

THE BIBLE AND THE AGE OF THE EARTH [PART II]

Bert Thompson, Ph.D.

[EDITOR'S NOTE: Part I of this three-part series appeared in August's issue. Part II follows below and continues, without introductory comments, where the first article ended.]

BIBLICAL GENEALOGIES AND THE AGE OF THE EARTH

Attempts to place the time necessary for an ancient Earth **during** the creation week (the Day-Age Theory) have proven unsuccessful. Similarly, attempts to insert the time needed for an old Earth **before** the creation week (the Gap Theory) also have failed. Subsequently, the idea has been proposed that perhaps geologic time might be placed **after** the creation week of Genesis 1.

Those willing to offer such a suggestion, however, have been few and far between because of a major obstacle in the biblical record to such a compromise. As every student of the Sacred Scriptures is aware, the Bible contains lengthy genealogies. That these records play a vital role in biblical literature is clear from the amount of space devoted to them in God's Word. Furthermore, they provide a tremendous protection of the text via the message they tell. That message is this: **man has been on the Earth since the beginning, and that beginning was not very long ago.**

While genealogies (and chronologies) serve various functions in the literature of Scripture, one of their main purposes is to show the historical connection of great

men to the unfolding of Jehovah's redemptive plan. These lists, therefore, form a connecting link from the earliest days of humanity to the completion of God's salvation system. In order for them to have any evidential value, the lists must be substantially complete.

Yet some Bible believers—determined to incorporate evolutionary dating schemes into God's Word—have complained that the biblical genealogies may not be used for chronological purposes because they allegedly contain huge “gaps” that render them ineffective for that purpose. Donald England has suggested, for example: “Furthermore, it is a misuse of Biblical genealogies to attempt to date the origin of man by genealogy” (1983, p. 155). John Clayton advocated the same view when he wrote: “Any attempt to ascribe a specific or even a general age to either man or the Earth from a Biblical standpoint is a grievous error” (n.d.[a], p. 3). Clayton also stated: “The time of man's beginning is not even hinted at in the Bible. There is no possible way of determining when Adam was created” (n.d.[b], p. 2).

In so commenting, most writers reference (as does Clayton) the nineteenth-century author, William H. Green (1890), whose writings on the genealogies usually are accepted uncritically—and acclaimed unjustifiably—by those whose intent is to insert “gaps” (of whatever size) into the biblical genealogies. Thus, we are asked to believe that the biblical genealogies are relatively useless in matters of chronology.

However, these same writers conspicuously avoid any examination of more recent material which has shown that certain portions of Green's work either were incomplete or inaccurate. And while references to the genealogies of Genesis 5 and 11 are commonplace, discussions of material from chapter 3 of Luke's Gospel appear to be quite rare. Two important points bear mentioning in regard to genealogical listings. First, to use the words of Custance:

We are told again and again that some of these genealogies contain gaps: but what is never pointed out by those who lay the emphasis on these gaps, is that they only know of the existence of these gaps because the Bible elsewhere fills them in. How otherwise could one know of them? But if they are filled in, they are not gaps at all! Thus, in the final analysis the argument is completely without foundation (1967, p. 3).

If anyone wanted to find gaps in the biblical genealogies, it was Dr. Custance—who spent his entire adult life searching for a way to accommodate the Bible to an old-Earth scenario. Yet even he admitted that arguments alleging that the genealogies contain sizable gaps are unfounded.

Second, **even if there were gaps in the genealogies, there would not necessarily be gaps in the chronologies therein recorded. The question of chronology is not the same as that of genealogy.** This is a critical point that has been overlooked by those who suggest that the genealogies

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are useless in matters of chronology. The “more recent work” alluded to above as documenting the accuracy of the genealogies is from James B. Jordan, who reviewed Green’s work and showed a number of his arguments to be untrustworthy. To quote Jordan:

Gaps in genealogies, however, do not prove gaps in chronologies. The known gaps all occur in non-chronological genealogies. Moreover, even if there were gaps in the genealogies of Genesis 5 and 11, this would not affect the chronological information therein recorded, for even if Enosh were the great-grandson of Seth, it would still be the case that Seth was 105 years old when Enosh was born, according to a simple reading of the text. Thus, genealogy and chronology are distinct problems with distinct characteristics. They ought not to be confused (1979/1980, p. 12).

Unfortunately, many who attempt to defend the concept of an ancient Earth have confused these two issues. For example, some have suggested that abridgment of the genealogies has occurred and that these genealogies therefore cannot be chronologies, when, in fact, exactly the opposite is true, as Jordan’s work has documented. Matthew, for example, is at liberty to arrange his genealogy of Christ in three groups of 14 (making some omissions) because his record is derived from more complete lists available via the Old Covenant. In the genealogies of Genesis 5 and 11, remember also that the inclusion of the father’s age at the time of his son’s birth is wholly without meaning unless chronology is intended. Else why would the Holy Spirit provide such “irrelevant” information?

Plus, there are other important considerations. Observe the following in chart form. Speaking in round figures, from the present to Jesus was roughly 2,000 years—a figure obtainable via secular, historical documents. From Jesus to Abraham also was approximately 2,000 years—another figure that is verifiable historically.

Present to Jesus	2,000 years
Jesus to Abraham	2,000 years
Abraham to Adam	? years

The only figure missing is the one that represents the time period from Abraham to Adam. Since we know that Adam was the first

man (1 Corinthians 15:45), and since we know as a result of Christ’s testimony that man has been on the Earth “from the beginning of the creation” (Mark 10:6; cf. Romans 1:20-21), if it were possible to obtain the figures for the length of time between Abraham and Adam we then would have chronological information providing the relative age of the Earth (since we also know that the Earth is only five days older than man—Genesis 1; Exodus 20:11; 31:17).

The figure representing the time span between Abraham and Adam, of course, is **not** obtainable from secular history (nor should we expect it to be) since large portions of those records were destroyed in the Great Flood. But the figure is obtainable—via the biblical record. Allow me to explain.

First, few today would doubt the fact that from the present to Jesus has been approximately 2,000 years. [For our purpose here, it does not matter whether Christ is viewed as the Son of God since the discussion centers solely on the fact of His existence—something that secular history documents beyond doubt.] Second, in Luke 3 the learned physician provided a genealogy that encompassed 55 generations spanning the distance between Jesus and Abraham—a time frame that archaeology has shown covered roughly 2,000 years (see Kitchen and Douglas, 1982, p. 189). Third, Luke documents that between Abraham and Adam there were only twenty generations. Thus, the chart now looks like this:

Present to Jesus	2,000 years
Jesus to Abraham	2,000 years (55 generations)
Abraham to Adam	? years (20 generations)

Since Genesis 5 provides the ages of the fathers at the time of the births of the sons between Abraham and Adam (thus providing chronological data), it becomes a simple matter to determine the approximate number of years involved. In round numbers, that figure is 2,000 (see Arthur, 1999, p. 113) The chart then appears as follows.

Present to Jesus	2,000 years
Jesus to Abraham	2,000 years (55 generations)
Abraham to Adam	2,000 years (20 generations)

[The fact that 55 generations between Jesus and Abraham cover 2,000 years, while only 20 generations between Abraham and Adam cover the same 2,000 years, can be accounted for, of course, on the basis of the vast ages to which the patriarchs lived. See Thompson, 1995, pp. 265-275.]

Some have argued that there are sizable gaps in the genealogies (e.g., Clayton, 1980a, pp. 6-7). But, where, exactly, should those gaps be placed, and how would they help? Observe the following. No one can place gaps between the present and the Lord's birth because secular history accurately records that age-information. No one can insert gaps between the Lord's birth and Abraham because secular history also accurately records that age-information. The only place one could put any "usable" gaps (viz., usable in regard to extending the age of the Earth) would be in the 20 generations between Abraham and Adam. Yet notice that there are not actually 20 generations available for the insertion of gaps because Jude specifically stated that "Enoch was the seventh from Adam" (Jude 14). An examination of the Old Testament genealogies establishes the veracity of Jude's statement since, counting from Adam, Enoch **was** the seventh. Jude's statement thus provides divinely inspired testimony regarding the accuracy of the first seven names in Luke's genealogy—thereby leaving only 13 generations between which any gaps could be placed.

In a fascinating article several years ago, Wayne Jackson observed that in order to accommodate the biblical record **only as far back as the appearance of man's alleged evolutionary forebear** (approximately 3.6 million years), one would have to insert **291,125 years** in between **each** of the remaining 13 generations from Abraham to Adam as provided in Luke's genealogy (1978, 14[18]:1). It does not take an overdose of either biblical knowledge or common sense to see that this quickly becomes ludicrous in the extreme for two reasons. First, who could believe that the first seven of these generations are so **exact** while the last thirteen are so **inexact**? Is it proper biblical exegesis to suggest that the first seven listings are correct as written, but gaps covering more than a quarter of a million years may be inserted between each of the last thir-

teen? Second, what good would all of this do anyone? All it would accomplish is the establishment of a 3.6 **million** year-old Earth; old-Earth creationists, progressive creationists, and theistic evolutionists need a 4.6 **billion** year-old Earth. So, in effect, all of this insertion of "gaps" into the biblical text is much ado about nothing.

And therein lies the point. While it may be true on the one hand to say that an **exact** age of the Earth is unobtainable from the information contained within the genealogies, at the same time it is important to note that—using the best information available to us from Scripture—the genealogies hardly can be extended to anything much beyond 6,000 to 7000 years. For someone to suggest that the genealogies do not contain legitimate chronological information, or that the genealogies somehow are so full of gaps as to render them useless, is to misrepresent the case and distort the facts.

MISCELLANEOUS OLD-EARTH THEORIES

Numerous religionists have seen the abject failure of both the Day-Age and Gap theories, yet they remain as determined as ever to find a way to force evolutionary time into the biblical text. This misguided determination therefore causes them to formulate, modify, temporarily accept, and then abandon theory after theory in search of one they hope eventually will succeed. Unfortunately, many Bible believers have not yet come to the conclusion that the Genesis account is a literal, factual, and defensible record of God's method of creation. And so, rather than accept that account at face value—as Christ and His inspired writers did—they constantly seek ways to alter it by appealing to one theory after another in the hope of ultimately incorporating geologic time into the biblical record. In many instances, the resulting "new" theories are little more than a reworking of the old, discarded theories that long ago were banished to the relic heaps of history because they could not withstand intense examination under the spotlight of God's Word. One such theory making the rounds today is known as the "Modified Gap Theory." Because of its increasing popularity, it bears examination here.

The Modified Gap Theory

Over the past three decades, one of the most frequently used lecturers within certain segments of the churches of Christ has been John N. Clayton, a self-proclaimed former atheist who teaches high school science in South Bend, Indiana. Due to his background in historical geology, Clayton has worked at a feverish pace to produce an illegitimate amalgamation between the evolutionary geologic record and the Genesis account of creation, the end result of which is an off-beat brand of theistic evolution that reflects his own "private theology" (see Francella, 1981). Consequently, he is recognized widely by those active in the creation/evolution controversy as the originator of what is known as the Modified Gap Theory (see: Clayton, 1976a, pp. 147-148; Thompson, 1977, pp. 188-194; McIver, 1988, 8[3]:22; Jackson and Thompson, 1992, pp. 115-130).

Since John Clayton routinely propagates the view in his writings and lectures that the Earth is approximately 4.5 billion years old—the standard evolutionary estimate—he must, in some fashion, accommodate the Genesis creation account to this concept (see Clayton, 1990b, p. 130). Here, in his own words, is how his Modified Gap Theory attempts to make such an accommodation possible.

Genesis 1:1 is an undated verse. No time element is given and no details of what the Earth looked like are included. It could have taken place in no time at all, or **God may have used eons of time** to accomplish his objectives. **I suggest that all geological phenomena except the creation of warm-blooded life were accomplished during this time.** There was no way God could have described amoebas, bacteria, virus [sic], or dinosaurs to the ancient Hebrew, and yet these forms of life were vital to the coal, oil and gas God knew man would need. Thus God created these things but did not describe them just as He did not describe a majority of the 110 million species of life on this planet. Changes took place in the Earth (but no gap destruction) until God began the formation of man's world with birds, whales, cattle and man in the literal days of Genesis (Clayton, 1976a, pp. 147-148, emp. added).

In his *Does God Exist? Correspondence Course*, he elaborated on what this means.

Not only does the first verse give us the creation of celestial objects, but of a **functional earth** itself.... By the end of Genesis 1:1 there was a functional, living, working earth. If you had stood upon the earth at this point in time, you would have recognized it. Let us once again remind you that how long God chose to use to accomplish this creation is not revealed in this passage.... It is very possible that a living ecosystem operated in Genesis 1:1 to produce the earth. Bacteria may have swarmed in the oceans and giant plants may have lived in great swamps. Dinosaurs may have roamed freely accomplishing their purpose in being. The purpose of all of this would have been to prepare the earth for man. This living ecosystem would have produced the coal, oil, gas, and the like, as well as providing the basis of man's ultimate food supply! (1990c, pp. 3,4, emp. added).

Thus, in capsule form, Clayton suggests that when the Bible says God "created," what it **really** means is that, over eons of time, God "prepared" an Earth for man. Additionally, God did not create **everything** to exist on that "first" Earth. For example, according to the Modified Gap Theory there were no warm-blooded creatures. And, since man is warm-blooded, naturally, he was not there either. Clayton has written:

I submit to you that Genesis 1:1 is not a summary verse. It is a record of God's action which produced an Earth ready for man's use. I further submit for your consideration that **some time may be involved in this verse and that natural processes may have been used** as well as miraculous ones to prepare the Earth for man (1982, p. 5, emp. added).

Mr. Clayton also has provided an explanation as to **why** man was not a part of this original creation, according to his theory:

The week described in Exodus refers to the week described in Genesis 1:5-31. The week in Genesis 1:5-31 describes the creation of man and a few forms with which man is familiar, but it is **not** a total description of every living thing that does [sic] or ever has existed on Earth (1976b, pp. 5-6, emp. in orig.).

Exodus 20:11, however, explicitly affirms that **everything** that was made by God was completed **within the six days** of the initial week. John Clayton begs to differ—with both God and His inspired writer, Moses—and asserts that many things had been created (during vast epochs of time) long before the creation week ever started. Since, as I already have discussed, Clayton does not believe that Exodus 20:11 refers to **all** of the creative activity of God, but instead refers only to that which occurred in Genesis 1:5-31, he has suggested that Moses "**avoids the creation question and concentrates on his own purpose**" (1976b, p. 5, emp. added). Placed into chart form by Clayton himself, a summary of the Modified Gap Theory looks like this:

dous number of years" between Genesis 1:1 and 1:2? A "gap" perhaps?

John Clayton's "private theology" is replete with unscriptural concepts, discrepancies, and contradictions that bear examination. Notice—according to his chart—that the "creation week" does not commence until Genesis 1:14ff. Since this section of Genesis 1 has to do **only** with the events of **day four and afterward**, Clayton's "week" of creative activity has only **three days**! Furthermore, Clayton's Modified Gap Theory suggests that during the eons of time prior to the creation week God was **building up** a "resource ecosystem" by the use of amoebas, bacteria, water, plants, dinosaurs, etc. (see the chart below). Yet at other times, while attempting to defend his Modified

CREATION			JUDGMENT		
		RESOURCE ECOSYSTEM	CHRONOMETRY SET UP		ETERNITY
TIME	EARTH SUN MOON	AMOEBIA BACTERIA WATER PLANTS	GEN. 1:14-19	GEN. 1:20-28 ADAM	
MATTER	STARS GALAXIES ETC.	DINOSAURS ETC.		CREATION WEEK	NOW CHRIST
				BIRDS WATER MAMMALS MAMMALS MAN	
PRECAMBRIAN	MESOZOIC		CENOZOIC ±		

[Summary of John Clayton's Modified Gap Theory]

A Response and Refutation

Whenever John Clayton is challenged regarding the Modified Gap Theory, his usual response is to cloud the issue by suggesting that he does not accept the **standard** Gap Theory (which no one accused him of advocating in the first place). He has said, for example: "I would like to emphasize that I do not in any way, shape, or form embrace the Gap Theory" (1980b). Yet, in his lecture, *Evolution's Proof of God*, he stated: "In Genesis 1:2 I'm told by the Hebrew scholars that the most accurate reading is that the earth 'became without form and void' and some have suggested that maybe a **tremendous number of years passed between the first part of Genesis 1:1 and Genesis 1:2**" (n.d.[c], emp. added). I wonder—what would the average person call that "tremen-

Gap Theory, Clayton has contended that, in his opinion, the "most accurate reading" of Genesis 1:2 is that the Earth "**became without form and void**" (n.d.[c]). Which is it? Was the Earth **generating** or **degenerating** during this period? Obviously, it cannot be both.

Earlier, I quoted Clayton as suggesting that in Exodus 20:11 Moses "**avoids the creation question and concentrates on his own purpose**" (1976b, p. 5, emp. added). This is a careless comment indeed. The purpose of Moses' statement was not merely to **establish** the Sabbath law; it also was to provide an explanation as to the **reason** for that law. Exactly **why** were the Israelites commanded to observe the Sabbath? Because in six days God created the Earth and its creatures and on the seventh day rested. To state that Moses "avoids the cre-

ation question” is wrong. The divine writer did not avoid a reference to the **Creator**; “Jehovah” is specified. Nor did he avoid referring to the Lord’s **action**; he noted that God “made” these things.

The Modified Gap Theory flatly contradicts Exodus 20:11 and Genesis 1. For example, Clayton has argued that the creation of fish (cold-blooded creatures) occurred in Genesis 1:1 (1976a, pp. 147-148), whereas according to Moses they were created on the **fifth day** (Genesis 1:20-23). The Genesis record states that creeping things (which would include both insects and reptiles) were brought into existence on the **sixth day** (1:21,24), but the Modified Gap Theory places them in the time period before the creation week. John Clayton simply rearranges the Genesis record to fit his own evolutionary presuppositions—without any regard whatsoever for what God had to say on the matter.

The only way that Clayton can hold to his Modified Gap Theory and his “private theology” is to convince people that **his way** of translating Genesis is the **correct way**. He has attempted to do exactly that for thirty years. In order to succeed, he has found it necessary to give people an entirely **new vocabulary**. This is the case with many false teachers. They realize they never will be able to reach the masses by using correct, biblical terminology, so they invent new terms, or offer drastic reinterpretations of old ones, in an attempt to make their ideas appear respectable.

The Modified Gap Theory, with its accompanying off-beat brand of theistic evolution, rests upon the (mis)interpretation of two Hebrew words, *bara* and *asah*, employed in Genesis 1-2. Here is what Clayton has said about them, and why they are so important to his theory.

In the Hebrew culture and in the Hebrew language there is a difference between something being created and something being made. The idea of creation involves a miraculous act on the part of God. It is not something that man can do, nor is it something that can occur naturally.... The Hebrew word used in Genesis 1 to describe this process is the word *bara*. As one might expect, this word is not used extensively in the Bible, in fact, it is only used in verses 1, 21, and 27 in Genesis. The other concept in the Hebrew culture and in the Hebrew language that is used in reference to things coming into existence involves the process of producing something naturally. The idea is that something came into existence because of planning, wisdom, and intelligence, but not as a miraculous act of God. Many times acts of men are described in this way. The Hebrew word *asah* is the main Hebrew word translated this way in Genesis 1. It is vital to a proper understanding of Genesis that these two words not be confused because much understanding is lost and considerable contradiction with the scientific evidence is generated when the words are not distinguished from each other (1991, pp. 6-7).

Clayton also has written:

We have pointed out that the Hebrew word *bara* normally means to create something out of nothing while the word *asah* usually implies the re-shaping of something that was already in existence.... [T]he normal use of the word *bara* and the normal use of the word *asah* are distinctly different and this difference is important in one’s interpretation of Genesis 1 (1979, pp. 2-5).

The following detailed summary from John Clayton’s own writings should clarify why this distinction is so important to the success of his Modified Gap Theory.

(1) God initiated the Big Bang, and the Universe developed according to evolutionary theories (Clayton, 1991, p. 8).

(2) The initial creation (*bara*) included such things as the Sun, Moon, Earth, stars, etc. (Clayton, 1991, p. 8). [As I have discussed previously, Clayton puts certain living creatures in this “prehistoric” period (including such things as dinosaurs, bacteria, etc.), but no warm-blooded animals or men.]

(3) Sometime after the initial creation, God then began to form and make (*asah*) things. As Clayton has stated: “It is important to recognize that this process of creating...is described in Genesis 1:1-3. Verse 4ff. deal with something all together [sic] different—the making, forming, and shaping of the created earth. Creation does not occur again until animal life is described in verses 20 and 21” (1991, pp. 8-9).

(4) Beginning in the time period called Day 5, God allegedly began to make new things (Clayton, 1991, p. 9), which presumably would **include** marine life, birds, and man, but would **exclude** light, oceans, atmosphere, dry land, planets, stars, moons, and beasts of the field—all of which supposedly were “created” (*bara*) in Genesis 1:1.

(5) Man’s spiritual part then was created (*bara*) in God’s image (1:27), and his physical part was formed (*yatsar* not *bara*) from the dust of the ground (Clayton, 1991, p. 9).

(6) By the end of Genesis 1, God’s “creating” and “making” were complete, but “there is no indication in the Bible that the seventh day ever ended” (Clayton, 1990a, p. 11).

Here, now, is what is wrong with all of this. First, the alleged distinction between *bara* and *asah* is as artificial as it is stilted—and Clayton has admitted as much. In the May 1979 issue of the *Does God Exist?* journal that he edits, he wrote:

Because there are a few isolated exceptions where the context seems to indicate that the word *bara* or *asah* has been used in a different way than the application we have just discussed, there are those who maintain that one cannot scripturally maintain the applications of these words as we have presented them in reference to Genesis 1. The Hebrew language, as most of us recognize, is a language which can be interpreted only in its context (1979, p. 4, emp. added).



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Clayton also has confessed: “Some may object to this superliteral interpretation of *bara* and *asab* by responding that there are exceptions to the usages I have described in the previous paragraphs. **Such a criticism is valid**” (1990d, p. 3, emp. added).

Second, Clayton’s “few isolated exceptions” are neither few nor isolated. Furthermore, they obliterate his artificial distinction in regard to *bara* and *asab* (which often **are used interchangeably** throughout the Old Testament and do not always have the strict interpretation that Clayton has placed on them). Notice the following.

(1) Clayton has suggested: “As one might expect, this word [*bara*—BT] is not used extensively in the Bible, in fact, it is only used in verses 1, 21, and 27 in Genesis” (1991, pp. 6-7). This statement is completely untrue. *Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance* cites no fewer than 11 instances of *bara* in the book of Genesis. Additionally, *bara* and its derivatives occur 40 times in the Old Testament apart from Genesis. In over 30 instances, it means “create, shape, form, or fashion.”

(2) Clayton has insisted—according to the rules of his “new vocabulary”—that the word *bara* **always** must mean “to create something from nothing” (1990a, p. 7). This, too, is incorrect, as Morris has noted:

The Hebrew words for “create” (*bara*) and for “make” (*asab*) are very often used quite interchangeably in Scripture, at least when God is the one referred to as creating or making. Therefore, the fact that *bara* is used only three times in Genesis 1 (vv. 1, 21, and 27) certainly does not imply that the other creative acts, in which “made” or some similar expression is used, were really only acts of restoration. For example, in Genesis 1:21, God “created” the fishes and birds; in 1:25, He “made” the animals and creeping things. In verse 26, God speaks of “making” man in His own image. The next verse states that God “created” man in His own image. No scientific or exegetical ground exists for distinction between the two processes, except perhaps a matter of grammatical emphasis.... Finally, the summary verse (Genesis 2:3) clearly says that **all** of God’s works, both of “creating” and “making” were completed with the six days, after which God “rested” (1966, p. 32, emp. in orig.).

Clayton’s insistence that *bara* **always** must mean “to create something from nothing,” is, quite simply, wrong. Old Testament scholars Keil and Delitzsch concluded that when *bara* appears in its basic form, as it does in Genesis 1,

...it always means **to create**, and is only applied to a divine creation, the production of that which had no existence before. It is never joined with an accusative of the material, **although it does not exclude a pre-existent material unconditionally**, but is used for the creation of man (ver. 27, ch. v. 1,2), and of everything new that God creates, whether in the kingdom of nature (Numbers xvi.30) or of that of grace (Ex. xxxiv.10; Ps. li.10, etc.) [1971, 1:47, first emp. in orig.; last emp. added].

Furthermore, the Old Testament contains numerous examples which prove beyond doubt that *bara* and *asab* **are** used interchangeably. For example, in Psalm 148:1-5, the writer spoke of the “creation” (*bara*) of the angels. But when Nehemiah wrote of that same event (9:6), he employed the word *asab* to describe it. In Genesis 1:1, the text speaks of God “creating” (*bara*) the Earth. Yet when Nehemiah spoke of that same event (9:6), he employed the word *asab*. When Moses wrote of the “creation” of man, he used *bara* (Genesis 1:27). But in the previous verse, he spoke of the “making” (*asab*) of man. Moses also employed the two words **in the same verse** (Genesis 2:4) when he said: “These are the generations of the heavens and of the earth when they were **created** [*bara*], in the day that Jehovah **made** [*asab*] earth and heaven.”

[to be continued]

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THE KANSAS DECISION

Trevor Major

The Kansas State Board of Education voted recently to de-emphasize the teaching of Darwinian evolution. This has attracted a lot of attention in the media. Reporters and commentators had fun making allusions to the land of Oz and the Scopes “monkey trial.” The first is raised, of course, to suggest that the Board has left behind reality — “Toto, I’ve a feeling we’re not in Kansas anymore.” The second has become a powerful (if misguided) metaphor for the “conflict” between science and religion in America. It is supposed to remind us that religious conservatives suffered an embarrassing defeat in the court of public opinion back in 1925 when John T. Scopes was tried for breaking Tennessee’s law against the teaching of evolution in public schools. The intended effect is guilt by association: to oppose evolution is to align oneself with backward, know-nothing fundamentalists of the Bible Belt. “You wouldn’t want to be numbered among that ilk, now would you?” When the discussions turned serious, there were dire warnings of a precipitous decline in student achievement, teacher recruitment, professional scientists, and The World As We Know It.

What are the facts here? For over two years, the 10-member board had been deadlocked over the origins issue. Conservative members were sensitive to constituents who objected to the presence of an evolution requirement in existing standards. For instance, the *Kansas Curricular Standards for Science* of 1995 expected all K-12 students to understand “patterns of change.” These were supposed to be of “particular interest” because “much of science is about how things evolve.” In lower grades, students were to understand changes within life cycles and the evolution of technology. At the high school level, students were to understand the origin and evolution of the Universe, the Solar System, and life.

The progression here is a common bait-and-switch tactic: get people to buy into the ubiquity of change (an easy sell, after

all), and Darwinian evolution is a *fait accompli*. If a baby becomes a man, a tadpole becomes a frog, or a Model T becomes a Ford Taurus, then of course a bacterium can become a human being. Or if mosquitoes can become resistant to pesticide, and finch beaks change with variations in climate, then of course a reptile can become a bird. The trick is to hawk one version of the ‘e’ word (change in general or biological change on a small scale), and palm off something quite different (unlimited biological change).

The revised standards—presented by a 27-member committee of science teachers and professors—did nothing to alleviate such concerns. Their draft proclaimed science to be “the human activity of seeking natural explanations for what we observe in the world around us.” That is about as clear a statement of methodological naturalism that you will ever find. It declares *a priori* that all questions asked of nature will return a natural explanation. The possibility of nonnatural causation is ruled out of court.

The committee went beyond the older standards in identifying, not just patterns of change, but **cumulative** patterns of change as a unifying concept of science. “The general idea,” according to a draft of July 1999, “is that the present arises from materials and forms of the past.” This time we get a pretty clear statement of materialism—the view that everything is made of matter (and thus, everything that exists must have come from matter). The draft offered Darwinian evolution as a prime example.

It is important to note, however, that these ideas are imported into science from a broader world view. Methodological naturalism is an idea of what should count as scientific knowledge. Materialism is an idea of what constitutes reality. Yet there is no experiment to prove that questions asked of nature should return natural answers. There is no experiment to

prove that matter is all there is. Ironically, the committee urges teachers to deflect any question deemed to be “outside the domain of science” (when, I suppose, little Johnny on the back row says in a loud, clear voice, “But couldn’t God have done it?”).

There are many more objectionable points in the committee’s draft. It is no wonder that concerned board members felt uncomfortable with its recommendations. In a 6-4 vote, they decided to adopt an alternate set of standards that emphasized the mechanisms of limited variation (microevolution), and de-emphasized long-term, large-scale change (macroevolution). Contrary to the indignant cries in most media reports, the board did not prohibit the teaching of evolution altogether. In any case, local school districts still would be left to determine the specific content of any origins curriculum.

The key issue is not whether evolution should be taught. Whether we like it or not, evolutionary theory exerts an important influence in biology and other fields of science. Kids should know what it is if, for no other reason, than to evaluate its claims. But for all the appeals to objectivity and disavowals of dogma, the underbelly of tax-funded science education remains, in principle, doggedly atheistic. We have yet to move beyond ideology to a fair, open consideration of the evidence. All we can do is hope that that day will come sooner, rather than later.

— AN APOLOGY —

Approximately two weeks ago—without our knowledge or permission—MCI wrongly re-assigned to another long-distance company the 800 number (234-2882) that has been allocated to our facsimile machine since 1993, thereby re-routing all incoming faxes to another firm (in Arizona). We truly regret the problem (which was not our fault) and apologize for any inconvenience it has caused our customers. Your patience as we work to correct the problem is appreciated.



NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

ANNOUNCING: THE NEW A.P. "SCRIPTURE AND SCIENCE SERIES"

God's revelation of Himself to mankind through the millennia has taken two basic forms—the revelation seen in nature and the revelation found in Scripture. Because God is the Author of both, a combined study of the two is a fascinating human enterprise that provides rich rewards. It is with this in mind that I am pleased to announce the new Apologetics Press "Scripture and Science Series."

Certain volumes in the series will examine strictly biblical matters in an exploration of the divine revelation of God as presented in Scripture. Other books will investigate strictly scientific topics as they relate to the powerful revelation of God provided in nature. And some will discuss both. In the coming months, it is our intention to add new titles to the series on a fairly regular basis. For now, however, I would like to tell you about the three that are available currently.

The first book, *Satan—His Origin and Mission*, is a 40-page discussion of Satan's reality, origin, mission, powers, and ultimate destiny. It contains the information from the popular series of the same name that was published in *Reason & Revelation* in 1998—for which we received numerous reprint requests that eventually led to the decision to include this book in the series. [\$4.50 + \$1.25 s/h]

The second volume, *In Defense of the Bible's Inspiration*, covers such topics as the need for revelation from God, a discussion of the two types of revelation, a survey of the Bible's claims for its own inspiration, and an examination of the evidence from various fields of study that substantiate those claims (inherent unity, factual accuracy, fulfilled prophecy, scientific foreknowledge, etc.). In its 62 pages, the book con-

tains a veritable storehouse of information on these subjects—information that is intended to help build the faith of the Christian or aid in the conversion of the non-Christian. [\$4.95 + \$1.25 s/h]

The third title, *The Scientific Case for Creation*, is a completely revised, newly updated 1999 edition of our 1995 book by the same title. Within its 98 pages, it examines the creation/evolution controversy and presents weighty evidence from the scientific laws of genetics, causality,

biogenesis, and probability that establishes the superiority of the creation model when viewed in a strictly scientific context. Also included are discussions on the fossil record and the plausibility of the creation model. Because it contains **only** scientific information (without any reference to the Bible or other religious literature), because it provides a wealth of scholarly information, and because it is fully documented with an extensive bibliography, this book will prove to be especially valuable to high school and college students who constantly are being exposed to the "fact" of evolution—a concept that this book thoroughly refutes. [\$4.95 + \$1.25 s/h]

Next month I plan to announce 4 additional volumes (currently at our printer's) in the series. The first three,

however, are available now and may be purchased as a set at the special price of only \$12 (\$1.75 s/h). Each has a beautiful full-color, laminated cover and eye-pleasing type style. What a great (and inexpensive!) gift, or addition to a personal library, these books would make. To order by credit card, call us at 800/234-8558.

— Bert Thompson

