

Theistic Evolution: A Response to Wayne Grudem, Making the Same Errors He Opposes in Others

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Abstract

Wayne Grudem is one of the most influential evangelical theologians in the world today and has written much to help the church think biblically and live faithful lives that honor Christ. As a co-editor and contributor to *Theistic Evolution: A Scientific, Philosophical, and Theological Critique* (2017), he presents many excellent biblical and theological criticisms of theistic evolution. However, in this careful analysis of his two chapters, I will demonstrate that most of his reasons for rejecting theistic evolution are also reasons that he should reject all old-earth creationist views, including the view of John Lennox that he now favors. In his acceptance of millions of years of geological and cosmological evolution, Grudem is making the same biblical and theological errors that theistic evolutionists make. To be biblically consistent, he must abandon his compromised old-earth position. The character of God, the truth and authority of Scripture, and the gospel itself are at stake.

Keywords: Adam and Eve, theistic evolution, Creation, old-earth, young-earth, presuppositions, naturalism, animal death, natural evil, the Fall, the curse, atonement, historical narrative, historically reliable, inerrancy, power, wisdom, goodness, Christian doctrines, John Lennox, biological evolution, geological evolution, cosmological evolution

In 2017, Wayne Grudem co-edited and contributed to a 25-author, 1000-page book published by Crossway entitled, *Theistic Evolution: A Scientific, Philosophical, and Theological Critique*. It was endorsed by many prominent theologians, philosophers and scientists. It is an important and needed book that will no doubt be read by some lay people, who are not put off by a 1,000-page book, and more importantly by many pastors and seminary students, especially as it has been promoted at the annual meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society. Given Grudem's prominence, it is no surprise that Crossway uses him to promote the book (Grudem 2018).

Grudem is a gifted and godly teacher. (I had him for several classes in seminary, when he also served as my supervisor, and I served one year as his teaching assistant.) He is also a prolific author who has done much good for the church through his work in defense of the complementarian teaching of Scripture about manhood and womanhood, through his excellent books on ethics and politics, and through many journal and web articles. Most important is his textbook *Systematic Theology* (1994), which has been translated into at least 19 languages (with more languages in process) and is widely used in churches and seminaries all over the world (Grudem 2020, xix).

Because he is a highly and justly respected theologian in the evangelical world globally, he has had an enormous impact on the thinking of Christians

regarding Genesis. It is therefore important to carefully consider what he says. I very much agree with the arguments he raises against theistic evolution in *Theistic Evolution*. My aim is to show that most of those same arguments stand against his own acceptance of billions of years of earth and cosmic history and his insistence, for at least 25 years, that the age of the creation is an unimportant side-issue over which Christians can agree to disagree.

After a general overview of *Theistic Evolution*, I will discuss the strengths of and very serious omissions in Grudem's "Biblical and Theological Introduction" and his chapter "Theistic Evolution Undermines Twelve Creation Events and Several Crucial Christian Doctrines." This analysis will demonstrate that Grudem is making many of the same significant errors that he is rightly opposing in the teachings of theistic evolutionists.

Overview of *Theistic Evolution: A Scientific, Philosophical, and Theological Critique*

As the title indicates, the book is divided into three sections. First, scientific arguments are raised against theistic evolution. Then philosophical objections are discussed. Finally, some biblical and theological reasons for rejecting theistic evolution are explained. I agree with nearly every argument marshalled against theistic evolution.

The section of chapters refuting the supposed science behind theistic evolution shows that there are massive scientific problems with chemical evolution

scenarios (that is, life evolving from non-living matter by natural physical and chemical processes). This section also explains that the genetic information encoded in the DNA of every microbe, plant, animal, and human could only come from an intelligent mind. It could not be produced by undirected natural processes as theistic (and atheistic) evolutionists imagine and dogmatically claim. Furthermore, natural selection and mutations produce very limited changes to organisms and lack the creative power to generate new genetic information to change one kind of creature into another (for example, a reptile into a bird or a robin into a hummingbird or an ape into a human). One chapter shows that these facts are causing many evolutionists to propose alternatives to neo-Darwinian evolution. In another chapter, the exquisite development of animals from the embryo to adult is described. The lack of fossil evidence for microbe-to-microbiologist evolution is discussed, and several chapters argue that both the fossil evidence and genetics argue against the claim that humans evolved from some ape-like ancestor. Two chapters also show that widespread belief in evolution among scientists is driven by the acceptance of unquestioned assumptions and maintained by bias in the scientific community.

In the philosophical section of the book, several chapters expose the scientific community's a priori commitment to methodological naturalism embraced by theistic evolutionists and explain why this is flawed thinking. This section also shows the weakness or fallacy of theistic evolution regarding the relationship between Scripture and science, the problem of explaining moral and natural evil, and the origin of moral conscience.

The chapters in these two sections on scientific and philosophical arguments are very helpful in showing why Christians should reject theistic (as well as atheistic) evolution.

In the theological section, Grudem explains the many ways in which theistic evolution contradicts many clear truths in Genesis 1–3. An Old Testament (OT) scholar analyzes key OT passages, and a New Testament (NT) scholar analyzes NT passages to show that they are incompatible with theistic evolution. Another chapter surveys church history to argue that theistic evolution is not consistent with historic Christian orthodoxy. A final chapter argues that although B.B. Warfield was open to evolution under divine guidance in some way, he did not embrace a view like that held by modern theistic evolutionists.

These theological chapters, like those in the previous two sections, make compelling arguments *as far as they go*. The problem is that they do not go far enough, and many of the philosophical and

theological arguments against theistic evolution are also grounds for opposing *all* old-earth views in the church, including the view of Wayne Grudem, which we will now consider.

Grudem's Biblical and Theological Introduction

In his opening chapter in *Theistic Evolution*, Grudem introduces readers to his reasons for saying that theistic evolution is incompatible with the biblical account of creation and with important Christian doctrines. He begins by saying that the debate is not merely about the existence of Adam and Eve or how Eve was created. Rather he says,

From the standpoint of theology, the debate is primarily about the proper interpretation of the first three chapters of the Bible, and particularly whether those chapters should be understood as a truthful historical narrative, reporting events that actually happened. This is a question of much significance, because those chapters provide the historical foundation for the rest of the Bible and for the entirety of the Christian faith. And that means the debate is also about the validity of several major Christian doctrines for which those three chapters are foundational. In Genesis 1–3, Scripture teaches essential truths about the activity of God in creation, the origin of the universe, the creation of plants and animals on the earth, the origin and unity of the human race, the creation of manhood and womanhood, the origin of marriage, the origin of human sin and human death, and man's need for redemption from sin. Without the foundation laid down in those three chapters, the rest of the Bible would make no sense, and many of those doctrines would be undermined or lost. It is no exaggeration to say that those three chapters are essential to the rest of the Bible. (Grudem 2017a, 61–62)

Several points need to be made in response. First, I totally agree with Grudem regarding theistic evolution. It is true that Genesis 1–3 teaches essential truths about the things Grudem lists, which are foundational to the whole Bible and which theistic evolution undermines. But those chapters also teach us essential, foundational truths about (1) the nature of the pre-Fall, *non-human* creation; (2) how, when, and in what order God created the earth, heavenly bodies, plants, animals, and man; (3) man's relationship to the non-human creation; and (4) the impact of the Fall on the non-human creation. Those truths are also foundational to the gospel and other doctrines in the rest of the Bible, as we will see.

Second, note that Grudem is only concerned about Genesis 1–3. But actually, *all of Genesis 1–11* is foundational to the rest of the Bible. Genesis 4–11 teaches us essential foundational truths about (1) the nature of early man (not primitive but highly

intelligent); (2) the origin of people groups and languages; (3) the age of the creation; and (4) the Flood of Noah and pre-Flood wickedness, which both Jesus and Peter link to their teaching about our Lord's Second Coming and which have undeniable bearing on geology and the interpretation of the rock layers and fossils, as I will explain. Those truths are just as essential and foundational to the Bible's metanarrative (which is the gospel) as are the truths Grudem discusses and about which he is rightly concerned.

Third, this origins debate is not (nor should it be) simply about whether the events in Genesis 1–3 *actually happened*, but also about whether those events happened *when* and *how* and *in what order* God says they happened. That these events happened is no more important than when and how they happened. We cannot ignore the latter and simply insist on the former if we believe, as Grudem does, that every word in Genesis 1–3 (and chapters 4–11) is inspired and inerrant.

Grudem is quick to point out in his introduction what the book is *not* about: the age of the earth. He says, “This book does not take a position on that issue, nor do we discuss it at any point in the book” (Grudem 2017a, 62). This is false on two counts.

First, not taking a position on the age of the creation is in fact indirectly taking a position; namely, that the age of the creation is relatively unimportant and not an essential foundational issue for the rest of the Bible and not related to the question of theistic evolution. But theistic evolution cannot be severed from billions of years because without billions of years the theory is dead. This decision of the editors is not surprising because, based on what I know about the contributors, most of them hold to one of several old-earth views.

But secondly, in a footnote, Grudem (2017a, 63 n3) himself announces (that is, takes a position) that he favors John Lennox's (2011) old-earth, gap-day-gap-day view expressed in his *Seven Days that Divide the World* and thereby commends Lennox's view to his readers.¹ And chapter 23 of *Theistic Evolution* (by Garrett DeWeese, a philosophy professor at Talbot School of Theology) presents an openly old-earth theodicy in defense of millions of years of animal death, disease, predation, and other natural evils.

So, given that Grudem is not only a contributor (and one of the most influential ones in the evangelical world) but also the theological editor of the book,² it *is* actually taking a stand on the age of the creation.

But Grudem gives two reasons why he and the other editors of this book “did not think it wise” to deal with the age question. First, they did not want to discuss “whether the Bible's teachings about creation should be interpreted ‘literally’” (Grudem 2017a, 63). That is, he reasons, because the phrase “literal interpretation” is slippery and means different things to different people. He says that “some interpreters” take it to mean a “wooden literalism” that rules out metaphors and other kinds of figurative language (Grudem 2017a, 63). But this is a strawman argument because there are no young-earth creationists (at least no leading ones) who have this view of “literal,” and Grudem cites no example of such a person. Young-earth creationists know and state that there is non-literal, figurative, metaphorical language in the Bible, especially in poetry, proverbs, parables, and prophetic visions. But in historical narrative (which, creationists argue, Genesis 1–11 is), the reader should assume a straightforward understanding of the text, unless there is clear contextual evidence to the contrary. Furthermore, Grudem and other authors in this book refer to what Genesis 1–3 “clearly” (for example, 49, 74), or “plainly” (45), or “naturally” (74) means, and they are thereby obviously taking the cited verses to mean exactly what any young-earth creationist would say they “literally” mean. But those words (*clearly*, *plainly*, and *naturally*) are no less slippery or vague than “literally.” Additionally, Grudem says the difficulty with all the theistic evolution explanations of Adam and Eve is that “they differ significantly from the biblical account in Genesis 1–3” (Grudem 2017a, 71). But this simply assumes the clarity (i.e., literal, straightforward, obvious meaning) of the biblical text. Here Grudem is taking the text literally, without explicitly saying so, just as the OT scholar and the NT scholar repeatedly do in their chapters in *Theistic Evolution* where they analyze all the passages relevant to Adam outside Genesis 1–3. This will be further shown when we consider Grudem's later chapter, which expands on what he says in this introductory chapter.

¹ Grudem (2017a, 63 n3) summarizes Lennox's view and says, “which I find quite plausible.” Lennox's view is that there are millions of years before the six days (which he asserts start in Genesis 1:3). Then each of the days are literal, on which God created something new or initiated a process to create something new. But, between each of the days is a very long but unspecified period of time.

In Grudem's (1994; first edition) *Systematic Theology*, he favored an old-earth; although, he said the young-earth view seemed to be what the Bible teaches. At the time, he appeared to lean toward the day-age view. I critiqued his thinking in that volume and that of two other leading theology textbooks on creation and the age of the earth in Mortenson (2009b). I will be analyzing his new second edition in the future.

² As for the other editors, Moreland is a philosopher, Meyer is a geophysicist and philosopher of science, Shaw is a biologist and pharmacologist, and Gauger is a biologist focused on human origins.

The second reason the editors of this book chose to avoid the age of the earth is because “any argument about the literal interpretation of Genesis 1 would run the risk of suggesting that we think each ‘day’ in Genesis 1 must be a *literal* twenty-four-hour day” (Grudem 2017a, 63, italics original). But that is risky because the editors “are aware of careful interpreters who argue” one of several old-earth interpretations (day-age, framework, analogical day, or Lennox’s gap-day-gap-day view) (Grudem 2017a, 63). But that is a strange reason because any position one takes on Genesis 1 will risk offending some “careful interpreters.” There are “careful interpreters” (i.e., highly respected card-carrying evangelicals) who believe in theistic evolution and will be offended by the basic tenets of this book. The label “careful interpreter” is even more ambiguous than “literal interpretation.” Many who are very careful in Scripture outside Genesis 1–11 are not so careful inside those chapters. A case in point is Wayne Grudem, as I will show.

In his introductory chapter, Grudem defines the form of theistic evolution that he and his co-authors reject:

God created matter and after that did not guide or intervene or act directly to cause any empirically detectable change in the natural behavior of matter until all living things have evolved by purely natural processes. (Grudem 2017a, 67)

But Grudem quotes Francis Collins (founder of the theistic evolution organization, BioLogos) on the same page. As those quotes show, Grudem’s statement leaves out the important reference to time. Collins explains theistic evolution this way:

The universe came into being out of nothingness, approximately *14 billion years ago*...the process of evolution and natural selection permitted the development of biological diversity and complexity *over very long periods of time*. (Collins 2006, 200; quoted in Grudem 2017a, 67; first italics by me, second italics by Grudem and me)

Grudem and all other old-earthers are wrong to separate biological evolution from millions of years. As discussed later regarding Grudem’s second chapter, they are inseparable ideas. Darwin’s theory was built on the geological theory of millions of years, and both are based on the same naturalistic worldview.

Evolution is really a three-part theory to explain all of reality (fig. 1). Cosmological evolution is the story of how stars, galaxies, nebulae, and our solar system formed over about 13.8 billion years of time by chance and the laws of nature (that is, the laws of physics and chemistry). Geological evolution is the story of how as a result of 4.6 billion years of chance plus the laws of nature the earth formed from part

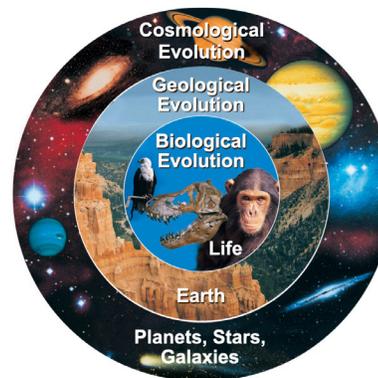


Fig. 1. The three-part theory of evolution.

of the condensing solar gas cloud to become a hot molten ball, which slowly cooled to develop a hard crust, evolve an atmosphere, produce oceans, and eventually accumulate thousands of meters of rock layers (many containing billions of fossils) to become the planet we see today. Biological evolution (which includes human evolution) is the story of how the first living cell popped into existence by chance and the laws of nature about 3.5 billion years ago. Slowly, by time and chance and the laws of nature, that first cell evolved and diversified into all the plants, animals, and people that we see today both living and in the fossil record.

You cannot with any scientific, philosophical, or theological consistency reject biological and human evolution but accept millions of years of geological and cosmological evolution. They are all driven by the worldview of philosophical naturalism (Mortenson 2015a), which first took control of geology in the early 19th century (Mortenson 2006b, 2015b). After this, naturalism took control of biology through Darwin and then conquered cosmology through the big bang theory in the 20th century. Theodosius Dobzhansky, one of the greatest evolutionary biologists of the 20th century, is correct when he says,

Evolution comprises all the stages of the development of the universe: the cosmic, biological and human or cultural developments. Attempts to restrict the concept of evolution to biology are gratuitous. (Dobzhansky 1967)

So, we cannot, indeed must not, separate the idea of evolution from the idea of millions of years. They are based on the same naturalistic worldview, and they both involve a rejection of the clear teaching of Scripture, as I will explain further.

In his introductory chapter, Grudem enumerates twelve claims promoted by prominent advocates of theistic evolution, which he rejects.

1. Adam and Eve were not the first human beings (and perhaps they never even existed).
2. Adam and Eve were born from human parents.
3. God did not act directly or specially to create Adam out of dust from the ground.

4. God did not directly create Eve from a rib taken from Adam's side.
5. Adam and Eve were never sinless human beings.
6. Adam and Eve did not commit the first human sins, for human beings were doing morally evil things long before Adam and Eve.
7. Human death did not begin as a result of Adam's sin, for human beings existed long before Adam and Eve and they were always subject to death.
8. Not all human beings have descended from Adam and Eve, for there were thousands of other human beings on the Earth at the time that God chose two of them as Adam and Eve.
9. God did not directly act in the natural world to create different "kinds" of fish, birds, and land animals.
10. God did not "rest" from his work of creation or stop any special creative activity after plants, animals, and human beings appeared on the earth.
11. God never created an originally "very good" natural world in the sense of a world that was a safe environment, free of thorns and thistles and similar harmful things.
12. After Adam and Eve sinned, God did not place any curse on the world that changed the workings of the natural world and made it more hostile to mankind. (Grudem 2017a, 72–73)

Regarding this evolutionary view of the origin of man, Grudem (2017a, 73) correctly says, "No one would derive such a reading of the narrative from simply reading the biblical text alone. In fact, each of these 12 claims contradicts one or more parts of the text in Genesis 1–3, if it is understood as historical narrative." He adds that to remove the contradiction between Genesis and the evolutionary view "would require denying the historicity of nearly *all* of the text in Genesis 1–3" (73; italics original). By "historical narrative" and "historicity," Grudem clearly means that the biblical text related to these points about Adam and Eve should be taken literally, naturally, (that is, as straightforward statements of fact).

But the very same thing can be said about the evolutionary view of the origin of the cosmos; the origin of the solar system from a spinning gas cloud; the origin of the earth from a hot, molten ball; and the origin of rock layers and fossils. No one would derive the big bang theory or the idea of millions of years of earth history involving the death and disease of billions of animals and extinction of millions of species of plants and animals from simply reading the biblical text alone. Such ideas require the denial of the historicity of *all* of Genesis 1–11. You simply cannot find any of these evolutionary ideas anywhere in Scripture. There is not even a hint.

So, Grudem is being very arbitrary in how he treats the historical narrative. There is no hermeneutically consistent way to take some of the statements about the length of the days and the order of creation events in Genesis 1 as figurative and ambiguous but then take the statements about Adam being made from dust as clear and literal. The many details about Noah's Flood cannot be interpreted in a non-literal way (that is, to mean a local flood in Mesopotamia or a myth), while insisting that Eve was made from Adam's rib. And one cannot with exegetical consistency say that the repeated statements about the lifespan of a patriarch and his age at the birth of his offspring in Genesis 5 and 11 have no literal, chronological value but that the patriarchs listed really did exist in history. All of Genesis 1–11 is historical narrative, and it is clear, straightforward, and plain (i.e., literal) in its teaching about six literal days of creation, the world-impacting Fall, the global Flood, and the division of humanity at the Tower of Babel. Furthermore, neither Jesus nor the apostles give any indication that we should treat these 11 chapters any less literally than Grudem is treating selected verses about Adam and Eve. This is shown somewhat in *Theistic Evolution* in the chapter on the New Testament's teaching on Adam. Jesus and the apostles are shown to be young-earth creationists even more thoroughly in the 14-scholars book, *Coming to Grips with Genesis* (Mortenson and Ury 2008, 315–346 [Jesus], 347–372 [apostles]).

Grudem's (2017a, 76) aim in chapter 27 is to establish these four points (his exact words):

1. A non-historical reading of Genesis 1–3 does not arise from factors in the text itself but rather depends upon a prior commitment to an evolutionary framework of interpretation, a framework that the chapters on science and philosophy in this volume show to be unjustified.
2. Several literary factors within Genesis itself give strong evidence that Genesis 1–3 is intended to be understood as historical narrative, claiming to report events that actually happened.
3. Both Jesus and the New Testament authors in ten separate New Testament books, affirm the historicity of several events in Genesis 1–3 that are inconsistent with the theory of theistic evolution.
4. If the historicity of several of these events in Genesis 1–3 is denied, then a number of crucial Christian doctrines that depend on these events will be undermined or lost.

What I aim to show is that these four points apply to *all* of Genesis 1–11. Therefore, theistic evolution and all old-earth views (including Grudem's) are false and harmful to the church. All of those chapters are intended by Moses (and God, who moved Moses to write without error) to be understood as historical

narrative that is accurate in *all* its details and teaches not only *what* happened but also *when* and *how* those events happened (as well as teaching many moral, theological, soteriological, and other truths). Grudem’s arguments in chapter 27 against theistic evolution will now be examined.

Grudem’s Chapter 27: Theistic Evolution Undermines Twelve Creation Events and Several Crucial Christian Doctrines

Grudem acknowledges that there are some features of Genesis 1–3 which make it different from other historical chapters in the Bible. But he rightly argues there is “an overwhelming amount of evidence” in these chapters that they “must be understood as historical narrative, claiming to report events that actually happened” (Grudem 2017b, 788).

I will now comment on the 12 points of theistic evolution (listed above and repeated below in italics) and Grudem’s analysis of them. I will then comment on nine of the 11 Christian doctrines Grudem contends are incompatible with orthodox Christian doctrine. I agree with all of his arguments against theistic evolution. But I will explain why his reasoning should also persuade him to publicly abandon his acceptance of millions of years and reject *all* old-earth views in the church.

Grudem’s “Analysis of Twelve Theistic Evolution Beliefs That Conflict with Teachings of the Bible”

1. *Theistic Evolution: Adam and Eve were not the first human beings (and perhaps they never even existed).*

Grudem rejects this by saying that Genesis 1 “tells how all things in the universe began...how things originally came into being” and “speaks sequentially of the original creation—the beginnings—of light, land and sea, plants, the heavenly bodies, fish and birds, animals, and finally human beings” (Grudem 2017b, 789).

But if Genesis 1 tells us “how all things” were created and “speaks sequentially,” then Grudem must reject the big bang and billions of years because how God created things and the order in which He created them contradicts the order of events in the story of cosmological-geological-biological evolution (see figs. 2 and 3). There is no way to add millions of years to Genesis 1 to resolve these blatant contradictions.³

Furthermore, God says He spoke all these things into existence by His powerful word (as Grudem emphasizes in his second doctrinal point discussed below). And in the case of plants, animals, and humans, God clearly distinguishes in Genesis 1 between the way the **first** plants, animals, and humans came into existence (*supernaturally* by His spoken command, or in the case of Adam and Eve, by his fashioning “hands”) and how all **subsequent** plants, animals, and people would come into existence (*naturally*, by procreation, “after their kind,” from the seeds or sperm and eggs *supernaturally* created in the first creatures).

In further refutation of this first point and in defense of the historicity of Genesis 1–3, Grudem effectively argues that these chapters are not poetry or extended metaphor or allegory. Part of

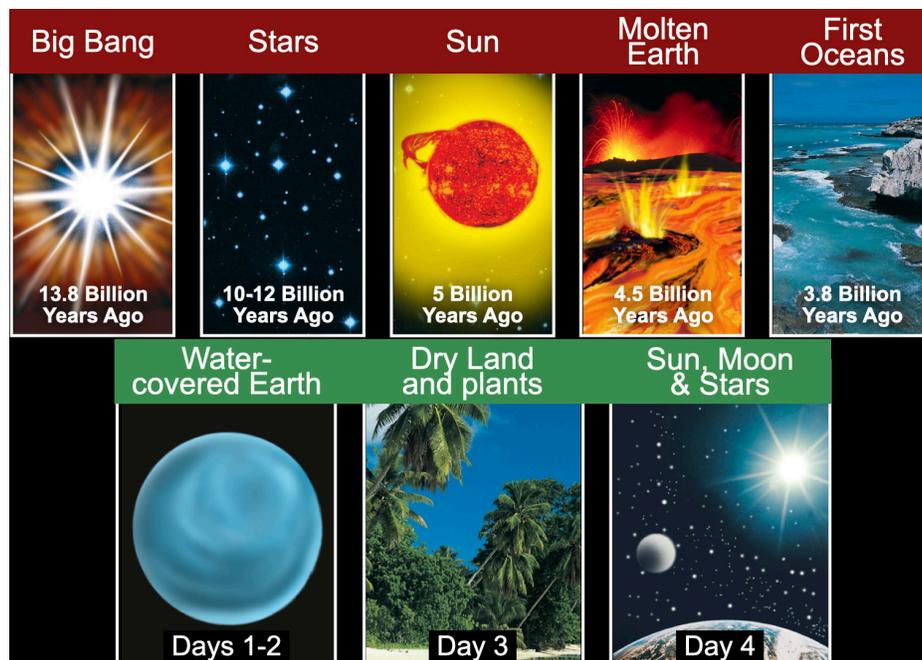


Fig. 2. Cosmological-geological evolution vs. God’s Word regarding the order of creation.

³ See a discussion of a fuller list of these contradictions in Mortenson (2006a).

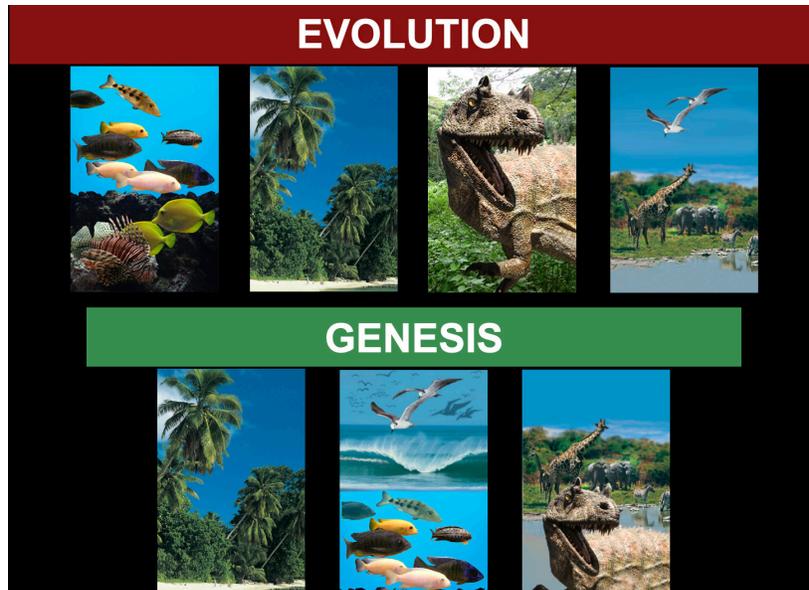


Fig. 3. Biological evolution vs. God's Word regarding the order of creation.

his argument is that “the entire book of Genesis is connected together as a single historical document in two ways” (Grudem 2017b, 795).

First, he says, the genealogies of Genesis 5, 10, and 11 report on “people who actually existed and events that actually happened” (Grudem 2017b, 795). In agreement, I would add that the *details* about these people and events are also 100% accurate. It is not just that they existed or happened but that they did so in exactly the way the inerrant Word of God describes. They lived for the number of years stated and were divided into people groups with different, supernaturally created languages, just as Genesis says.

Grudem's second convincing evidence of historicity is the elevenfold use of the Hebrew word *toledoth*, translated as “these are the generations of” (or similar).⁴ These link together the account of Adam and Eve with the accounts of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph, which are “unquestionably intended as factual historical narratives” (Grudem 2017b, 795). But one must add that those historical narratives are factual in *all* the details, including the nature of the pre-Flood world, the nature and duration of the Flood, and what Scripture says about the Tower of Babel (Genesis 4–11).

Grudem (2017b, 797) goes on to cite Matthew 19:4–5 and says, “Jesus thus affirms the historicity of both Genesis 1 and Genesis 2, and thus affirms Adam and Eve as the first human beings on the earth.” But neither Grudem nor chapter 29 by the NT scholar (Guy Prentiss Waters) cite the parallel passage of Mark 10:6–8, which shows that Jesus was

a young-earth creationist in that He believed Adam and Eve were made at the “beginning of creation,” not billions of years after the beginning.⁵ Jesus also clearly believed Noah's Flood was both an actual historical event and a global judgment, just like His Second Coming will be (Matthew 24:37–39).

The next five points of theistic evolution that Grudem discusses are closely related. He makes excellent points in refuting all of these false views.

2. *Theistic Evolution: Adam and Eve were born from human parents.*
3. *Theistic Evolution: God did not act directly or specially to create Adam out of dust from the ground.*
4. *Theistic Evolution: God did not directly create Eve from a rib taken from Adam's side.*
5. *Theistic Evolution: Adam and Eve were never sinless human beings.*
6. *Theistic Evolution: Adam and Eve did not commit the first human sins, for human beings were doing morally evil things long before Adam and Eve.*

I only wish to point out that every verse which Grudem uses in his argument is taken literally (the plain, straightforward, face-value meaning), just as biblical creationists insist on taking virtually all the other verses in Genesis 1–11 literally in defense of a roughly 6,000-year-old creation. There simply is no exegetical basis (that stands up to scrutiny) for taking the verses Grudem cites as literal while at the same time rejecting the literal days (or literal week) of Genesis 1 (by putting millions of years before the six days, spreading millions of years over the figurative “days,” or [as Grudem does, following

⁴ Genesis 2:4, 5:1, 6:9, 10:1, 11:10, 11:27, 25:12, 25:19, 36:1, 36:9, 37:2.

⁵ For an in-depth analysis of this phrase (“beginning of creation”) and passage and Jesus's other statements showing that He was a young-earth creationist, see Mortenson (2008).

Lennox] inserting thousands or millions of years between each of the literal days). Nor is there an exegetically consistent way to reject theistic evolution but to accept millions of years while affirming that the Fall had a very negative impact on the whole creation (as Grudem does) and ignoring (as Grudem does by endorsing Hill et al [2016]) or allegorizing the details in Genesis 6–9, which show that Noah’s Flood was a year long, global, catastrophic judgment. Nor is it exegetically defensible to insist on the historicity of Genesis 5 and 11, but yet to symbolize the ages of the patriarchs and/or add thousands of years between the patriarchs (to accommodate the evolutionist claims about the antiquity of man).⁶

7. *Theistic Evolution: Human death did not begin as a result of Adam’s sin, for human beings existed long before Adam and Eve and they were always subject to death.*

Grudem (2017b, 809) rightly argues that Genesis 1:31, 1 Corinthians 15:26, and Revelation 21:4 combine to teach that “the initial ‘very good’ creation should be understood to imply that Adam and Eve were not subject to death when they were created.” But Grudem explicitly opposes young-earth creation by saying, “Nothing is implied in Genesis 2 about animal death, for God’s statement directed to Adam implies only human death: ‘you shall surely die’” (809). He then cites Genesis 3:19 and Romans 5:12 and adds, “The entire Bible says nothing one way or another about the death of animals before the fall” (809). He is badly mistaken about this, and to demonstrate that we will come back to this issue when we consider points 11 and 12 below.

8. *Theistic Evolution: Not all human beings have descended from Adam and Eve, for there were thousands of other human beings on earth at the time that God chose two of them as Adam and Eve.*

Grudem (2017b, 810–811) reasons well in refuting this point. He answers the popular skeptical question about who Cain’s wife was in the same way that young-earth creationists do more thoroughly (for example, Ham 2006). Again, taking the text very literally, he says “the text of Genesis itself provides an obvious solution to this problem, because it says that Adam lived 930 years, ‘and he had other sons and daughters’” (Grudem 2017b, 811). So, says Grudem, Cain could have married a sister.

9. *Theistic Evolution: God did not directly act in the natural world to create different “kinds” of fish, birds, and land animals.*

Grudem is certainly correct when he says in response to this point, again taking the biblical text literally, that in Genesis 1 “God carries out *distinct and separate actions* to directly create different specific parts of creation, and then, in further distinct actions, creates specific kinds (or types) of animals” (Grudem 2017b, 812, italics original). In relation to the phrase “according to their kinds” (which appears ten times on creation days 3, 5, and 6), he correctly says these verses picture “a direct, active involvement of God in making different kinds of animals, which is far different from the ‘hands-off’ allowing of matter to evolve following its own properties,” as theistic evolutionists claim (Grudem 2017b, 813). Grudem is also right in saying, “Scripture gives us no indication of the size of each category that is called a ‘kind’” (813). But neither Grudem nor any other contributor to *Theistic Evolution* commented further about this important point.

A few words about the relationship of the created “kind” to “species,” “genus,” and other modern taxonomic classifications is in order here. In Charles Darwin’s *The Origin of Species*, at the beginning of the first paragraph of the book, he declared, “Until recently the great majority of naturalists believed that species were immutable productions and had been separately created” (Darwin [1859] 1985, 53). But Darwin did not cite a single example of this belief in the so-called “fixity of the species”; although, in the rest of his first chapter, he discussed all the recent naturalists who believed that species change and that new species form over time.

I have documented elsewhere that about 30 years before Darwin wrote his book, two Bible-believing men (one a well-known pastor and the other a well-known scientist) published works showing they did not believe in the fixity of the species or that the original created “kinds” were the same as the modern taxonomic classification of “species” (Mortenson 2004, 87–88, 188, 196). It is therefore likely that other Christians in the early nineteenth century believed in neither the fixity of the species nor that the created “kind” was equivalent to what we call today “species.”

Furthermore, the great eighteenth-century Swedish scientist, Carl Linnaeus (who developed the modern taxonomic classification system) initially thought the created kinds were equal to his classification of species. This was no doubt due in part to *species* being the translation of the Hebrew word *mîn* [מין], “kind” in English⁷ in his Latin Bible. But after more research, by 1742 he concluded that

⁶ For in-depth biblical arguments that Adam was created on the sixth literal day of history only a little more than 6,000 years ago, see Mortenson (2016a). For powerful genetic arguments confirming this biblical truth, see Jeanson and Tomkins (2016). For a brief summary of the overwhelming biblical evidence for the global catastrophic Flood, see Mortenson (2020c). For the strong geological evidence for the Flood, see Morris (2007) and Snelling (2009).

⁷ The Hebrew word *mîn* is used ten times in Genesis 1 in verses 11–12, 21, and 24–25. The same word (in the same phrase, “after its kind”) is used in the account of Noah’s Flood in Genesis 6:20 and 7:14. Noah did not take onto the ark two of every *species*.

the created kind was likely equivalent to his classification of “genus” (Landgren 1993). Modern creationist biologists researching this question think there is good scientific evidence to conclude that in most cases the original created kinds are equivalent to the modern taxonomic classification of “family” (Joubert 2011; Mortenson 2006c; Purdom 2010). So, Noah did not take onto the ark two of every *species*, but two of every *kind* of land animal and bird (Lightner et al. 2011).

Therefore, the idea of the fixity of the species is false; the fixity of the created kind is biblical and true. A new species could arise *within* a kind by natural processes (for example, natural selection, mutations, genetic drift) that delete, damage, or shuffle existing genetic information inherited from original members of that created kind. So, for example, the dog kind includes wolves, coyotes, dingoes, jackals, all the varieties of domestic dogs, and foxes. All wild and domestic cats are descended from the original created cat kind. And if the kind level occasionally incorporates an entire order within our modern taxonomy, then the woolly mammoth, the mastodon, the African elephant, and the Asian elephant are descended from the first created members of this kind. But this is not evolution. It is simply variation within a created kind. One kind does not change into a different kind. Dogs and cats did not come from a common ancestor. Birds did not evolve from dinosaurs, and humans did not evolve from ape-like creatures. This is the clear implication of Genesis 1, and the fossil evidence and genetics confirm this: variation *within* distinct kinds but not transformation of one kind into a different kind. The study of fossils, living creatures, and genetics does not support microbe-to-microbiologist evolution, as young-earth creationists have shown for decades (for example, Gish 1995; Sanford 2014; Werner 2007) and as many chapters in *Theistic Evolution* also demonstrate.

10. *Theistic Evolution: God did not “rest” from his work of creation or stop any special creative activity after plants, animals, and human beings appeared on the earth.*

Grudem correctly argues that the Bible distinguishes between God’s initial acts of creation and his subsequent providential upholding of His creation. God’s resting from His creation work (a rest which still continues, says Grudem, based on Exodus 20:11 and Hebrews 4:4, 10) was “an actual historical event” (Grudem 2017b, 817) theistic evolutionists, on the other hand, deny there is any distinction between God’s creative acts and the way He providentially sustains His creation today.

But Grudem fails to see that the same applies to *all* the other old-earth views in the church, because the billions of years of earth history and cosmic history assume and insist that the geological and astrophysical processes which scientists observe today are the same processes that brought the sun, moon, stars, galaxies, planets, and earth (with its rock layers and fossils) into existence. The way God says in Genesis 1 that He created living creatures contradicts the story of biological evolution and human evolution. And the way God says in Genesis 1 that He created the non-living creatures likewise contradicts the story of billions of years of geological and cosmological evolution. There is no exegetically or scientifically sound reason to say God rested from His work of creating living creatures, but has not rested from His work of creating non-living creatures. So, Grudem cannot with consistency reject biological and human evolution, but at the same time accept millions of years of geological and cosmological evolution.

11. *Theistic Evolution: God never created an originally “very good” natural world in the sense of a world that was a safe environment, free of thorns and thistles and similar harmful things.*

12. *Theistic Evolution: After Adam and Eve sinned, God did not place any curse on the world that changed the workings of the natural world and made it more hostile to mankind.*

These two points overlap, and so I will discuss them together. These are two extremely important points and are powerful reasons why Grudem should reject *all* old-earth views, including John Lennox’s view,⁸ which I discuss further below.

Grudem is right when he says that for many centuries Bible interpreters understood Genesis to teach that in the pre-Fall earth there were no thorns and thistles, no curse on the ground, “no natural disasters such as hurricanes, tornadoes, earthquakes, floods or droughts.” They also taught that on the earth there “were no animals hostile to human beings” (Grudem 2017b, 818). They said this on the basis of Genesis 1:31, 3:17–18, and Isaiah 11:8–9, and Grudem agrees. Actually, it can be confidently asserted this has been the orthodox view not just for many centuries but for 2,000 years. Grudem (2017b, 818–819) accurately summarizes,

But theistic evolution cannot affirm such an originally idyllic creation, because it holds that all living things as they exist today, including all the things that are hostile to human beings, are the results of a fully natural evolutionary process. Therefore, the earth has always been the way it is today. Therefore, the picture of an idyllic creation given in Genesis is not a historically reliable narrative.

⁸ Grudem’s endorsement and a summary of Lennox’s view is in fn 1 above. For critiques of Lennox’s old-earth view, see Ham and Golden (2012) and Turpin (2012).

But according to the Bible, that idyllic creation, which Grudem affirms as descriptive of the whole creation, did not last long. Surely only a few days transpired before Adam and Eve fell in sin.⁹ Grudem (2017b, 819) is correct to say that “the biblical text, if understood as a historical record of actual events, shows that God did indeed alter the workings of the natural world” when He pronounced His judgment in Genesis 3:17–19. Grudem (2017b, 820) continues with perfectly biblical and historically orthodox reasoning:

God’s words of judgment mean that the earth would not only produce thorns and thistles but would also harbor insects that would destroy crops (Deut. 28:38; Amos 7:1), diseases that would consume them (see Deut. 28:22), foraging animals that would eat crops before they could be harvested, and floods and droughts, tornadoes and hurricanes that would make farming difficult and life precarious (see Eccles. 11:4).

He then says before quoting Romans 8:18–24 that Paul affirms “that the present operation of the natural world is not the way God originally created it to work but is a result of God’s judgment” (Grudem 2017b, 820). In this, Grudem is in harmony with commentators on Romans 8 down through the centuries (Smith 2007).¹⁰ Therefore, he rightly concludes that “theistic evolution requires us to affirm that Paul was also wrong at this point” (Grudem 2017b, 821).

What about animal death before the Fall?

As noted on point 7 above, Grudem is wrong when he says, “The entire Bible says nothing one way or another about the death of animals before the fall” (Grudem 2017b, 821).

Here Grudem is ignoring many Scriptures and some of his very own biblically sound reasoning related to this question later in this chapter of *Theistic Evolution* and also in his widely used textbook, *Systematic Theology* (1994).¹¹

Regarding Scripture, Genesis 1:29–30 clearly says man and all the birds and land animals were

vegetarian (a fact not noted by anyone in this book critiquing theistic evolution). This statement makes no sense if some of the land animals and birds were really carnivores before the Fall. In Genesis 3:14, the serpent and other animals were cursed (resulting in changes of physical behavior if not of anatomy), as was the ground.¹² Paul says in Romans 8:19–23 that the whole creation is now groaning and suffering because of God’s subjection of it to corruption. It is waiting for liberation at the second coming of Jesus Christ when the creation will be restored like unto the pre-Fall world (Acts 3:21) by the redeeming power of the blood of Jesus (Colossians 1:15–20). Then the curse on creation will be removed (Revelation 22:3). In that day, the creation will be even better than the future state of affairs prophesied in Isaiah 11:6–9 and 65:24–25. Those passages speak of a future time when dangerous creatures and carnivorous creatures will no longer be so because the knowledge of the Lord will fill the earth as the waters cover the sea. Scripture most certainly does give us abundant evidence that the “scientific” dogma of millions of years of animal death, disease, carnivorous behavior, extinction, and other natural evils is a lie.

But another reason to conclude that there could not have been millions of years of all these natural evils in the non-human creation but that it all comes after and because of Adam’s rebellion is this. Many of God’s later holy and righteous judgments (or threats of judgment) because of human sin also produced negative consequences for the non-human creation, including innocent animals (Genesis 8:21; Deuteronomy 28:15–18; Jeremiah 7:20, 12:4, 36:29; Jonah 4:11; Zephaniah 1:2–3; Haggai 1:9–11; Malachi 3:9–12; Revelation 8:7–12). Additionally, unfavorable weather, failed crops, unproductive flocks and herds, and other natural evils served to reveal to people that they were under God’s specific judgment for their own rebellion. Undoubtedly, God’s curses in Genesis 3 (and reflected in Romans 8) were and are intended to teach all of sinful humanity that we are under God’s general judgment. Given this witness to God’s actions

⁹ The time from the creation of Adam and Eve to the Fall could not be more than a few days. The Fall could not have been on Day 6, for it would not be an idyllic creation if Satan and sin were in the world. The Fall surely was not on Day 7, for God blessed and sanctified it. And the Fall was before Eve conceived her first child, which was after they were expelled from the Garden. It is hardly reasonable to think that Adam and Eve worked for weeks or months in the Garden without uniting sexually or conceiving a child, given God’s command on Day 6 to be fruitful and multiply.

¹⁰ For a briefer discussion, see Moo (1996, 513–514), Schreiner (1998, 435), and Murray (1993, 301–302).

¹¹ I received a copy of Grudem’s revised second edition (Grudem 2020) in mid-December, 2020, just before finishing this article. An article critiquing his thinking on creation and the age of the earth in this new edition in comparison to the first edition (see my critique of his first edition in Mortenson 2009b) will be forthcoming in 2021, Lord willing.

¹² Some have suggested Genesis 3:14 teaches that the curse separated the serpent from the other animals (that is, only he was cursed), as might be interpreted from the ESV, NIV, and KJV, which all say that the serpent was cursed “above all” the cattle and beasts of the field. The NASB, NKJV, NLT, and CSB render the Hebrew (שָׂרָף) as “more than all,” which would indicate that the named animals were also cursed but that the serpent was cursed more (“above all” could be interpreted to mean this also). I favor this latter interpretation because Genesis 3:1 has already told the reader that the serpent was “more crafty than all” the other animals (where “more than all” is a translation of the same word in Hebrew [חָכָם] as in Genesis 3:14). In other words, as all the above translations render 3:1, the serpent was not the only crafty creature but was the most crafty. So too, in Genesis 3:14, the serpent was not the only creature cursed, but was the most cursed.

in the fallen creation, there is absolutely no reason to think that the same God would destroy billions of animals over the course of billions of years of disease, asteroid impacts, hurricanes, tornadoes, earthquakes, volcanoes, forest fires, floods, and droughts in the process of creating a “very good” world.

Later in Grudem’s chapter when he discusses the doctrine of the goodness of God, he rejects the theistic evolutionist idea that God created “a world filled with deadly diseases, dangerous animals, and natural disasters” (Grudem 2017b, 834). But he only connects that to *human* suffering and death as long as *humans* have been on the earth. Is it even rational to think that disease, dangerous animals, and natural disasters only affected humans after the Fall? No animals had disease that infected other animals, and no animals killed other *animals*? During the whole span of human existence, we certainly see those evil things happening to animals, not just to people. If sinful humans fight animal disease, rescue animals threatened by natural disasters, and work to prevent extinction of endangered species, could our holy, good God allow animals to suffer disease, death, and extinction for millions of years and call it “very good?” If none of that natural evil affecting humans and animals happened before the Fall, then Grudem must reject the millions of years proclaimed by evolutionary geologists on the basis of their naturalistic interpretations of the rock layers and the fossil record, which clearly displays evidence of disease, death, and extinction. This alone is proof the evolutionists’ dating methods are completely false. And if the evolutionary geologists are wrong about the age of the earth, then there is no reason to accept the billions of years claimed by the evolutionary cosmologists, whose big bang theory is based on the same anti-biblical, naturalistic (atheistic) philosophical (aka, religious) assumptions. But by accepting millions of years, whether Grudem realizes it or not, he is accepting millions of years of animal disease, death, extinction, and other natural evils and implying that God called it all “very good.” He is accepting the same view of history that he criticizes theistic evolutionists of promoting and thereby is also believing what is contrary to Scripture!

When we turn to his *Systematic Theology*, we see more confused and contradictory thinking. Grudem reasons that if the gap theory were correct, then God called the creation “very good” as He looked at an earth “full of the results of rebellion, conflict and terrible divine judgment” (Grudem 1994, 288). I agree: the gap theory is false. But this is not just a problem for the gap theory. It is also a problem for the gap-day-gap-day view of John Lennox, which

Grudem now favors.¹³ Grudem also correctly reasons in his theology text that the gap theory

must assume that all of the fossils of animals from millions of years ago that resemble very closely animals from today indicate that God’s first creation of the animal and plant kingdom resulted in a failure. These animals and plants did not fulfill God’s original purpose, so he destroyed them, but in the second creation he made others that were exactly like them... [which seems] inconsistent with the biblical picture of God...” (Grudem 1994, 289).

But every old-earth view has this same problem, except that in most of those views the death of all those pre-Adamic creatures was not the result of God’s judgment but rather of His permissive will over millions of years of creating a world for man and every step of the way repeatedly calling it “good” and then at the end looking at the fossil record of death and calling it “very good.” What a monstrous God!

In the chapter on sin (Grudem 1994, 490–514), he makes no mention of the impact of the Fall on the non-human creation. But in the chapter on our future glorification, he affirms, “When Adam sinned, God cursed the ground because of him (Gen. 3:17–19) so that it brought forth thorns and thistles,” and then he quotes Romans 8:21 concerning the future of the creation (835). He continues, “In this renewed creation, there will be no more thorns or thistles, no more floods or droughts, no more deserts or uninhabitable jungles, no more earthquakes or tornadoes, no more poisonous snakes or bees that sting or mushrooms that kill” (836). But surely the creation does not need to be restored and renewed because for millions of years God used all these evil things to create His “very good” world. In the future does God need to fix His own flawed creation work? No, Scripture is clear that the restoration and renewal of the whole non-human creation are necessary because Adam’s sin resulted in God’s curse, which put the “whole creation” in “bondage to corruption” (Romans 8:21–22), not because God is a terrible Creator.

Grudem and the other contributors to *Theistic Evolution* reject biological evolution—that all plants, animals, and people are descended from the first living cell that popped into existence as a result of time, chance, and the laws of nature. But by accepting millions of years, they are accepting the death and destruction of billions of creatures and other natural evils before the Fall.

If God cursed the earth with thorns *after* Adam sinned (as Genesis 3:18 says, “both thorns and thistles it [i.e., the ground, v. 17] *shall* grow for you,” and as Grudem believes), why do we find fossil thorns

¹³ Lennox believes there is an unknown but great amount of time before the first day (which he says begins in Genesis 1:3) and an unknown but great amount of time between each of the six literal days of creation.

in rock layers which the evolutionists claim are 350 million years old (Stewart and Rothwell 1993, 172–176)?¹⁴ If millions of years really happened, then God lied about the thorns and thistles.¹⁵ Conversely, if Genesis 3:18 is true, then the evolutionists' claim about millions of years is a lie based on deceptively false dating methods.

Did arthritis, gout, rickets, viruses, malaria, and cancer exist in the “very good” world before man sinned? If the evolutionists' dating methods are correct, the answer must be “yes,” because many kinds of diseases have been found in animals in the fossil record, including arthritis, abscesses, gout, and tumors in dinosaur bones dated to be 110 million years old (Acton 1978; Cisneros et al. 2010; Oregon State University 2019; Poinar, Zavortink, and Brown 2019; Rothschild, Tanke, and Carpenter 1997; University of Texas 2010). A researcher of these bones tells us “diseases look the same through time...it makes no difference whether this is now or a hundred million years ago” (Anonymous 1998).¹⁶ There is also considerable evidence of rickets, syphilis, dental disease, cannibalism, and other diseases in human fossilized bones, which evolutionists date to be tens or hundreds of thousands of years before any biblically plausible date for Adam (Lubenow 1998). If the Bible is true, then those dates are false and there was no pre-Fall death and disease.

Furthermore, evolutionists insist that over the course of a half billion years there were five major mass-extinction events or periods, when 65–90 percent of all species living at those particular times went extinct.¹⁷ They also claim many lesser extinction events or periods occurred. If this was the way the creation was for millions of years, then what impact on the creation did the Fall and Curse have? None.

Contrary to what the Bible teaches, the Fall would have only caused spiritual death in man.

In fact, one can go further and say that if millions of years of animal death, disease, and extinction really did occur, then the “very good” creation of Genesis 1 was considerably *worse* than the world we now inhabit where habitats are only occasionally polluted or destroyed and only a few creatures are brought to extinction due to human sin. We have never seen in human history the kind of mass-kill, extinction events which the evolutionary geologists say occurred before man came into existence, unless, that is, we accept the global Flood of Noah's day clearly taught in Scripture.

But theistic evolutionists and most old-earth proponents deny the global Flood. Some Christians do believe Noah's Flood was global while they also accept millions of years. But as fig. 4 illustrates, they cannot with logical coherency believe that the



Fig. 4. The fossil record was formed either before Adam's creation or after Adam's Fall. It cannot be both. If before, it means God called disease, suffering, mass extinction, etc. “very good.” If after the Fall, then the most logical cause of most of it is Noah's Flood.

¹⁴ Stewart and Rothwell show fossilized thorny plants (*Psilophyton crenulatum*) found in the Devonian formation, which the evolutionists date at 345–395 million years BP (before present).

¹⁵ God would not necessarily need to create thorns *de novo* at the Fall. He may have simply “switched on” some previously created latent genetic information to cause plants after the Fall to grow thorns and have other characteristics that would be needed for the post-Fall world (see Allen 2011).

¹⁶ Because the diseases look the same, medical schools are beginning to have their students study cancer in dinosaur bones so as to become more skilled in diagnosing cancers in humans (see Whipps 2006).

¹⁷The names and approximate evolutionary dates of the supposed five major extinction events are these: Late Ordovician (440 million years ago [mya], 100+ families of marine invertebrates perished, www.park.org/Canada/Museum/extinction/ordmass.html, accessed 8 Dec 2020); Late Devonian (365 mya, 70% of marine invertebrates perished along with other marine life, www.park.org/Canada/Museum/extinction/devmass.html, accessed 11 Aug. 2009); Permian-Triassic (245 mya, greatest mass extinction event, 96% of marine species and 70% of land vertebrate species went extinct, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Permian%E2%80%93Triassic_extinction_event, accessed 8 Dec 2020); Late Triassic (210 mya, at least 50% of species went extinct, www.wikipedia.org/wiki/Triassic%E2%80%93Jurassic_extinction_event, accessed 8 Dec 2020); Cretaceous-Tertiary (66 mya, second largest mass extinction, 85% of all species, including all dinosaurs), www.park.org/Canada/Museum/extinction/cretmass.html, accessed 8 Dec 2020). The Canadian web site bases its information on Stanley (1987), a leading evolutionist.

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thousands of feet of fossil-bearing sedimentary rock layers are the result of both Noah's Flood *and* the result of millions of years of geological history. It must be one or the other, not both. Furthermore, the evolutionary geologists insist there is absolutely no geological evidence of a global flood ever in earth history, but it is simply impossible that the global, catastrophic, Noachian Flood, as Scripture describes, left no evidence of erosion, sedimentation, and fossils.

In 2005 in a conversation with Grudem at the annual meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society, I told him about diseases in fossil bones of dinosaurs and other animals and about fossil thorns and thistles, all supposedly millions of years old. These were facts he had not known. His response was, "I'll have to think about that." Yet 15 years later, he either has not thought about this, or he is ignoring this massive biblical problem that *all* old-earth views have. In that 2005 conversation, Grudem also told me he believed Noah's Flood was global. He apparently has now abandoned that belief since in 2016 he heartily endorsed the extremely deceptive and erroneous book, *The Grand Canyon, Monument to an Ancient Earth*, which argues that Noah's Flood was localized in the Middle East.¹⁸ I have thoroughly critiqued that book elsewhere (Mortenson 2020d; for a summary of the critique see Mortenson 2021).

Excursus on John Lennox's view of death

On this point we also need to consider briefly the view of John Lennox, since as already noted Grudem endorses his old-earth gap-day-gap-day view of Genesis 1. In Lennox's ten-page discussion regarding death before the Fall, he fails to engage with young-earth arguments. In fact, he shows no evidence of even reading young-earth literature, and he presents arguments we have long ago refuted (Lennox 2011, 75–85).¹⁹

First, he spends time arguing that Romans 5:12 is about human death and so is irrelevant to the question of animal death before the Fall. But that is not the verse that prominent young-earthers use. Rather, we make our case from Genesis 1:29–31, 3:14–19, 8:21; Deuteronomy 28:15–68; Romans 8:19–23; Isaiah 11:6–9, 65:24–25; Colossians 1:20; Revelation 22:3; etc. (for example, Mortenson 2012).

Second, he talks about plant death (as a result of people and animals eating). But, as young-earth creationists have repeatedly shown, Scripture is abundantly clear that plants are not living creatures (*nephesh chayyah*) as humans and animals are, and plants do not die in the same sense as animals and people do. So, eating plants or the fruit of plants before the Fall is not an example of death before the Fall (Stambaugh 1992, 2008; Todhunter 2013).

Third, Lennox says whales are a problem because "they don't live on green vegetation" (Lennox 2011, 78). Well, they do not do so today, but that fact cannot be used to say what they ate before the Fall. Even sharks have been known to eat seaweed (Catchpoole 2018; HuffPost 2012). There seems to have been plenty of plant life in the oceans before the Flood, as evidenced by the fact that most oil apparently comes from marine algae, zooplankton, and phytoplankton (Schobert 2013, 103–130).²⁰ Based on how the Bible defines "living creatures" (Heb.: *nephesh chayyah*), one would conclude that algae, phytoplankton, and zooplankton, as well as perhaps krill and many marine invertebrates, which are food for baleen whales,²¹ are not living creatures (*nephesh chayyah*) and therefore eating them would not constitute carnivorous behavior or death (Stambaugh 1992).

Fourth, Lennox raises the objection of the existence of predators and prey with their respective attack and defense structures and abilities. Sharks, lions, and many other creatures have sharp teeth, strong jaws, and other features that were well designed for capturing and killing other creatures. Other creatures have amazing defense structures and behaviors. Does this prove many creatures were carnivores right from the beginning, before the Fall? No.

It is a demonstrable fact that creatures which are normally carnivores today can survive on a vegetarian diet (Catchpoole 2000).²² Even evolutionists (Tihelka et al. 2020) have concluded that blood-sucking fleas (scorpionflies) descended from nectar-feeding ancestors (which would not be an example of evolution, but simply variation within a created kind). Also, to change herbivores into carnivores, God would not have needed to make changes to body parts. We now know that much of the genetic code previously called

¹⁸ Grudem says on the endorsement page of the book (Hill et al. 2016): "Can Bible-believing Christians also believe that the earth is billions of years old and that the Grand Canyon could not have been formed by Noah's Flood? . . . On page after page, professional geologists explain that "flood geology" . . . fails to explain massive amounts of evidence in the Grand Canyon itself."

¹⁹ Lennox cites two young-earth sources: the contributions of Paul Nelson and John Mark Reynolds in Moreland and Reynolds (1999) and the young-earth contributions of Ligon Duncan and David Hall in Hagopian (2001). But none of those young-earthers are leading defenders of the view. And in these books, none of these young-earth creationists even touch on the very important creationist argument that there was no death before the Fall.

²⁰ Creation geologists think there are good reasons to conclude that oil was produced as a result of billions of these creatures being buried in the Flood (see Snelling 2009, 2: 965–976).

²¹ The huge baleen whales have these creatures for their diet: <https://seaworld.org/animals/all-about/baleen-whales/diet/>.

²² Catchpoole discusses a lion born in America that lived for nine years and thrived on a vegetarian diet. Also, in discussing how carnivores survived when they came off the ark at the end of Noah's Flood, Woodmorappe (1996, 167–172) documents that carnivores today can adjust to a vegetarian diet when necessary.

“junk DNA” has a regulatory role controlling the function of other genes. By His curse in Genesis 3, God could have simply activated or deactivated some genetic information so that creatures’ behaviors were changed (Hennigan, Purdom and Wood 2009). Using a computer analogy, it is reasonable to think that at the Fall, God did not change the hardware of creatures, but only turned on or off some of the software He had preprogrammed in the DNA of the creatures at the beginning (but left the genetic “switch” in the opposite position, which could also in the future be reversed again) with the foreknowledge that man would sin and God would curse the creation (McIntosh and Hodge 2006). This is not a wild and *ad hoc* idea but is rather implied by God’s judgment of Adam and Eve. Eve had *increased* pain in childbirth, and the bodies of Adam and Eve began to suffer from processes which would eventually lead to physical death. Yet there is no reason to think their body structures were significantly modified (or new body parts added) when God judged them.

All of Lennox’s other arguments in defense of animal death before the Fall are just as weak, as is the rest of his book (Ham and Golden 2012; Turpin 2012). But we need to consider one more point, which makes me wonder if Grudem read Lennox’s book very carefully before embracing his view. Lennox says, “From the biblical text one does not get the impression that the entire world was like Eden,” which he calls “idyllic” (Lennox 2011, 81). But as we have seen, Grudem (2017b, 818) rightly reasons that the *whole* pre-Fall creation was “idyllic.” What Genesis 2 indicates is not that inside the Garden everything was wonderful and outside it was filled with natural evils. Rather, Eden was special because it was a geographically limited area for testing man’s obedience. The whole creation was very good without natural evil of any kind, according to Genesis 1 and other biblical texts and Christian orthodoxy for 2,000 years.

But we should note that Lennox, like Grudem and most other old-earthers, contradicts himself. While accepting millions of years of animal death, disease and extinction, and other natural evils in the so-called, non-idyllic world outside the Garden of Eden, a little later in his book, Lennox says the opposite. Under the heading of “The Goodness of Creation,” he says at the end of Creation Week (which Lennox thinks lasted billions of years), God delighted in “the wonderful harmony of his completed work.” He says, “at the beginning all was perfect.” He adds, “Indeed, just as the material creation was originally perfect, one day there will be a new creation, new heavens and a new earth that will also be perfect” (Lenox

2011, 111). Really? When God said in Genesis 1:31 that His whole creation was “very good,” He was looking at an earth covered with thousands of meters of sedimentary rocks containing billions of fossilized plants and animals revealing evidence of disease, predation, death, and extinction spread over millions of years as a result of earthquakes, volcanoes, hurricanes, tsunamis, and massive asteroid impacts? This is a perfect creation? And this is what we have to look forward to in the new heavens and earth?

Wrapping up this vital point on death

It is vitally important to grasp the enormity of this biblical and theological issue. If we believe what the inerrant Word of God says about the original “very good” creation and the Fall and curse, then we *must* reject not only theistic evolution but also *every* attempt to fit millions of years into or before Genesis 1.

We must reject the gap theory that tries to put deep time into an exegetically non-existent gap in Genesis 1:1–1:3. We must reject the view of John Lennox that puts millions of years before the first day (which he says begins in Genesis 1:3) and millions of years in gaps (some of them filled with death) between each of the literal days of creation. We must reject C. John Collins’ analogical days view, which is similar to Lennox’s view. We must reject the day-age view that tries to spread millions of years of death over the six figurative “days.” We must reject the framework hypothesis which makes no exegetical attempt at reconciliation but accepts the evolutionary view of death because it rejects Genesis 1 as historical narrative. We must reject John Walton’s cosmic temple view (that God made everything, and billions of creatures suffered disease, death and extinction *before* Genesis 1:1), because (Walton thinks) Genesis 1 is only an account of God giving function to a pre-existing material creation. And we must reject any other view that attempts to add millions of years of death and other natural evils to Genesis 1.

There is no place in or before Genesis 1 to put millions of years without destroying what the Bible says about the pre-Fall, “very good” creation and the curse on the whole creation at the Fall. As fig. 5 illustrates, either death came before man (*all* old-earth views), or man came before all death (scriptural, young-earth view). You cannot coherently believe both at the same time.²³ The idea of millions of years of such natural evil is utterly contrary to Scripture (Mortenson 2012). Old-earth Christians need to stop ignoring this issue, superficially addressing it (while ignoring the best young-earth treatments of it) or twisting Scripture to resolve the problem!

²³ William Dembski (2009) proposed that all the death came before man as a preemptive consequence of Adam’s future sin, just as Christ was slain before the foundation of the world. The view is fatally flawed on many counts (see Mortenson 2009a).



Fig. 5. Either death came before man, or man came before death. Both cannot be true.

Significant Christian Doctrines are Undermined or Denied by Theistic Evolution, and All Old-Earth Views

Grudem finishes his chapter by discussing 11 doctrines to show that theistic evolution is not a harmless alternate opinion about creation but rather is destructive of Christian orthodoxy. As above, I agree with all his points, but contend that many of them are also reasons for rejecting *all* old-earth views in the church. Using Grudem’s headings, I will comment on nine of the 11 doctrines. (The other two are insignificant points for this discussion.)

1. *The Truthfulness of the Bible*

Grudem says, “Theistic evolution must deny that Genesis 1–3 should be understood as historical narrative in the sense of literature that intends to report events that actually happened” (Grudem 2017b, 821). But *all* old-earth views deny that many of those events happened *just as God describes them*. Grudem says, “Theistic evolution requires us to believe that both Jesus and the New Testament authors were wrong in their affirmations of the historical reliability of many details in Genesis 1–3” (Grudem 2017b, 821). But the NT writers’ affirmations of those details (including a talking serpent and Eve being created from Adam—two of the miraculous events) give sufficient reason to conclude that they believed all the details. Put another way, there is no biblical evidence the NT writers took any of the details of Genesis 1–3 as figurative or in any way non-literal. Also, they revealed that they took the details of Genesis 4–11 as literal history too. They were all young-earth creationists.²⁴ Grudem rightly says the question of origins is not a salvation issue, but an issue of the truthfulness and inerrancy of Scripture, which are central points of doctrine. He says, “Once the truthfulness of Scripture is lost, the entire Christian faith begins to unravel” (Grudem 2017b, 823). He says theistic evolutionists

will not allow the Bible to speak with authority . . . about the origin of all living things on the earth, the origin of human beings, the origin of moral evil in the human race, the origin of human death, the origin of natural evil in the world, the perfection of the natural world as God originally created it, and even the nature of Christ’s own personal involvement as the creator of “all things . . . in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible” (Col. 1:16). These are massive areas of human knowledge, affecting our outlook on our entire lives. Yet theistic evolution has decreed that the Bible cannot authoritatively speak to us about these areas of human knowledge. Those topics are the exclusive domain of modern naturalistic science, off-limits for God to speak to us about. (Grudem 2017b, 823)

But Grudem and all other old-earthers will not allow the Bible (that is, God) to speak with authority and perspicuity about:

1. the origin of all *non-living* things (such as the earth, the sun, the moon, and stars)
2. the order of the creation events (which seriously contradicts the order of events in cosmological and geological evolution)
3. the time used for the creation of those things (six sequential, non-overlapping, literal days, as God clearly said in Exodus 20:8–11)
4. the yearlong, global, catastrophic Noachian Flood
5. the creation being only a little more than 6,000 years old
6. the impossibility of millions of years of death, bloodshed, disease, and extinction of billions of animals in God’s “very good” initial creation (which Grudem describes here as “the perfection of the natural world as God originally created it”).

These topics related to geological evolution and cosmological evolution are just as off-limits for God to speak about (according to Grudem and other old-earthers) as are the topics related to biological and human evolution about which Grudem is rightly concerned. Theistic evolution is indeed an assault on the truthfulness and authority of Scripture. But geological evolution and cosmological evolution are equally an assault on the same.

Grudem (like other authors contributing to *Theistic Evolution*) are concerned about “modern naturalistic science.” As philosopher of science and co-editor Stephen Meyer says in his introductory chapter, given the scientific evidence against neo-Darwinian, microbe-to-microbiologist evolution,

we argue that theistic evolution devolves into little more than an *a priori* commitment to methodological naturalism—the idea that scientists must limit themselves to strictly materialistic explanations and that scientists may not offer explanations making

²⁴ See chapters 11 (on Jesus’ view) and 12 (on the apostles’ view) in Mortenson and Ury (2008, 315–372).

reference to intelligent design or divine action or make any reference to theology in scientific discourse. (Meyer 2017, 54–55)

But this naturalistic stranglehold does not apply just to biology. It also applies to geology and astronomy. And more importantly and most fundamentally, it does not just exclude from scientific discussions any reference to intelligent design or divine action or theology, it prohibits any reference to the eyewitness testimony of the Creator in His Word regarding biology, geology, astronomy, and anthropology.

Grudem and others apparently do not see that naturalism is controlling geology and cosmology just as much as it is controlling biology and anthropology. Grudem has told the global church through his widely used *Systematic Theology* in 19 languages, “Although our conclusions are tentative, at this point in our understanding, Scripture seems to be more easily understood to *suggest* (but not to require) a young earth view, while the observable facts of creation seem increasingly to favor an old earth view” (Grudem 1994, 307; italics original). No, it is not the “observable facts of creation” that prove millions of years. Quite the opposite is the case.²⁵ It is the *anti-biblical, naturalistic, philosophical assumptions* used to *interpret* the geological (and cosmological) evidence that led to the myth of millions of years, as I explain elsewhere (Mortenson 2004a, 2004b, 2007).

In his second chapter in *Theistic Evolution*, Grudem comments about inerrancy and the “Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy,” which he signed back in 1978. Grudem (2017b, 827) quotes from articles IX, XI, and XII to affirm that Scripture is true and trustworthy “on all matters of which the Bible authors were moved to speak and write” (ICBI 1978, Article IX). Through that document, Grudem (2017b, 827) further affirms that the Bible is inerrant not just in spiritual, religious, or redemptive themes but also in its “assertions in the fields of history and science” (ICBI 1978, Article XII). Through that document, Grudem (2017b, 827) also denies that “scientific hypotheses about earth history may properly be used to overturn the teaching of Scripture on creation and the flood” (ICBI 1978, Article XII).

Grudem is absolutely correct that biological evolution undermines the inerrancy of Scripture. But geological and cosmological evolution (over millions of years) also undermine the inerrancy of the Bible and overturn its teaching on creation and the Flood! Grudem and *all* other old-earth inerrantists are inconsistently applying their belief in inerrancy, as they reject theistic evolution, but then embrace millions of years and tell the church the age of the earth is a “side issue” over which Christians should agree to disagree. This inconsistency in the thinking

of so many inerrantists is a massive problem in the worldwide church, as I document and illustrate elsewhere (Mortenson 2020b).

2. *Direct Creation by God’s Powerful Words*

Grudem quotes Genesis 1:11, Genesis 1:24, Psalm 33:6, and Psalm 33:9 to support his claim:

According to theistic evolution, there was no special action of God or intervention by God in the created order after the initial creation of matter. But the biblical picture is far different. It shows God speaking living things into existence by his powerful creative words, and the picture it gives is that those powerful words of God bring immediate response. (Grudem 2017b, 828)

In the cited verses, Grudem focuses on “living things,” but he overlooks the fact that the verses in Psalm 33 say that “the heavens” and “all their host” were made by God’s powerful words which brought immediate results. We can be certain God did not command the sun, moon, and stars to come into existence and then wait billions of years for them to evolve from gas and dust clouds into their present state by natural processes (as evolutionary cosmologists imagine and confidently assert). God supernaturally spoke the earth and all other non-living things into existence by His powerful words, just as He did the plants, animals, and people. That clearly is the force of the words in Psalm 33:6–9, Genesis 1, and Psalm 105:31, 34 (when God judged Egypt), and when Jesus did His miracles by His spoken word. As Grudem says above, “those powerful words of God [brought] immediate response.”

Grudem (2017b, 828) rejects the idea that *living* things “evolved over billions of years and new forms of life are the result of random mutations, not God’s commands.” But neither in this book, nor in his *Systematic Theology*, nor in any other of his writings of which I am aware, does Grudem say anything about how or when the earth and the heavenly bodies came into existence. By accepting millions of years, Grudem is either denying that God powerfully (supernaturally) spoke the earth, sun, moon, and stars into existence (that is, he believes, as Lennox apparently does [see below], that God spoke and initiated a natural process that eventually after millions of years brought them into existence). Or he believes that God miraculously (virtually instantaneously) spoke them into existence and then waited millions or billions of years before He created plants, animals, and people.

Lennox (whose gap-day-gap-day view Grudem now favors) is very fuzzy and confusing on this point. As noted earlier, Lennox contends there is a long period of time between the initial creation in Genesis

²⁵ Many other prominent Bible scholars erroneously reason just as Grudem does (see Mortenson 2010).

1:1 (“In the beginning”) and “the six days of creation that follow it,” which begin, he says, in Genesis 1:3 (Lennox 2011, 52–53). During this gap of time *before* the six days of Genesis 1:3–31, God created the earth and the universe (including the sun, moon, and stars, Lennox appears to believe, though his discussion lacks specifics) (Lennox 2011, 58–60). This, says Lennox, “leaves the age of the universe indeterminate” (Lennox 2011, 53).

Then, according to Lennox, after this long initial period of creation, a second period of creation occurs in which there are six literal creation days with an unspecified long period of time *between* each of those days. So he proposes a long gap of time before the six days and long gaps of time between the days. Furthermore, the creative processes initiated on each literal day took a long time to complete “so that there was a great deal of overlapping in the periods of active creation” (Lennox 2011, 57). In his chapter on the days of creation, Lennox nowhere clearly says what God made or how He made things on each day (either supernaturally or by some natural process). Instead, Lennox uses very ambiguous phrases like “God acted to create something new,” “the outworking of the potential of each creative fiat,” “God speaking to inaugurate something radically new,” “each of the creation days *inaugurates* a period of outworking,” and “those creative processes took varying lengths of time to complete” (Lennox 2011, 54–57; italics original). He also ambiguously states, “The outworkings of the fiats, of course, could have taken any amount of time to occur. The fiats of God are uttered swiftly, but his mills grind slowly” (Lennox 2011, 56). There is no biblical basis for such statements (which is why Lennox offers no Scriptures to support his vague assertions).

Of course, God decreed things that did not immediately happen. For example, through His prophets God decreed events (for example, the coming of the Messiah, the fall of Jerusalem, the return of the exiles from Babylon, etc.) that would happen many years after the decree. But the decreed event, when it happened, did not require many years to take place. The time between decree and event is not the same as the time required for the event to occur. But Genesis 1 makes it clear there is no such time gaps between the days. The repeated phrases “God said,” “God saw that it was good,” “and it was so,” and “there was evening and there was morning, the xth day” emphatically teach these are six, gapless, consecutive, literal days.²⁶

It is anyone’s guess what Lennox’s vague language about the six days of creation means. His language certainly does not convey the notion of Psalm 33:9 that “God spoke, and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast!” And it surely does not seem to reflect what Grudem thinks about that verse. So why does Grudem endorse Lennox’s view when he disagrees with him on such fundamental points? Has he read Lennox carefully? It sure does not seem like he has.

Neither Grudem nor Lennox rules out natural processes for the formation of the sun, moon, and stars over long ages. Neither of them explicitly says that God spoke, and these heavenly bodies immediately and supernaturally (i.e., virtually instantly in a single literal day) came into existence. If they do not believe God’s creative act on Day 4 was immediate and supernatural, then they are completely arbitrary about their affirmation of God’s powerful, creative words (affirming it with respect to plants and animals but not with respect to the heavenly bodies). If they do believe God created the heavenly bodies supernaturally (essentially in the blink of an eye or at least within a 24-hour period), then by accepting what the evolutionary cosmologists say about the age and history of the universe they believe those heavenly bodies existed for billions of years before God made plants, animals, and people.

Either God’s words are not powerful, or God is seriously deficient in knowledge or wisdom, or Grudem and Lennox are being very selective and arbitrary in their reading of the inerrant Word of God. But God clearly says He made the sun, moon, and stars on Day Four, three days after He made the earth, two days after He made the expanse, and one day after He made all the land plants (Mortenson 2020a).

3. *Overwhelming Evidence in Nature for God’s Existence*

4. *Evidence in Nature for Moral Accountability to God*

We will consider these two points together since they are related. Grudem is right in quoting Romans 1:19–20 and saying, “Paul’s phrase ‘the things that have been made’ certainly includes plants, animals, and human beings, all of which give clear *evidence* of God’s power and other attributes (such as wisdom, knowledge, creativity, love, goodness, and faithfulness)” (Grudem 2017b, 829, italics original). Therefore, says Grudem, “when people ponder the astounding complexity of the human eye, or a bird’s wing, or a single living cell, the evidence for God’s existence is so strong that people have no good excuse for unbelief” (Grudem 2017b, 829).

²⁶ Someone might object, “Yes, but God decreed in Genesis 2:17 that ‘in the day that’ Adam would eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil he would ‘surely die.’ But he did not die till 930 years later. So, this might suggest that there could be long time-gaps between God’s creative decrees.” Two points in response. (1) This ignores the contextual evidence in Genesis 1 against the idea of gaps. (2) Adam and Eve did instantly die spiritually (they hid themselves from God—their relationship with Him was broken), and the physical death process began (he became mortal). So, God kicked him and Eve out of the garden, lest they be healed.

But here again, Grudem is only looking at living creatures. The non-living creatures (sun, moon, and stars) also reveal God's attributes, including His glorious power, wisdom, and righteousness (Psalm 19:1, 97:6). Job 12:7–10 tells us to study living creatures. But Job also urges us to “speak to the earth and it will teach you.” Scripture teaches there was a year-long, global, catastrophic Flood at the time of Noah (Mortenson 2020c), and the rocks of the earth give abundant evidence of this event (Morris 2007; Snelling 2009). But Grudem and most old-earthers refuse to look at this geological evidence through the lenses of God's eyewitness testimony, as explained by creation geologists (Mortenson 2020d).

Grudem quotes parts of Acts 17:24, 26, 30–31 and contends that “the wonder of creation leads people to think of their moral accountability to God” (Grudem 2017b, 831). But more than the amazing characteristics of living creatures that Grudem points to, Paul alludes in Acts 17:26 to the Tower of Babel judgment when God divided the people into families and nations. And if any event reminds us of our moral accountability to God, Noah's Flood is surely a prominent one in addition to the Fall. The natural evil we see in the creation is a reminder of the Fall, and the natural evil preserved in the fossil record in the rocks of the earth is a sobering reminder of the Flood.

5. *The Wisdom of God*

6. *The Goodness of God*

These two points are also closely related. Grudem (2017b, 832) states, “Theistic evolution undermines the glory given to God for his unfathomable wisdom in the creation of all living things.” He adds, “In addition, theistic evolution God does not wisely create various kinds of animals on his first attempt, but clumsily, by his providence, brings about millions of failed mutations in each creature before he finds a beneficial change” (Grudem 2017b, 832). Two pages later he also correctly contends,

Theistic evolution also undermines belief in the goodness of God, because according to this view God is responsible for (somehow) creating a world filled with deadly diseases, dangerous animals, and natural disasters that have brought suffering and destruction to human beings for the entire duration of the human race on the earth. (Grudem 2017b, 834)

But *all* old-earth views, including Grudem's and Lennox's, have this very same problem. The millions of years are not empty time. They are millions of years filled with all these evil things that did not just impact humans (after they came into existence) but also impacted the plants and animals that lived before humans. The idea of millions of years of earth

history is a massive assault on the character of God: on His power, on His goodness, on His wisdom, and on His intelligence.

Because of Adam and Eve's rebellion, He cursed the animals and the earth at the Fall (Genesis 3:14–19). Because of mankind's continued rebellion, He destroyed by a curse billions of animals during Noah's Flood (Genesis 8:21). In the post-Fall creation, He cares for the animals (Matthew 6:26; Psalm 104:27–28), He commands the Israelites to care for their animals and not mistreat them (Exodus 23:12, Deuteronomy 25:4), and He said that helping an animal in danger is “doing good” (Matthew 12:11–12). Furthermore, He instructs us in Proverbs 12:10: “A righteous man has regard for the life of his animal, but *even* the compassion of the wicked is cruel.” So, how could this same God spend millions of years creating and then destroying (that is, permitting natural processes to destroy) most of the animals He made before Adam and sin entered the world and call it all “very good”? What kind of God is this?

If millions of years really happened, then Darwin was right in his 1856 letter to Joseph Hooker, “What a book a Devil's Chaplain might write on the clumsy, wasteful, blundering low and horridly cruel works of nature” (Burkhardt and Smith 1990, 178). Or as Cameron said, if all the suffering and agony—especially in the animal world—happened, “the logical step is to believe that the world was created not by a good God but by a demon” (Cameron 1983, 63).

When the idea of millions of years was being developed by atheist and deist geologists in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, an Anglican pastor in England put it this way in 1826 in his two-volume opposition to the old-earth theories and the accommodating reinterpretations of Genesis (gap theory, day-age theory):

Hence then, we have arrived at the wanton and wicked notion of the Hindoos, viz., that God has “*created and destroyed worlds as if in sport, again and again!*”! But will any Christian Divine who regards his Bible, or will any Philosopher who believes that the Almighty works no ‘superfluous miracles,’ and does nothing in vain, advocate the absurdity that a wise, just, and benevolent Deity has, “numerous” times, wrought miracles, and gone out of his usual way for the sole purpose of destroying whole generations of animals, that he might *create others* very like them, but yet differing a little from their predecessors!! (Bugg 1826, 1:318–319)

Genesis 1:14 is very important in this regard. It tells us why God created the heavenly bodies. One purpose was so that humans could measure the passage of seasons, days, and years. If God created those heavenly bodies billions of years before man

(as evolutionary cosmologists claim and as Grudem and Lennox believe), then for most of their existence, those heavenly bodies did not fulfill this purpose for which God created them. What kind of God is this? Where is the wisdom in this? And why even tell us this purpose, since the heavenly bodies did not accomplish it until the last tiny fraction of time to date. Genesis 1:14 only makes sense if Adam and Eve were created just two literal days after the heavenly bodies.

Similarly, we need to consider Genesis 1:26 and 1:28. There God commands Adam and Eve to rule over the sea creatures, flying creatures, and land creatures: “over every living thing that moves on the earth.” But if millions of years really happened, then most of these creatures lived and died and many species became extinct before Adam and Eve and their posterity could rule over them. What kind of God gives a ridiculous command like this? It only makes sense if Adam and Eve were created soon after these other creatures.

We also should not neglect Isaiah 45:18. God says he created the earth to be inhabited. Surely in context, He is not simply referring to animals inhabiting the earth. He intended that mankind, His highest creation, would multiply and fill the earth (Genesis 1:28, 9:1). Again, this makes no sense if the earth was formed 4.6 billion years before the first man and woman. It only makes sense if Adam and Eve were created shortly after the earth was created. In fact, this verse does not even make sense if God is referring to animals inhabiting the earth. This is because according to the evolutionary geologists, the earth existed for one billion years before the first single-celled living creature popped into existence by chance, and it existed for four billion years before the first multi-cellular living creatures came into existence.²⁷

As we noted earlier, the order of creation contradicts the order in which creatures appeared according to old-earth geologists. What wisdom is there in God making plants and then waiting millions of years to create the sun and pollinators (insects and birds). How would plants have survived and propagated? It makes sense and is consistent with the wisdom, goodness, and power of God only if the plants were created one literal day before the sun and two to three literal days before the pollinating creatures.

Another early nineteenth century opponent of this old-earth idea and the various Christian compromises was Granville Penn, grandson of the founder of the colony of Pennsylvania. He wrote a

two-volume work against the catastrophist and uniformitarian old-earth geological theories and old-earth compromise views in the church and drives home the point I am making this way:

To assume arbitrarily, *à priori*, that God created the matter of this globe *in the most imperfect state to which the gross imagination of man can contrive to reduce it*, which it [old-earth geology] effectually does, by reducing the creative *Fiat* to the mere production of an *amorphous elementary mass*; and then to pretend, that His intelligence and wisdom are to be collected from certain hypothetical occult laws, by which *that mass worked itself into perfection of figure and arrangement after innumerable ages*; would tend to lessen our sense either of the divine *wisdom or power*, did not the supposition recoil with tremendous reaction upon the *supposers*, and convict them of the clumsiest irrationality. The supposition is totally *arbitrary*; and not only arbitrary, *viciously arbitrary*; because it is totally *unnecessary*, and therefore betrays a *vice of choice*. For, the laws of matter could not have *worked perfection* in the mass which the Creator is thus supposed to have formed *imperfect*, unless by a power imparted by *Himself* who established the laws. And, if He could thus produce perfection *mediately*, through their operation, He could produce it *immediately*, without their operation. Why, then, wantonly and viciously, without a pretence of authority, *choose* the supposition of their mediation? It is entirely a decision of *choice and preference*, that is, of *the will*; for, *the reason* is no party in it, neither urging, suggesting, encouraging, or in any way aiding or abetting the decision, but, on the contrary, positively denying and condemning it. *The vast length of time*, which this sinister *choice* is necessarily obliged to call in for its own defence, could only be requisite to the Creator *for overcoming difficulties obstructing the perfecting process*; it therefore *chooses to suppose*, that He *created obstructions* in matter, to resist and retard the perfecting of the work which He designed; whilst at the same time he might have perfected it without any resistance at all, by *His own Creative Act*...To suppose then, *à priori*, and without the slightest motive prompted by *reason*, that His wisdom willed, at the same time, both the *formation* of a perfect work, and a series of resistances to *obstruct and delay* that perfect work, argues a gross defect of intelligence *somewhere*; either in the *Creator* or in the *supposer*; and I leave it to this science [of geology], to determine the *alternative*. (Penn 1825, 1:124–127, italics original)

²⁷ According to evolutionists, the earth was formed about 4.6 billion years ago. It gradually evolved into an inhabitable planet so that by about 3.5 billion years ago the first single-cell organism popped into existence by chance and the laws of nature. It was not until about 550 million years ago that the first complex multi-cellular, macroscopic organisms appeared (the so-called “Cambrian Explosion” of life).

Why do Grudem and the other contributors to *Theistic Evolution* not see this very serious theological problem with *all* old-earth views in the church? It is at least partly because they have unquestioningly accepted what the scientific majority dogmatically says about how, when, and in what order non-living things came into existence, while they reject what the same scientific majority just as dogmatically asserts about how, when, and in what order living creatures (especially man) came into existence. It is also because, as their writings reveal, they have not seriously considered the scientific and biblical arguments of leading young-earth creationists.

7. Human Equality

Grudem is correct that “according to theistic evolution, some human beings have evolved primarily from one group of early humans, while others have evolved from another group of early humans” (Grudem 2017b, 835). This destroys the unity of the human race and contradicts not only Acts 17:26 (as Grudem notes), but it also conflicts with Genesis 3:20 (Eve is the mother of all the living), 1 Corinthians 15:45 (Adam was the first man), and the genealogy of Genesis 5 combined with the statement of Genesis 10:32 that all people are descended from the eight people who came off the ark after the global Flood that destroyed all other humans (Genesis 7:23, Matthew 24:37–39, 1 Peter 3:20).

If everyone understood and believed what Genesis and the rest of the Bible say on this point, there would be no racism.²⁸ The Bible is clear there is only one race, and modern genetics research confirms not only that we are all descended from Adam and Eve, but also that the biblical chronology is correct. They were created on the sixth day of history a little more than 6,000 years ago (Jeanson and Tomkins 2016; Mortenson 2016a).

8. The Atonement

9. The Resurrection

Grudem connects these two points, so I will discuss them together. As Grudem says, based on Romans 5:12 and 5:19, that the historicity of Adam’s sin and the unity of the human race represented by Adam are linked to the atoning work of Christ through his death and resurrection. By denying the former, “theistic evolution significantly undermines the doctrine of the atonement” (Grudem 2017b, 835). And

since Adam and Christ are linked in 1 Corinthians 15:21–22, it also “undermines the effectiveness of the resurrection to give new life to all who are saved by Christ” (Grudem 2017b, 836). Put simply, if the early chapters of Genesis are not literal history, if they are mythological or symbolic, then Jesus died for a mythological or symbolic problem, and He is offering us a mythological or symbolic hope. A prominent atheist reasoned this way:

The most devastating thing though that biology did to Christianity was the discovery of biological evolution. Now that we know that Adam and Eve never were real people the central myth of Christianity is destroyed. If there never was an Adam and Eve, there never was an original sin....If there was never an original sin, there is no need of salvation. If there is no need of salvation, there is no need of a savior. And I submit that puts Jesus, historical or otherwise, into the ranks of the unemployed. I think that evolution is absolutely the death knell of Christianity.²⁹

But there is another way the doctrine of atonement is undermined. If animals were killing each other and dying by disease and natural disasters for millions of years in a “very good” creation, then why did God command animal sacrifice as a covering for sin? When God made coats of skin to cover the nakedness of Adam and Eve because of sin, is it not reasonable to think this was the first blood sacrifice? Where did Abel get the idea to sacrifice from his flock, if not from God? Why is the death of an innocent animal connected to the forgiveness of sin, if animals were being killed by God’s decreative or permissive will for millions of years? How is it that the shed blood of the innocent Lamb of God takes away sin, if the shed blood of innocent lambs for hundreds of thousands of years before Adam was created were part of the “very good” creation? This notion of millions of years of animal death and extinction is totally incompatible with and contradictory to the doctrine of atonement and therefore to atoning sacrifice of Christ!

The hope of the gospel is also undermined if millions of years of natural evil happened. Scripture makes it clear that Jesus’ return will result in the restoration of all things as the prophets foretold (Acts 3:21; Isaiah 11:6–9, 65:25–26) and the removal of the curse (Revelation 22:3) as a result of the Lord’s redemptive work in all creation (Colossians 1:20). According to Scripture and orthodox Christian teaching for the last 2,000 years, the new heavens and earth will be like the original very good creation,

²⁸ See these excellent resources: <https://answersingenesis.org/store/product/one-race-one-blood-revised-updated/>, <https://answersingenesis.org/store/product/one-blood-kids/>, <https://answersingenesis.org/racism/are-there-really-different-races/>. Also, on AiG’s Answers.tv are a series of lectures from the 2019 Answers for Pastors conference. See particularly <https://www.answers.tv/race/videos/genesis-foundations-and-races-part-1>, <https://www.answers.tv/race/videos/genesis-foundations-and-races-part-2>, <https://www.answers.tv/race/videos/ape-men-adam-and-the-gospel>, <https://www.answers.tv/race/videos/grace-not-race-relations>.

²⁹ Frank Zindler (American atheist), in a debate at Willow Creek Community Church with Dr. William Lane Craig (Christian philosopher), “Atheism vs. Christianity” (video), Zondervan, 1996.

except better because sin will no longer be possible, as illustrated in fig. 6. But if millions of years really happened, then how can we trust what the Bible says about the future? All old-earth views necessarily imply (whether their proponents, like Grudem and Lennox, realize it or not) one of the unbiblical views represented by figs. 7 and 8.

If the history in the Bible is not true from the very first verse, then how can we trust the gospel rooted in those truths of Genesis without being inconsistent? If the claims of secular geologists and astrophysicists are the hermeneutical authority by which we must say

Genesis does not mean what it very clearly appears to teach about the Flood and the age of the earth, then how can we trust what the Bible says about biology and anthropology without being inconsistent? The majority of biologists and anthropologists say virgins do not have babies and dead men do not rise from the dead. So why do Grudem and other old-earthers not submit to these scientific authorities regarding those biblical teachings as they submit to the authority of the majority of geologists and astrophysicists about creation of the non-biological world, the Flood, and the age of the creation?

If the Bible’s statements relevant to these sciences are not trustworthy, then why would anyone trust what the Bible says about God and the gospel. The “Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy” and the “Chicago Statement on Biblical Hermeneutics,” produced by the International Council on Biblical Inerrancy, clearly state that scientific hypotheses cannot trump Scripture. But that is precisely what most leaders and scholars who signed those original documents have permitted in their thinking, as I discuss and demonstrate elsewhere (Mortenson 2020b).

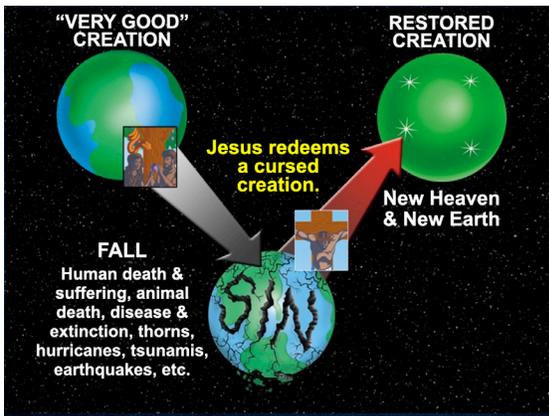


Fig. 6. Biblical view.

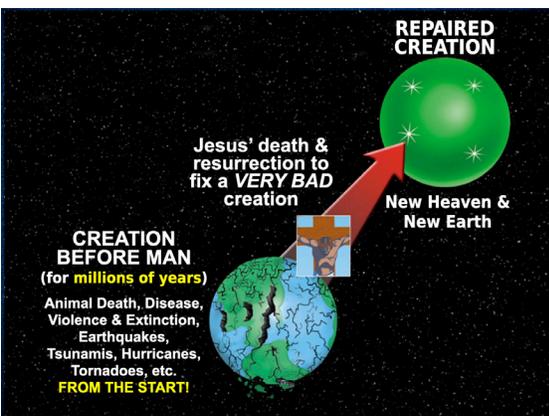


Fig. 7. Unbiblical view that accepts what the Bible teaches about the future new creation.

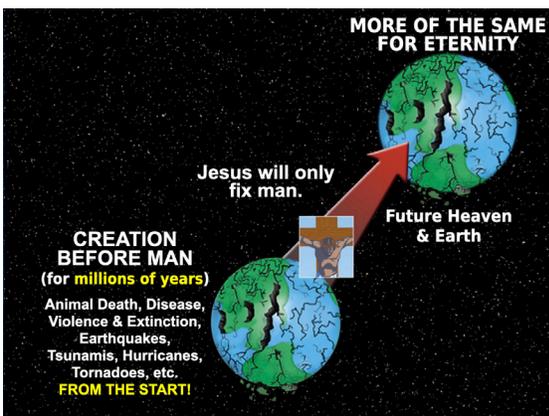


Fig. 8. Unbiblical view that rejects what the Bible teaches about the future new creation

Conclusion

The book *Theistic Evolution: A Scientific, Philosophical and Theological Critique* is a helpful book, as far as it goes. Grudem’s criticisms of theistic evolution are right on the mark. Theistic evolution contradicts many clear teachings of Genesis 1–3 and undermines many important biblical doctrines. But by regarding the old-earth views that reject biological and human evolution while still accepting geological and cosmological evolution, Grudem obviously agrees with Lennox (2011, 58) who asserts that “no major doctrine of Scripture is affected” by the acceptance of millions of years. The fact that *all* old-earth views contradict the clear teaching of Genesis 4–11 and undermine the character of God and the doctrines of the Fall and the atonement are completely missed by Grudem.

The very sad fact is that in 2016 (just one year before *Theistic Evolution* was published), Grudem (and C. John Collins, a co-author of *Theistic Evolution*) gave a hearty endorsement inside the cover of a book written by eight professing evangelical theistic evolutionists and three *non-Christian* evolutionists (in defiance of 2 Corinthians 6:14–18). That book, *The Grand Canyon Monument to an Ancient Earth* (Hill et al. 2016), was designed to convince Christians not only to believe in millions of years and to reject the global Flood of Noah but *also* to believe in evolution. I have written an in-depth (50,000-word) biblical, theological, philosophical, and historical critique of the relevant parts of this very deceptive and Bible-

subverting book, but I have left the geological critique to creation geologists to handle, hopefully in the near future (Mortenson 2020d; for a summary of the critique see Mortenson 2021).

This attractively illustrated Grand Canyon book, published by a leading evangelical publisher and promoted at the annual meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society, will have a very negative effect in seminaries by undermining the inerrancy and authority of Scripture, especially given the endorsements by Grudem and Collins, as well as by Ken Keathley (another prominent evangelical theologian) and Paul Copan (a well-known evangelical philosopher). The book is promoting a naturalistic evolutionary view of earth history (and by implication, the naturalistic evolutionary view of cosmic history), just as theistic evolutionists are doing regarding the history of life. I urge readers to carefully consider my critique and watch the AiG website for the future geological critique of this book.

Sociologist Steve Fuller is right on the mark in his foreword to *Theistic Evolution* when he says,

Today science enjoys an unprecedented authority because of both the number of people who believe in it and the number of subjects to which their belief applies. In this respect, our world resembles the one faced by the Protestant Reformers in that people today are often discouraged, because of the authority of science, from testing their faith in its claims by considering the evidence for themselves. Instead, they are meant to defer to the authority of academic experts, who function as a secular clergy. (Fuller 2017, 29)

But we need to think carefully. It is not *science* that is the authority in most people's minds today; it is *scientists* who are the authority. But it is not all scientists. In the case of the question of origins, the scientific *majority* (the consensus view) is the authority in most people's minds. Any scientist who goes against the majority view (whether about evolution, or climate change, or the Covid-19 pandemic, etc.) is labeled a "pseudo-scientist" and thereby deemed completely untrustworthy and even dangerous to society. But it is not just in the area of biological evolution where Christians are bowing the knee to the authority of the scientific majority. For 200 years, most Christians have bowed unquestioningly to the dogmatic claims of geologists and cosmologists about the age and history of the earth and the cosmos.

Grudem said the editors and authors of *Theistic Evolution* "are concerned that [theistic evolutionists] believe that the theory of evolution is so firmly established that they must accept it as true and must use it as their guiding framework for the interpretation of Genesis 1–3" (Grudem 2017a, 64). I fully agree with that concern. Theistic evolution is

a scientific myth, just like atheistic evolution is. And theistic evolution is an assault on the character of God, on the clear truth of the Word of God, and on the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

But Grudem and all other old-earth proponents in the church over the last 200 years have been doing exactly the same thing (Mortenson 2015b). They have *not* been doing so out of evil intentions. On the contrary, I believe most of them have been seeking to be faithful to Scripture and consistent with science. But in so doing, they have unquestioningly believed that the theories of millions of years of geological history and the big bang cosmology are scientifically proven. Therefore "deep time" (millions of years) has been their controlling hermeneutic for interpreting Genesis 1–11 regarding creation, Noah's Flood, and the age of the creation (Mortenson 2009b). That hermeneutic has caused them to overlook many details of the biblical text and made them resistant to examining the biblical and scientific arguments of the top young-earth creationists. They have boldly proclaimed their belief in the inerrancy and authority of Scripture but have not treated Genesis 1–11 as inerrant history regarding the days of creation, the Flood, and the age of the creation (Mortenson 2020b). The majority of them have held to an orthodox view of the Fall (that God cursed the whole creation) and the future redemptive work of Jesus Christ (when at His second coming He liberates the whole creation from that curse). But because of the unquestioning trust in the scientific majority, they have failed to see that their view of the Fall and the return of Christ is incompatible with their belief in millions of years of death, disease, and other natural evils.

That compromise on the truth of Genesis regarding the age of the creation has massively contributed to much of the church and all of the non-believing culture rejecting the historicity of Genesis, including the historicity of Adam. That undermining of faith in the historicity of Genesis 1–11 has in turn significantly contributed to the rejection of biblical morality and to the acceptance of abortion and the LGBTQ agenda. It is no surprise that during the last 200 years of Christian compromise with millions of years and then evolution, the Western world has increasingly become post-Christian and strongly resistant to the gospel. The church's widespread rejection of the truths of Genesis related to the age of the creation is not the only factor leading to the West's present total moral collapse and descent into political totalitarianism, but it is the most important factor because Genesis is foundational to all other biblical doctrines (Mortenson 2016b). Undermine the authority of Scripture in Genesis and you will undermine the authority of the rest of Scripture. As Paul said, a little leaven leavens the whole lump (1 Corinthians 5:6; Galatians 5:9).

Since the late 1980s when Grudem was my seminary professor and advisor, I have tried privately many times to get him to seriously examine the biblical and scientific evidence for young-earth creation. But he has repeatedly refused. In spite of his even stronger promotion of the acceptance of millions of years in his revised *Systematic Theology* (Grudem 2020), I hereby call on him to do that serious work (which he clearly has not done in his new revised book) and then to publicly abandon his old-earth view, for the sake of the truth and authority of God's holy Word, the truth of the gospel, the glorious character of our Creator and Savior, and for the revival of His church.

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