human population that was ancestral to the language-groups of peoples in the ancient Near East at the time Genesis was composed, which he puts around 1400 BC. The language, however, does not read that way.

Genesis 11:1 declares: "Now the whole earth (*kāl ha'āreṣ*) had one language and one [set of] words." When the Lord confused the people's one language, He scattered them over "the face of all the earth" (Genesis 11:8–9). Verse 9 says the Lord confused "the language of all the earth." The impression of universality could not be stronger, and that fits with the flow of the entire narrative. So it is not surprising the early church, including Augustine, disagreed with Gordon's reading. Bradshaw (1999) remarks:

> It appears to have been generally accepted that Babel resulted in the division of mankind into 72 language groups, being the number of post-flood chieftains [citing Epiphanius, Hippolytus, and *Pseudo-Clementine Homilies* 18.4]. Augustine referred to Genesis 11 on numerous occasions and clearly held the majority view that all the languages of the world are explained by the events at Babel.

Augustine (1982) wrote in *The Literal Meaning of Genesis*, "We know, of course, that there was originally just one language before man in his pride built the tower after the flood and caused human society to be divided according to different languages. And whatever the original language was, what point is there in trying to discover it?" (p. 84). Bradshaw 1999 notes that by the time Augustine wrote *City of God* he had come to believe that the original single language was Hebrew.

Conclusion

At every turn, I find Gordon's arguments and interpretations of Scripture to be exceedingly weak and contrary to the historical understanding of the church. It is as though he comes to the text with preconceived notions of what it must mean and then forces the text into that mold. And he does so with no sense of humility, no sense that he might be twisting the word of God, but rather with a triumphalism that declares people like me and great theologians of the past to be exegetical rubes who lack the sophistication to see with his clarity. He lectures us to abandon our rudimentary analysis and to grow up into his robust grammatical-historical methodology, but I see very little to commend in his approach.

As noted, I am leaving Gordon's science claims to those more capable of addressing them. I should point out, however, that many of his criticisms are aimed at straw men, long abandoned theories or those held by a small minority of creation scientists, which he mistakenly labels "standard young-earth creationist arguments." He shows no familiarity with the current thinking and technical publications of leading creation scientists, dismissing any need to stay up to date as a wearisome exercise. Wearisome or not, it seems incumbent upon one railing against a view to fairly represent it.

I am not a scientist, but I am versed enough to be confident that the data Gordon takes to be irrefutable proof of vast ages are not the silver bullets he thinks they are. If he interpreted the scientific data with half the ingenuity, creativity, and disregard for traditional thinking that he brings to the interpretation of Scripture, I think he would find that young-earth creationists are not so misguided after all.

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Addendum

The following may be of interest to some. They provide a young-earth creationist perspective on a variety of scientific issues:

Bill Nye 'the Uninformed Guy': Examining Nye's Claims in His Debate with Ken Ham

What Science Tells Us about the Age of Creation

Online articles on astronomy, planetary science, and cosmology

Online articles on the geologic column and the fossil record

Online articles on matters relating to the flood

Online articles on post-flood matters

Online articles on various fossils, geological features, and phenomena

Online articles on additional matters relating to age

Online articles on miscellaneous objections to creation, the flood, and a young age