

# Systematic Theology Texts and the Age of the Earth: A Response to the Views of Erickson, Grudem, and Lewis and Demarest

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## Abstract

In the past few decades there has been a growing controversy in society and in the Church over evolution and the age of the earth. Some Christians accept the idea of billions of years, as taught by the scientific establishment, while others contend that Scripture requires that we believe that creation is only a few thousand years old. Systematic theology texts are influential in this debate as they are used in the training of future pastors, missionaries, and seminary and Christian college professors and are also read by many lay people, thus affecting the Church's witness. After briefly explaining the evidence in defense of the young-earth creationist view and why this subject is important, three deservedly respected theology textbooks will be examined regarding their teachings on the age of the earth. It will be argued that in spite of their many helpful remarks, these scholars have not adequately explained the biblical truth on this subject nor have they persuasively defended their old-earth positions and provided convincing rebuttals to the young-earth view. On this subject then, I conclude, these systematic theology texts are not helping but rather hindering the Church in her witness in our evolutionized world. (*This is a slightly revised version of a paper the author presented at the annual meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society in November 2006. Two of the authors of the critiqued texts [Grudem and Lewis] read the paper shortly thereafter but to date have given no specific responses to this critique of their views.*)

**Keywords:** Creation, Fall, Flood, death, character of God, age of the earth, millions of years, authority, assumptions

## Introduction

Over the past few decades there has been a growing and often very heated controversy in the public square and in the Church (not only in America but in many other countries as well) over evolution and the age of the earth. Over 20 states are considering changing (or have recently tried to change) their high school science standards to allow students to be exposed to scientific criticisms of evolution. This is due to the combined efforts of young-earth creationists and people in the Intelligent Design Movement.

Almost every day articles appear in leading newspapers, news magazines, and popular science magazines dealing with these issues. Many of those articles deal with the age of the earth. In fact, in one week in October 2006 several magazines produced by Lutherans, Presbyterians, Catholics, and Jews, all had cover stories on the question of origins.<sup>1</sup> And the documentary film *Expelled: No Intelligence Allowed* has generated much discussion since its release in 2008.

In 2008 Answers in Genesis (AiG) had five full-time and about ten part-time speakers who conducted teaching seminars in about 300 churches, schools,

and colleges, and the demand for such teaching keeps increasing. The Institute for Creation Research (ICR) and the Creation Research Society (CRS) also present many creation seminars each year, as do creation organizations in over 35 countries (MacKenzie 2000; Morris 1993b, pp.408–410).<sup>2,3</sup> Over one million people from all over the world visit the AiG web site every month, and AiG has received emails from 122 countries.<sup>4</sup> The web sites of ICR, CRS and many other creationist groups and individuals based in many countries are also being accessed by a growing number of readers.<sup>5</sup> AiG's world-class, 70,000 square-foot Creation Museum,<sup>6</sup> which opened 28 May 2007 and to-date has had over 900,000 visitors from all over the world, has been reported on by major TV, radio and newspaper sources in America, England, Germany, Italy, Australia and many other countries, and even in a communist Chinese newspaper. Such widespread internet and media interest reveals the importance many people place on this issue.

Many Christians today accept the idea of billions of years, as taught by the scientific establishment, while others contend that Scripture requires that we believe that creation is only a few thousand years old.

<sup>1</sup> Hollabaugh, 2006, with response articles following it; Laliberte, 2006; Parker, 2006; Rothenburg.

<sup>2</sup> The evolutionist Deborah MacKenzie noted 35 such organizations in her concerned article about creationism.

<sup>3</sup> Henry Morris listed the names and addresses of 33 foreign creationist organizations (Morris 1993). Contrary to most people's expectations, one of the largest creationist organizations is in Korea.

<sup>4</sup> As of 30 September 2009.

<sup>5</sup> See, for example, the English-Russian web site of geophysicist Sergei Golovin in Ukraine, which is having an impact across the Russian-speaking world: <http://www.scienceandpaleogeology.org/engln.html>.

<sup>6</sup> Get a virtual tour at <http://www.answersingenesis.org/museum/>.

Systematic theology texts significantly influence this debate as they are used in the training of pastors, missionaries, Christian college students and future Christian college and seminary professors. These texts are also read by many lay people. And through translation into a growing number of languages these texts are having a worldwide impact.

After briefly summarizing the creationist view and explaining further why this subject is vitally important, I will examine the old-earth views of three justifiably respected theology textbooks by Millard Erickson, Wayne Grudem, and Gordon Lewis and Bruce Demarest. It will be argued that in spite of their many helpful remarks on creation, these scholars have not explained the biblical truth on this subject adequately, defended their old-earth positions persuasively, or provided convincing rebuttals to the young-earth view. On the question of the age of the earth, I will conclude, these fine systematic theology texts are misleading the Church and weakening her witness in our evolutionized world.

### Creationist View Summarized and Defended

Young-earth creationists believe that the creation days of Genesis 1 were six literal (24-hour) days which occurred 6,000–12,000 years ago.<sup>7</sup> They believe that about 2,300–3,300 years before Christ, the surface of the earth was radically rearranged by Noah's Flood. All land animals and birds not in Noah's Ark (along with many sea creatures) perished; many of which were subsequently buried in the Flood sediments. Therefore, creationists believe that the global, catastrophic Flood was responsible for *most* (but not all) of the rock layers and fossils. In other words, some rock layers and possibly some fossils were deposited before the Flood, while other layers and fossils were produced in postdiluvian localized catastrophic sedimentation events or processes).

The biblical arguments in support of this view can be briefly summarized as follows.<sup>8</sup>

1. Genesis is history, not poetry,<sup>9</sup> parable, prophetic vision, or mythology. This is seen in the Hebrew verbs used in Genesis 1 (Boyd 2008),<sup>10</sup> the fact that Genesis 1–11 has the same characteristics of historical narrative as in Genesis 12–50, most of Exodus, much of Numbers, Joshua, 1 and 2 Kings, etc. (which are discernibly distinct from the characteristics of Hebrew poetry, parable, or prophetic vision), and the way the other biblical

authors and Jesus treat Genesis 1–11 (as literal history) (Kaiser 2001, pp. 53–83).<sup>11</sup>

2. The very dominant meaning of *yôm* in the Old Testament is a literal day, and the context of Genesis 1 confirms that meaning there (Hasel 1994; McCabe 2000; Steinmann 2002). *Yôm* is defined in its two literal senses in verse 5. It is repeatedly modified by a number (one day, second day, etc.) and with evening and morning, which elsewhere in the Old Testament always means a literal day. It is defined again literally in verse 14 in relation to the movement of the heavenly bodies.
3. God created the first animate and inanimate things supernaturally and instantly. They were fully formed and fully functioning. For example, plants, animals, and people were mature adults ready to reproduce naturally “after their kinds.” When God said “let there be . . .” He did not have to wait millions of years for things to come into existence. He spoke, and things happened (Psalm 33: 6–9).
4. The order of creation in Genesis 1 contradicts the order of events in the evolution story in at least 30 points. For example, the Bible says the earth was created before the sun and stars, which is just the opposite of the big bang theory's order. The Bible says that fruit trees were created before any sea creatures and that birds were created before dinosaurs (which were made on Day 6, since they are land animals), exactly the opposite of the evolution story. The Bible says the earth was covered completely with water before dry land appeared, and then it was covered again at the Flood. Evolution theory says the earth has never been covered with a global ocean, and dry land appeared before the first seas (Mortenson 2006).
5. Exodus 20:8–11 resists all attempts to add millions of years anywhere in Genesis 1 because it says that God created everything in six days. The day-age view is ruled out because “day” (*yôm*) is used in both parts of the commandment. The days of the Jewish work-week are the same as the days of Creation Week. God could have used several other words or phrases if He meant to say “work six days because I created in six long, indefinite periods” (Stambaugh 1991a). But He didn't. These verses also rule out the gap theory or any attempt to add millions of years before verse 1 because God says He created the heavens, the earth, the

<sup>7</sup> See point 10 below in the text for an explanation on the range of years here.

<sup>8</sup> Most of these points are well defended (including refutation of the most common objections to the young-earth view) in Chaffey and Lisle, (2007), Sarfati (2004) and Mortenson and Ury (2008). Other books defending most of these points before the systematic theology texts discussed in this essay were written will be footnoted in the discussion on each text.

<sup>9</sup> The fact that Genesis records Adam's poetic and romantic statement in Genesis 2:23 and the words of Jacob's poetic prophecy given to his sons does not negate the fact that Genesis is history. It accurately records what those men poetically said on those occasions.

<sup>10</sup> A fuller technical discussion is Boyd (2005). A layman's summary of Boyd's research in DeYoung (2005, pp. 157–172).

<sup>11</sup> Even most old-earth proponents recognize that Genesis 1–11 is history.

sea, and *all that is in them* during the six days. He made nothing before the six days. It should also be noted that the fourth commandment is one of only a few of the Ten Commandments that contains a reason for the commandment. If God created over millions of years, He could have not given a reason for Sabbath-keeping or He could have given a theological or redemptive reason as He did elsewhere.<sup>12</sup>

6. In Jesus' comments about Adam and Eve, Cain and Abel, Noah and the Flood, Sodom and Gomorrah, etc., He clearly took the events recorded in Genesis as literal history, as did all the New Testament writers. Several passages show that Jesus believed that man was created at the beginning of creation, not billions of years after the beginning (as all old-earth views imply), which confirms the young-earth creationist view (Mark 10:6 and 13:19 and Luke 11:50–51) (Mortenson 2004a, 2008a). His miracles also confirm the young-earth view. From His first miracle of turning water into wine (which revealed His glory as the Creator, *cf.* John 2:11 and 1:1–5) to all His other miracles, His spoken word brought an immediate, instantaneous result, just as God's word did in Creation Week.<sup>13</sup>
7. The Bible teaches that there was no animal or human death before the Fall of Adam and Eve. So the geological record of rock layers and fossils could not have been millions of years before the Fall. See my development of this point on page 178.
8. The nature of God as revealed in Scripture rules out the idea that He created over millions of years. See on page 179.
9. The global catastrophic Flood of Noah was responsible for producing most (but not all) of the geological record of rock layers and fossils (Barrick 2008). Careful exegesis has shown that this was not a local flood in Mesopotamia (Sarfati 2004, pp.241–286; Whitcomb and Morris pp.1–88). It is most unreasonable to believe in a global, year-long Flood that left no geological evidence (or that it only left evidence in the low lands of the Fertile Crescent, as some suppose) (Hallo and Simpson 1998, pp.32–33). The global evidence of sedimentary rock layers filled with land and marine fossils is exactly the kind of evidence

we would expect from Noah's Flood. If most of the rock record is the evidence of the Flood, then there really is no geological evidence for millions of years. But the secular geologists deny the global Flood of Noah's day because they deny that there is any geological evidence for such a flood. So, the fossiliferous rock record is either the evidence of Noah's Flood or the evidence of millions of years of geological change. It cannot be evidence of both. If we do not accept the geological establishment's view of Noah's Flood, then we cannot accept their view of the age of the earth. So, it is logically inconsistent to believe in both a global Noachian Flood and millions of years.

10. The genealogies of Genesis 5 and 11 give us the years from Adam to Abraham, who virtually all scholars agree lived about 2000BC. This sets the date of creation at approximately 6,000 years ago. Some young-earth creationists say the creation may be 10,000–12,000 years old, but the arguments for gaps of any length of time in the Genesis 5 and 11 genealogies are not compelling to this writer and many others. Freeman, Jones and Pierce present strong arguments for accepting these genealogies as tight chronologies with no gaps (Freeman, 1998, 2008; Jones, 2005; Pierce, 2006).
11. For eighteen centuries the almost universal belief of the Church was that the creation began 4,000–5,000 years before Christ (Mortenson 2004b, pp.40–45).<sup>14</sup> So, young-earth creationism is historic Christian orthodoxy. It was also Jewish orthodoxy at least up to the end of the first century of church history (Whiston 1987, pp.29–33). In light of this fact, it seems inconsistent with the truth-loving nature of God revealed in Scripture to think that for about 3,000 years God let faithful Jews and Christians (especially the writers of Scripture) believe that Genesis teaches a literal six-day creation about 6,000 years ago but that in the early nineteenth century He used godless men (who rejected the Bible as God's Word) to correct the Church's understanding of Genesis.<sup>15</sup>

Two of the points above require further explanation because they are so important and overlooked or resisted by the authors under consideration (as well as by nearly all other old-earth creationists).

<sup>12</sup> Exodus 31:13 and Deuteronomy 5:13–15.

<sup>13</sup> This is true even of the two-stage healing of the blind man (Mark 8:22–25). Each stage of the healing was instantaneous. Jesus apparently did this miracle in stages for a pedagogical purpose.

<sup>14</sup> Some followed the Genesis chronology of the Septuagint, rather than the Massoretic text, and so calculated creation at about 5400 B.C.

<sup>15</sup> An earlier reader of this paper objected that God used many "evil" nations to judge ancient Israel (for example, Babylon, Greece, Medo-Persia, Rome, etc.) and He has used non-Christians to make discoveries in medicine to cure disease or improve technologies. So why would it be surprising or unlikely that God would use non-Christians to understand the Bible? Well, in the first case, God was using godless nations to judge Israel for her wickedness, not to help her understand Scripture. Likewise, making advances in science is a categorically different activity than rightly dividing the inspired Word of truth, which teaches us that ungodly men twist the Scriptures but that God has given spiritually gifted and godly men to the church to understand Scripture aright.

### **Death before the Fall?**

Simply put, the evolutionary idea of millions of years is diametrically opposed to the Bible's teaching about death.

Evolution says that during the course of millions of years, death, bloodshed, suffering, and disease eventually led to man's existence. The late evolutionary astrophysicist Carl Sagan said, "The secrets of evolution are time and death: time for the slow accumulations of favorable mutations, and death to make room for new species" (Sagan 1978/1979). So when evolutionists talk about millions of years, they are not merely referring to a large number. They are imagining a long period of history in which certain events took place.

The fossils, which the evolutionists say represent millions of years of history, are a record not of life, but of death. And in many places around the world we see evidence of massive and violent carnage in fossil graveyards containing millions of former living creatures packed in high concentrations.

So, whether we believe in Neo-Darwinian evolution, or we believe that God supernaturally created different kinds of plants and animals occasionally during the course of millions of years, we are still adopting an evolutionary view of death if we accept millions of years.

But the biblical teaching on death is very clear and consistent from Genesis to Revelation. Genesis 1 says six times that God called the creation "good." When He finished creation on Day 6, He called everything "very good." Man, animals and birds were originally vegetarian according to Genesis 1:29–30. Plants are not living in the same sense as people, animals, and birds are, according to this and other Scripture passages. Plants are never called "living creatures" (Hebrew: *nephesh chayyah*), as people, land animals, birds and sea creatures are called (Genesis 1:20–21, 24 and 30; Genesis 2:7; Genesis 6:19–20 and Genesis 9:10–17) (Stambaugh 1991b; Todhunter 2006). So plant "death" is not the same as animal or human death (cf. Job 14:7–12, John 12:24).

Adam and Eve sinned, resulting in the judgment of

God on the whole creation. Instantly Adam and Eve died spiritually, evidenced by their hiding from God. But they also began to die physically and Paul clearly had physical death in mind in Romans 5:12 and 1 Corinthians 15:21–22 (as the context shows), when he says that death came into the human race through Adam's sin. The serpent was cursed, along with other animals, resulting in a physical transformation. It is reasonable to assume that the other cursed animals were also altered physically in some way (Genesis 3:14). Eve was changed physically to have increased pain in child-birth (Genesis 3:16). And the ground itself was cursed (Genesis 3:17–19), a fact which was still on the minds of people 1,000 years later when Noah was born (Genesis 5:29). The whole earth was cursed again at Noah's Flood (Genesis 8:22). The whole creation now groans in bondage to corruption (because of the Genesis 3 curse) waiting for the final act in the redemption of Christians—giving them immortal resurrected bodies (Romans 8:19–25) (Moo 1996, pp. 513–514; Murray 1993, pp. 301–302; Schreiner 1998, p. 435).<sup>16</sup> When that redemptive event happens, we will see the restoration and redemption of all things (Acts 3:21 and Colossians 1:20) to a state similar to the pre-Fall world. Then there will be no more carnivorous behavior (Isaiah 11:6–9) and no disease, suffering, or death (Revelation 21:3–5) because there will be no more curse (Revelation 22:3).<sup>17</sup> To accept millions of years of animal death before the creation and fall of man contradicts and destroys not only the Bible's teaching on death but also undermines its teaching on the full redemptive work of Christ.

If God cursed the earth with thorns *after* Adam sinned (as Genesis 3:18 says, "both thorns and thistles it *shall* grow for you"),<sup>18</sup> then why do we find fossil thorns in rocks that the evolutionists claim are about 350 million years old (Stewart and Rothwell 1993, pp. 172–176<sup>19</sup>)? If the millions of years are true, then God lied. If Genesis 3:18 is true, then the millions of years are a lie. Were arthritis and cancer in the "very good" world before man sinned? If the evolutionists' dating methods are correct, the answer must be "yes."

<sup>16</sup> This is the dominant interpretation of Romans 8:19–23 in the history of the Church, which is understandable since this is the only interpretation that really makes sense exegetically and theologically. See Moo (1996, pp. 513–514), Murray (1993, pp. 301–302) and Schreiner (1998, p. 435).

<sup>17</sup> While I am inclined to think that Isaiah 11:6–9 refers to the literal 1,000-year millennium right before the eternal state begins, I am not certain on that point. But, even if that is wrong, clearly the passage is speaking of a future state of affairs that is very different from the present, for it will be a time when righteousness will fill the earth as the water covers the seas. In that righteous world both man and the animals will be significantly changed. Surely in the eternal perfect state this change in the animals will continue. The point is that carnivorous behavior is part of the fallen world, not the period before the Fall or after the return of Christ, when righteousness will indeed fill the earth.

<sup>18</sup> Some might object that God cursed the Garden of Eden with thorns. But this objection fails for three reasons. First, why would God curse the Garden with thorns and tell Adam about it, when Adam was going to be expelled from the Garden? Second, the ground that God cursed with thorns was the same ground outside the Garden that Adam would sweat over to provide food for himself and his family. Third, the Hebrew words for "curse" and "ground" in Genesis 3:17 are the same as those used in Genesis 5:29, which speaks of the cursed ground in Noah's day.

<sup>19</sup> It shows fossilized thorny plants (*Psilophyton crenulatum*) found in the Devonian formation, which the evolutionists date at 345–395 million years BP (before present).

Many kinds of disease have been found in the fossil record, including arthritis, abscesses, and tumors in dinosaur bones dated to be 110 million years old. A researcher of these bones tells us that “diseases look the same through time ... it makes no difference whether this is now or a hundred million years ago” (Anonymous 1998). There is also considerable evidence of rickets, syphilis, dental disease, etc., in human fossil bones that 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.

Evolutionists believe that over the course of a half billion years there were five major extinction events/periods,<sup>20</sup> when 65–90% of all species living at those particular times went extinct. They also claim many lesser extinction events/periods. If this was the way the creation was for millions of years, then what impact on the creation did the Fall have? None. Contrary to what the Bible says, the Fall would have only caused spiritual death in man. In fact, we can go further and say that if the millions of years of death and extinction really did occur, then that “very good” creation was considerably *worse* than the world we now inhabit where habitats are polluted or destroyed and creatures are brought to extinction due to human sin. We have never seen in human history<sup>21</sup> the kind of mass-kill, extinction events that the evolutionary geologists say occurred before man came into existence. So, if the millions of years really happened, then the Fall actually improved the world from what it was in the “very good” pre-Fall creation. In this case, the curse at the Fall would actually be a blessing! So, if the Bible’s teaching on death, the curse and the final redemptive work of Christ is true, then the millions-of-years idea must be a grand myth, really a lie. Conversely, if the millions of years really happened, then the Bible’s teaching on these subjects must be utterly false, which is devastating for the gospel.

### **The nature of God**

Closely related to this issue of death is the incompatibility of the idea of millions of years with the character of God, as revealed in Scripture.<sup>22</sup>

The events of creation in Genesis 1 were clearly miraculous. God spoke and things immediately came into existence, as both Genesis 1 and Psalm 33:6–9 state. The emphatic repetition of “and it was so” and “God saw that it was good” and “there was evening and there was morning, the Xth day” strongly indicate this in Genesis 1. Also, it is difficult to imagine how God could say “let there be light” and then have to wait millions of years for light to appear. Similarly, Adam surely did not sleep for days, weeks, months, years or millions of years while God made Eve. These facts support the conclusion that all the other divine acts in Genesis 1 were essentially instantaneous or occurred in a miraculously short period of time, on the respective days they occurred. Conversely, there is nothing in the text that indicates that thousands or millions of years would have been required for God to accomplish His objective in each act of creation.

It is also clear in Genesis 1 that God supernaturally created the first plants, sea creatures, birds, land animals and the first human couple because the description of those events is stated in a way that contrasts with the description of how other such creatures would come into existence after the original ones—that is, by the natural growth of seeds in the fruit of the first plants or by the sexual reproduction of the first animal and human pairs. Also, the nature of all God’s later miracles in the Bible and the miracles of Jesus in the Gospels were instantaneous.

If the gap theory is true, then what kind of God is it who would create the earth and all forms of life, except man, and let them live and die for millions of years and then destroy them all (perhaps in a flood associated with Satan’s fall) before He recreated the world with creatures very similar to the ones He had already destroyed?

<sup>20</sup> The names and approximate evolutionary dates of the supposed five major extinction events are these: Late Ordovician (440 Million Years Ago, 100+ families of marine invertebrates perished, retrieved from, <http://park.org/Canada/Museum/extinction/ordmass.html>, on 11 August 2009); Late Devonian (365 MYA, 70% of marine invertebrates perished along with other marine life, retrieved from, <http://park.org/Canada/Museum/extinction/devmass.html>, on 11 August 2009); Permian-Triassic (245MYA, greatest mass extinction event, 90–95% of marine species extinct), Late Triassic (210MYA, at least 50% of species extinct, retrieved from, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Triassic%E2%80%93Jurassic\\_extinction\\_event](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Triassic%E2%80%93Jurassic_extinction_event), on 11 August 2009), Cretaceous-Tertiary (65MYA, second largest mass extinction, 85% of all species, including all dinosaurs, retrieved from, <http://park.org/Canada/Museum/extinction/cretmass.html> on 11 August 2009). The Canadian web site bases its information on Stanley(1987) who is a leading evolutionist.

<sup>21</sup> That is, if we rule out Noah’s Flood as a global Flood—which we logically must do, if we accept millions of years. The reason is this. The same scientific establishment that dogmatically states that the geological record reflects millions of years of history also insists that there is no geological evidence of a global Flood. To accept what the secular geologists say about the first point but to reject what they say about the second point is inconsistent. But to believe in a global Flood that occurred about 4,500 years ago and left no last erosional and sedimentary geological evidence while believing that the geological effects of lesser floods occurring millions of years ago survived the ravages of time and Noah’s Flood until our day is most unreasonable. So we must decide. Either we believe God’s Word about a global Flood or we believe in millions of years. We cannot consistently or logically believe in both.

<sup>22</sup> I am indebted to David Fouts, whose lecture a few years ago first drew my attention to many of the points presented here. At the time he was an Old Testament professor at Bryan College in Tennessee.

If the day-age view or framework hypothesis or any other old-earth view is true, then what kind of God is it who would create the earth instantly and then leave it covered with water for millions of years and then create dry land and plants and let them produce for millions of years before He made the sun? And what kind of God would make the sun, moon and stars to enable man to measure time, but then wait billions of years before He made man to measure the time? Or if we reject the order of events in Genesis 1 and say that the evolutionary order of appearance of the different creatures and the time-scale are correct, we have other problems. What kind of God would create the earth 4.5 billion years ago and let it exist for one billion years before He made the first microscopic creatures (protozoans)<sup>23</sup> and then waited another 2.875 billion years before He made the first metazoans<sup>24</sup> and then waited another 625 million years before He made Adam, who was the ultimate goal of His creation and was made to rule over all the animals, most of whom lived and died before Adam was created?<sup>25</sup> This is a bizarre, wasteful God, and nothing like the wise and omnipotent Creator revealed in Scripture. And if God really created in the order and over the long time-scales that evolutionists claim, does this not make God a deceiver or a liar when He inspired Moses to write the Genesis 1 account of the order of His creative acts, which is so contradictory to the evolutionary order of events of history?

Furthermore, as we noted before, at the end of Creation Week God called everything that He had made “very good.” But could the God of Scripture really describe as “very good” a fossil graveyard of thousands of feet of sedimentary rocks covering the whole earth and containing billions of fossils of former living things? Could He really call cancer “very good”? Could He call thorns and thistles “very good,” when in Genesis 3 He says they are the result of His curse? If God called all this death “very good” and told Adam that thorns were a consequence of his sin when in fact they existed long before he was created, then again God lied. But the biblical God is the God of truth. It is Satan who is a liar and a deceiver.

Furthermore, if God created through a process (either progressive creation or theistic evolution) that involved millions of years of death, then He is very different from the God revealed in the post-Fall world. The God of the post-Fall world commanded His people (the Israelites) to take care of their animals and give them a day of rest (Exodus 20:10 and 23:12). The post-Fall God commanded them to help lost or trapped animals (Exodus 23:4–5). That God told them not to be cruel to their animals (such as muzzling an ox while it was threshing, Deuteronomy 25:4). The post-Fall God says that “a righteous man has regard for the life of his beast, but the compassion of the wicked is cruel” (Proverbs 12:10). That God says that He cares for the creatures of the earth in His fallen, cursed creation (Psalm 104:14–16 and 27–28, Psalm 145:14–16, Psalm 147:9, Jonah 4:11, Matthew 6:26, and Luke 12:24).<sup>26</sup>

If millions of years of death and extinction and disease really occurred, then God is like the wicked man of Proverbs 12:10 and He was doing exactly the opposite of what He told the Jews to do. The acceptance of millions of years is an assault on the character of Almighty God.

If God created over those millions of years, then He clearly was not intelligent enough and powerful enough to create the world right in the first place. Either He lacked the sovereign power to control His creation so that it did not destroy most of His previous work or He intentionally created obstacles to hinder Himself from accomplishing His intention of making a very good world. And then all along the way He kept making creatures very similar to the creatures that He had just destroyed by intention or by incompetence and impotence. What a monstrous God this would be! He would be less competent than the most incompetent engineer or construction worker. And He would be grossly unjust and unrighteous compared to the God of Isaiah who said that when the knowledge of Him fills the earth, animals will not hurt or kill each other or people (Isaiah 11:6–9 and 65:25).<sup>27</sup> Such a cruel, bumbling, and weak God could not be trusted and would not be worthy of our worship.

<sup>23</sup> Protozoans are microscopic animals made up of a single cell or a group of more or less identical cells and living in water or as parasites, including ciliates, flagellates, rhizopods or sporozoans.

<sup>24</sup> Metazoans are all animals whose bodies, originating from a single cell, are composed of many differentiated cells arranged into definite organs.

<sup>25</sup> For an explanation of this evolutionist view of history, see Miller and Levine (2010, p. 543), where the earth’s 4.5-billion-year history is represented as a 24-hour clock.

<sup>26</sup> It might be objected that animals live and die today, and it is not equated with cruelty. So, why could not that be the case in the pre-Fall world? I would reply that animal death today is not as God intended originally because it is an aspect of God’s just judgment of His creation (which is now in bondage to corruption: Romans 8:19–23) because of the rebellion of His highest creation, man. But in light of God’s prophecies about the future state when animals will not be carnivores or dangerous to man, it is clear that the present state of affairs is not as God wants it to remain. Also, the fossil record does not speak of animals dying of old age. It speaks of massive, catastrophic death, even burial alive, of billions of creatures (which is not happening even in today’s post-Fall creation). And the problem is having all this carnage in a creation that was not cursed but called “very good.”

<sup>27</sup> It might be objected that God brought about the death and extinction of animals during the Flood, which is in the post-Fall period when God shows care for the animals. So, why could not that be the case in the pre-Fall period? The reason is that the death and extinction during the Flood was part of God’s curse on the earth at the Flood (Genesis 8:21). But God never cursed His creation in the “very good” pre-Fall Creation Week.

And if these millions of years of death really occurred, then God's curse on creation really did nothing to the nonhuman creation, and His promises about the future cannot be trusted. In fact, in this case none of His Word can be trusted.

This point has not escaped the notice of non-Christians. The evolutionist philosopher, David Hull, is one of many who could be cited. He remarks on the implications of Darwinian evolution for the nature of God, but his comments equally apply to all old-earth views, even if we reject Darwinism as the explanation for the origin of the various forms of life. Hull reasons:

The problem that biological evolution poses for natural theologians is the sort of God that a Darwinian version of evolution implies. ... The evolutionary process is rife with happenstance, contingency, incredible waste, death, pain and horror. ... Whatever the God implied by evolutionary theory and the data of natural history may be like, he is not the Protestant God of waste not, want not. He is also not a loving God who cares about his productions. He is not even the awful God portrayed in the book of Job. The God of the Galápagos is careless, wasteful, indifferent, almost diabolical. He is certainly not the sort of God to whom anyone would be inclined to pray (Hull 1991, pp. 485–486).

In his opposition to the old-earth geological theories developing in the early nineteenth century, the Anglican minister, George Bugg, reasoned this way:

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, pp. 318–319).<sup>28</sup>

Only young-earth creationism gives us a view that is consistent with the glory, wisdom, power, holiness, truthfulness and omniscient intelligence of the God revealed through the pages of Scriptures. As the Bible presents them, the doctrines of death and the nature of God are utterly opposed to the millions-of-years view. If we believe the Bible on these points, then we must completely reject the old-earth view. They cannot both be true.<sup>29</sup>

Having presented the young-earth creationist view we can now turn to an evaluation of three of the leading systematic theology textbooks regarding their views of the age of the earth.

### Views of Millard Erickson

#### *Christian theology,*

#### **Grand Rapids: Baker, 1983 and 1998<sup>30</sup>**

Erickson's text is justly valued for helpful explanations of many points of Christian doctrine.

#### **The doctrine of Creation**

In his sections on creation and on the origin of man, he provides good arguments for affirming the theologically foundational importance of the doctrine of creation (Erickson 1983, pp. 366–367, 385–386 and 487–493). He affirms that the Bible teaches why, what, and how God created (Erickson 1983, p. 379). He rejects the gap theory, ideal time theory,<sup>31</sup> and pictorial day (or framework) theory of Genesis 1.<sup>32</sup> He expounds the doctrine of *ex nihilo* creation, namely that much of what God created during Creation Week (including the original earth and heavens) was created without using preexisting materials. And he affirms that everything (even things made from preexisting material, such as Adam from dust and Eve from Adam's rib) was created by His Word. He notes that creation is the work of the Triune God; all three members of the Godhead were involved and they created for God's glory (Erickson 1983, pp. 367–373). He also affirms the historicity of Adam, citing New Testament evidence (Erickson 1983, pp. 476–477). We can be thankful for these affirmations and defenses of biblical truth. However, there are also many weaknesses in these sections of his text.

<sup>28</sup> Bugg was one of many orthodox clergy and scientists who opposed the old-earth geological theories and the various Christian compromises at that time. See Mortenson (2004b) for a full discussion.

<sup>29</sup> For a historical analysis of Luther's, Calvin's, Wesley's and the nineteenth century Scriptural geologists' views on this subject in comparison to the views of old-earth proponents in the early nineteenth century, see Ury (2008, pp. 399–424). His fuller discussion is Ury (2001). Ury shows that the implied character of God arising from old-earth views is historically unorthodox.

<sup>30</sup> I refer to the pagination of the 1985 printing of the 1983 first edition. The 1998 second (revised) edition has no substantive changes to the text in the sections where Erickson deals with creation and the age of the earth and related subjects.

<sup>31</sup> This is actually a particularly unique and odd young-earth view of a British nineteenth century biologist, Phillip Gosse, who sought to explain the rock layers and fossils (in an attempt to counteract the millions of years idea) by saying that God created them during Creation Week to give the appearance of age. But Erickson gives the wrong date for Gosse's book in both his 1983 and 1998 editions. Gosse published his book in 1857, not 1957, as Erickson says.

<sup>32</sup> But he offers no arguments. He only refers his readers in a footnote (p. 381) to an essay by Bradley and Olsen presented at the Summit on Biblical Hermeneutics in Chicago in 1982.

Erickson says that from the fact that God created by His Word, we can conclude that things “immediately come to pass exactly as He has willed” (Erickson 1983, p.370). But then he contradicts this by advocating progressive creation which posits many supernatural acts of creation of plants and animals scattered over millions of years. But what is the divine purpose for creating, say, the first plants supernaturally and instantly and then waiting for millions of years to create animals and the insects that pollinate plants? And how did the plants survive the millions of years of darkness (the figurative “evening” of the fourth figurative “day”)? What is the point of instantly creating sea creatures and birds on “day” 5 and then waiting millions of years to create any land animals and then waiting more millions of years to create man, whom He created to rule over the sea creatures, birds, and land animals? This bizarre way of creating is not consistent with the intelligence and wisdom of God revealed in Scripture.

Erickson uses New Testament evidence to affirm the historicity of Adam and many New Testament verses to defend the doctrine of *ex nihilo* creation (Erickson 1983, pp.368–369). However, although he cites Matthew 19:4, Mark 10:6 and Mark 13:19 in support of the creation having a beginning, he does not discuss (and has apparently overlooked) what these verses reveal about Jesus’ belief in recent creation, namely that mankind is as old as the rest of creation.

Erickson teaches that the fourth commandment in Exodus 20:8–11 indicates that the creation days were in a chronological sequence (Erickson 1983, p.382). But, actually, that commandment is not stressing the sequence of the days but rather their duration.

### The age of the earth

In his section on the age of the earth, Erickson holds to an old-earth, day-age, progressive creationist view because it “fits well the biblical data” (Erickson 1983, p.384). But he presents no biblical support for

this statement. When he compares the gap theory, pictorial-day (framework) theory, and the day-age theory to “Flood geology,” he does not give an accurate description of the young-earth view. But Flood geology is only one part of the young-earth view, which deals with all of Genesis 1–11, not just chapter 1 or 6–8. He asserts that

considerable amounts of time are available for microevolution to have occurred since the word יוֹם (*yôm*), which is translated ‘day,’ may also be much more freely rendered.

He cites in support of that claim a 1948 book on progressive creation by Edward Carnell (Erickson 1983, p.482). But Erickson has no interaction with, or acknowledgement of, scholarly young-earth arguments for literal days. He also says that in the day-age view “the geological and fossil records correspond to the order of [God’s] creative acts” (Erickson 1983, p.381). But as explained and documented earlier, that is incorrect (Mortenson 2006). Erickson also makes the exegetically unsupported and erroneous assertion that the sun, moon, and stars were created on the first day and only appeared on day four (Erickson 1983, p.382).<sup>33</sup> Furthermore, he distorts the young-earth view by saying that creationists believe the created kinds of Genesis 1 were the same as modern biological species (Erickson 1983, pp.383, 480).<sup>34</sup>

Erickson rejects atheistic evolution (because of an absence of transitional fossils) (Erickson 1983, p.384).<sup>35</sup> He then contradicts himself when elsewhere he rejects *theistic* evolution as inconsistent with Scripture, but nonetheless says that theistic evolution “handles quite well the scientific data” (Erickson 1983, p.383). The addition of God to atheistic evolution cannot make it fit the scientific data any better than it did without God.

It is clear that the real reason for his old-earth view is the supposed evidence from science. But he is at least twenty years out-of-date in his reading of creationist literature.<sup>36</sup> Judging from his text and

<sup>33</sup> For a refutation of this idea, see Ham (2007).

<sup>34</sup> One of many explanations of the creationist view is found in Parker (2006, pp.95–148).

<sup>35</sup> However, here Erickson reveals his serious lack of understanding the scientific problems with evolution, when he says that the fossil record indicates gaps only “at several points.” In fact, there are thousands upon thousands of gaps. See Gish (1995). Also, Erickson does not have an adequate understanding of young-earth creationist views about genetic variation within the original created kinds (sometimes called “micro-evolution,” though that term is problematic and no longer used by most leading creationists). See Purdom and Hodge (2008), and Hodge (2009).

<sup>36</sup> The following young-earth creationist books were available before Erickson published his first edition in 1983, but he does not refer to any of them, Morris (1974); Morris and Parker (1982); Whitcomb (1972); Whitcomb (1973); Whitcomb and Morris (1961). His ignoring of Henry Morris’s work is all the more troubling in light of the fact that Dr. Morris was recognized as the leading creation science author, and he was an attendee at the second summit of the International Council on Biblical Inerrancy in 1982, where Morris presented a paper that responded to the essay given by Walter Bradley and Roger Olsen (which defends the day-age view and which Erickson cites on p.381). Erickson’s second (revised and updated) edition appeared in 1998. It had no substantive changes to his text with reference to creation and the age of the earth or the age of mankind. All the previous books were still available in 1998, plus the following, Austin (1994); Morris and Morris (1983) (refuting Davis Young’s geological objections to the young-earth view); Morris (1985) (revised on science matters); Morris and Parker (1987); Morris and Morris (1989); Morris (1994); Morris and Morris (1996) (which contains three volumes, vol. 1 deals with biblical arguments, vol. 2 with scientific arguments, and vol. 3 with the social implications of evolution); Whitcomb (1986); Whitcomb (1988). Also, the video of Dr. Steve Austin’s geological research on Mount St. Helens after its eruption in 1980, which provided many analogies of how the Flood could rapidly produce geological phenomena, traditionally attributed to the work of millions of years of gradual change (Austin n.d.).



notes, he consulted only four very old creationist texts: one from 1857 (his citation mistakenly has “1957”), one from 1923 (which apparently was Erickson’s only source of information about Flood geology), and two from 1970–1971 (Gosse 1857; Price 1923; Lammerts 1970, 1971).<sup>37</sup> He constantly refers to scientific or empirical “data” (Erickson 1983, pp. 378, 384, 477, 480, 481, 482, 484, 487) that supposedly make the young-earth view improbable, if not impossible. But he gives no specific examples. He says that the radiometric dating methods have led to a scientific consensus that the earth is billions of years old (Erickson 1983, p. 380). But truth is not determined by majority vote, and he shows no understanding of the role of philosophical assumptions used in those methods to interpret that data to arrive at the idea of millions of years (Morris 1984, pp. 51–67; Mortenson 2004c; Mortenson 2008b, pp. 79–104). Furthermore, he apparently arrived at his old-earth conclusion without carefully considering the current young-earth scientific arguments against those dating method assumptions and for a young earth, which were available at the time of both editions of his text.<sup>37</sup>

Instead he relies (in both 1983 and 1998) on the 1954 book *The Christian View of Science and Scripture* by Bernard Ramm (1916–1992), Erickson’s first theology professor, to whom Erickson dedicates his theology text. Since then, Ramm moved into Barthian Neo-orthodoxy (as Erickson himself documented the year before his 1998 revised theology text) (Erickson 1997, pp. 33–38), and Ramm’s old-earth views were no doubt a contributing cause of that theological slide. From a reading of Erickson’s text, one would not know that there has been a growing young-earth creationist movement within orthodox, evangelical Christianity since 1961, when the monumental book *The Genesis Flood* was published by Whitcomb and Morris. They gave 230 pages of geological arguments<sup>38</sup> and refuted many of Ramm’s ideas about creation and the Flood. Erickson does not even mention that key book.

### The Flood

The only book Erickson footnotes in defense of Flood geology is the 1923 book by Adventist George McCready Price. And in his 1998 revised text, Erickson demonstrates no awareness of John Morris’s *The Young Earth* (1994), a fully documented book on the geological evidence, written by an evangelical Ph.D. geologist, for lay people and other non-geologists.

Erickson quickly dismisses Flood geology because it “involves too great a strain upon the geological evidence.” To support this statement, he gives a footnote reference to a mere five pages in Ramm’s 1954 book (Erickson 1983, p. 382). But Ramm was not a geologist, nor even a scientist of any kind.<sup>39</sup> He also apparently did not discern the philosophical assumptions embedded in the geological arguments for millions of years, even though he was trained in philosophy of science. Ramm simply accepted the claims of the geological establishment as fact, and Erickson has followed suit.

Erickson does not affirm or deny belief in the global Flood, but since he rejects Flood geology, he possibly holds to the local flood view, which is advocated by most progressive creationists. But that view does not stand up to careful scrutiny with an open Bible (Barrick 2008, pp. 1–88; Sarfati 2004, pp. 241–286; Whitcomb and Morris 1961, pp. 1–88). If he does believe in a global Flood, he does not see that such a belief is incompatible with his acceptance of millions of years.

### The origin of man

In Erickson’s discussion on the origin of man, he gives a brief but somewhat inaccurate summary of the young-earth creationist view (Erickson 1983, pp. 479–480). Unfortunately, he does not even appear to have read carefully the two older young-earth books (from 1970–1971) that he cites in a footnote, for as he did in his section on creation he misrepresents their views once again by implying that creationists believe that the original created kinds are the same as modern species with no biological development since the original creation.<sup>40</sup> But these and all other informed

<sup>37</sup> Besides sources available to Erickson, current readers of Erickson could also profitably consult Woodmorappe (1999) and DeYoung (2005). The latter documents in laymen’s language the results of an eight-year creationist research project that shows that all the assumptions in the radiometric dating methods are wrong and that radioactive decay in the rocks actually confirms that the earth is only thousands of years old.

<sup>38</sup> The book contains a forward by John C. McCampbell, then professor and head of the geology department at the University of Southwestern Louisiana, who said that although he found the arguments difficult to accept as a geologist, he commended Morris and Whitcomb for their accurate and up-to-date discussion of the geological data and their challenging and thought-provoking reinterpretation of that data. He recommended the book even to skeptics who reject the Bible.

While leading Ph.D. young-earth geologists today would not agree with every reinterpretation of the geological evidence suggested in *The Genesis Flood*, they would contend that most of the arguments are still valid. Most of these geologists would also say that the book had a significant influence in their own journey from old-earth uniformitarian geology to young-earth creationism. For up-to-date, in-depth geological arguments see Snelling (2009a). Snelling has a Ph.D. in geology from the University of Sydney in Australia, has done geological research on several continents, and is Director of Research for Answers in Genesis.

<sup>39</sup> Ramm went to the University of Washington intending to major in chemistry but quickly changed to speech in preparation for ministry. See Numbers (1993, p. 185) and Ramm’s own statement in an interview with the American Scientific Affiliation (a Christian group that favors theistic evolution) (Hearn and Ramm 1979).

<sup>40</sup> On p. 480 he footnotes two books edited by Lammerts, a creationist biologist (Lammerts 1970, 1971). But without presenting any arguments, Erickson dismissed the 150 pages of scientific evidence for a recent creation (presented by scientists knowledgeable in geology and related fields) in Lammerts’s 1970 book and the 80 pages discussing the age of the earth in his 1971 book.

young-earth creationists believe that the created kinds were a much larger biological category than “species” and that much genetic variation and even rapid speciation has occurred within the created kinds since the beginning (for example, Lightner 2008).

Regarding the dating of man and the relationship of Genesis 4 to the Neolithic period of evolutionary theory, Erickson accepts the evolutionist timescales (Erickson 1983, pp.484–487). He considers five different Christian views on the subject and says they all have serious hermeneutical problems. But he does not present the young-earth view as one of the options even though a thorough creationist analysis of the claims about human evolution and the nature and dating of ancient man was available before his first edition (Bowden 1981; Wilder-Smith 1975).<sup>41</sup>

### **Sin and death**

In his section on the results of sin, (Erickson 1983, pp.601–619). Erickson correctly teaches that the fall of man had a cosmic impact on the whole creation. Unfortunately, this truth’s implications for the age of the earth seem to have escaped his notice. He discusses the results of sin’s impact on man, namely physical, spiritual, and eternal death. But he does not explain the impact of sin on the rest of creation, and he says nothing about whether there was animal death before the Fall or not.

Elsewhere in one short paragraph he does briefly refer to Romans 8:18–25 in his discussions of “the social dimension of sin” (Erickson 1983, p.655). He rightly observes that toilsome work, thorns and thistles, painful childbirth, and human disease are part of the curse of Genesis 3 (Erickson 1983, pp.655, 837–838). In his thinking, Romans 8 shows the “cosmic character of sin” and that “the sin of mankind has distorted the entire creation” and that the creation “is waiting for the time when it will be set free from its bondage to decay” (Erickson 1983, p.655).

In the section “the glorification of the believer’s body” he says the liberation of believers from their bondage to toil, sickness, and death will happen “suddenly, dramatically” (not as a result of a process or growth), when God instantly makes a new heavens and new earth. So it will be, he says, with respect to the bondage to corruption that the whole creation is now suffering: “Part of the glorification of man will be the provision of a perfect environment in which to

dwell” (Erickson 1983, pp.1001–1002). Neither the nature of that perfect environment nor the change to the animals in the new creation, as we might expect from a consideration of Isaiah 11:6–9 and 65:25, is discussed, however.

In his chapter (“section 19”) on the problem of evil, he identifies two general types of evil. One is moral evil such as war, crime, slavery, injustice, etc., which are the result of the choices and actions of people. The second is natural evil, which he describes as “the destructive forces of nature: hurricanes, earthquakes, tornadoes, volcanic eruptions and the like” (Erickson 1983, p.412). Moral evils are relatively easy to explain; natural evils cannot be dismissed from our consideration, because “they simply seem to be there in the creation which God has made” (Erickson 1983, p.412). After discussing and rejecting various attempts to solve the problem of apparent contradiction between the reality of God (especially His goodness and omnipotence) and the reality of natural evil,<sup>42</sup> he affirms again that when Adam sinned, “a radical change took place in the universe.” Human death, pain in childbirth, male domination in the home, hard labor, and thorns “are merely a sample of the actual effects upon the creation.” Citing Romans 8, he again says “the whole creation has been affected” by sin, and “a whole host of natural evils may also have resulted.” So he concludes,

We live in the world which God created, but it is not quite as it was when God finished it; it is now a fallen and broken world. And part of the evils which we now experience are [*sic*] a result of the curse of God upon creation (Erickson 1983, p.428).

But then in a final paragraph in this section, before turning to a discussion of moral evil, Erickson discusses the problem of millions of years of natural evil before Adam sinned. Erickson wisely rejects as “artificial” the suggestion by some that “evils were put there [in the rocks of the earth] anticipatively by God in light of the sin that He knew man was to commit.”<sup>43</sup> But Erickson’s solution is equally unacceptable. He states,

While a full-length exploration of this issue goes beyond the scope of this volume, it seems best to think of those conditions as being present from the beginning, but neutral in character. The evil effects of those phenomena may then have resulted from the sinfulness of man. For example, earth layers may

<sup>41</sup> A recent short overview of the creationist view of the origin of man can be found in Junker (2000). Cuozzo (1998) provides a dentist’s careful analysis of the evidence for Neanderthal man. The most recent and thorough work is Lubenow (2004). For an enlightening demonstration of the unreliability of radiometric dating methods, see Lubenow’s (1992, pp.247–266) appendix to the first edition of his book (which was available to Erickson for his 1998 edition), regarding the dating of some human fossils. A summary version is also available in Lubenow (1995).

<sup>42</sup> These attempts are (1) dualism (which abandons the idea of God’s omnipotence, making evil and God equal ultimate principles in the universe), (2) Calvinistic determinism (which redefines the traditional idea of God’s goodness and says that God is the cause of all things, good and evil), and (3) the rejection of the reality of evil (as does the cult of Christian Science)—evil is simply an illusion of the mind.

<sup>43</sup> This is precisely the theodicy that William Dembski has proposed to harmonize the Bible’s teaching about the cosmic impact of the Fall with the idea of millions of years of natural evil, animal death, etc. I argue that this proposal is fatally flawed in Mortenson (2009).

naturally shift (earthquakes). When man unwisely, perhaps as a result of greed, builds upon geological faults, the shifting of the earth's layers becomes an evil (Erickson 1983, p. 428).

Erickson's view is unacceptable because God declared the pre-Fall creation to be "very good," not "neutral in character." And the natural evils are not just bad for the people who live on the fault lines or at the base of volcanoes or along sea coasts where hurricanes hit. Furthermore, the natural evils are bad for the animals too. As noted before, the rock layers contain a fossil record of death, disease, mass extinctions, and even thorns and thistles. If those rocks are millions of years old, then natural evil is not the result of sin at all and the curse did not bring corruption into the whole creation, as Erickson correctly teaches. Erickson's unacceptable and inconsistent answer to the problem of natural evil is the result of his uncritical acceptance of millions of years and his apparent lack of familiarity with creationist literature.

In his chapter on God's continuing work of providence, Erickson notes that God preserves His creation as a whole, citing Nehemiah 9:6, Colossians 1:17, and Hebrews 1:3 (Erickson 1983, p.388). He rightly observes that Psalm 104 speaks of God providing for the beasts of the earth (Erickson 1983, pp.388–394).<sup>44</sup> Elsewhere he reasons that "God cannot be cruel, for cruelty is contrary to his nature" (Erickson 1983, p.423). But he apparently does not see the serious conflict between his belief in this benevolent and faithful post-Fall activity of God and his acceptance of the idea that God created over millions of years with the attending death, disease, violence, and extinction that the evolutionists say actually happened.

### **Views of Wayne Grudem Systematic Theology, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994**

Wayne Grudem's theology text is immensely influential, having been translated into at least eight major languages. On the positive side, Grudem affirms *ex nihilo* creation and the direct supernatural creation of Adam and Eve (Grudem 1994, pp.262–266). He has a helpful discussion of the biblical view of God's relation to creation compared to the views of deists, atheists, pantheists, and others (Grudem 1994, pp.266–270). He rejects biological evolution and presents good reasons for rejecting theistic evolution, the framework hypothesis, and the gap theory (Grudem 1994, pp.279–286

(biological evolution), pp.276–279 (theistic evolution), pp.300–304 (framework hypothesis) and pp.287–289 (gap theory). He also affirms belief in a global Flood (Grudem 1994, p.306). In the bibliography at the end of his chapter on creation, Grudem refers to a number of young-earth books dealing with the age of the earth (most of which he identifies with "young earth view" after the citation). In this he is far more up-to-date and fair in his treatment of the young-earth view than Erickson and Lewis/Demarest are. But his old-earth arguments fail at many points.

### **Inconsistencies in rejecting some old-earth views**

For example, he affirms that an atheistic form of the big bang theory is inconsistent with Scripture, but his qualified wording does not rule out a theistic big bang theory (Grudem 1994, p.275).<sup>45</sup> Since he is open to the evolutionary timescale as advocated by old-earth proponents who are astrophysicists and do accept the big bang as fact,<sup>46</sup> he must, to be consistent, be open to the big bang order of events which contradict the order in Genesis (with the earth created before the stars and sun), even though he rejects theistic evolution. In rejecting the framework hypothesis, he says that the strongest argument against it is that "the implication of chronological sequence in the [Genesis 1] narrative is almost inescapable" (Grudem 1994, p.303.) But if the days are sequential, then the events that occurred on each day must be sequential also (unless the text explicitly tells us otherwise, which in the case of the sun, moon and stars, it does not). So any theistic version of the big bang theory is also inconsistent with Scripture. But Grudem does not clear say so.

Three of his arguments against the gap theory also count against all other old-earth views, including Grudem's tentatively-held day-age view. First, Grudem correctly says there is no verse explicitly speaking of a previous creation before this one. But likewise there is not a single verse in the Bible that explicitly speaks of or supports the idea of millions of years of time in Genesis 1. Second, he explains that if the gap theory is correct, then God calls the creation "very good" as He looks at an earth "full of the results of rebellion, conflict and terrible divine judgment" (Grudem 1994, p.288). But in accepting the millions of years, Grudem is implying that God looked at the fossil record of death and disease, the destructive results of supernova explosions and asteroids bombarding the earth and other planets, and the other evidence of His apparently clumsy attempts at creation over millions of years, and then He called it all "very good." Third,

<sup>44</sup> See particularly verses 14–16 and 26–27.

<sup>45</sup> He says, "Thus, the 'big bang' theory (in a secular form in which God is excluded), or any theories that hold that matter has always existed, would be inconsistent with the teaching of Scripture . . ."

<sup>46</sup> He refers positively to the writings of Hugh Ross and Robert Newman, both of whom are evangelical advocates of the big bang.

Grudem rightly reasons that the theistic evolution 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 [*sic*] resulted in a failure (Grudem 1994, p.289).

But the same indictment can be made of all old-earth theories, for they would concur with theistic evolution on this point. Only the young-earth view reflects the wisdom and power and creative success of our Creator, because in that view all the death and suffering is post-Fall.

As noted, Grudem rejects theistic evolution. But his first two reasons for doing so also stand against all other old-earth views. First, he says that the "purposefulness in God's work in creation seems incompatible with the randomness demanded by evolutionary theory" (referring to the millions of random mutations that the theory requires) (Grudem 1994, p.276). But this counts equally against the blind, random, millions-of-years process of star and galaxy evolution in the big bang theory and the randomness of the millions-of-years formation of the earth and its strata to become our current habitable planet. If Scripture speaks of God's intelligent design of living creatures, as Grudem rightly understands, it equally clearly speaks of His intelligent design of the stars and the earth, which were made for His glory and by His wisdom and have always operated according to His righteous ordinances.<sup>47</sup> Grudem holds to a "straightforward biblical account of creation" to oppose theistic evolution (Grudem 1994, p.276) and insists that the account of the Fall of Adam and Eve is a "straightforward narrative history" (Grudem 1994, p.493). But the same straightforward exegetical approach to all of Genesis 1–11 requires the rejection of all old-earth theories.

Second, Grudem quotes Psalm 33:6–9 and says that we should reject theistic evolution because "Scripture pictures God's creative word as bringing an immediate response" (Grudem 1994, p.277). He rightly says that these verses seem incompatible with the idea that "after millions of years and millions of random mutations in living things" the creation was what God called for. But the verses are equally incompatible with the theory of slow gradual, millions-of-years evolution of nonliving things such as the stars, galaxies, and the earth. In fact, these verses specifically mention the heavenly bodies, but not living creatures. So, Grudem has missed the explicit teaching of the passage. God did not need and

God did not take billions of years to make the earth and the heavenly objects. As the psalmist says, God spoke and it was done. He spoke and there was light. He spoke and dry land appeared. He spoke and the sun, moon and stars came into existence. He did not have to wait millions of years for things to happen in response to His commands.

Since Grudem accepts the Creation account as straightforward history and the chronological sequence of events in Genesis 1, and since he believes the divine acts of creation were instantaneous, then by accepting millions of years he must necessarily believe that the divine creative acts were separated by millions of years. There is no other place to put the time. But where is the wisdom or even purpose of God in creating plants instantly and then waiting millions of years to create the sun, or in creating the sea and flying creatures instantly and then waiting millions of years to create land animals and man?

### ***The importance of the age of the earth***

Before entering into a discussion of the age of the earth, Grudem says that the topic "is really much less important than the[se] doctrines:" (1) God created the universe out of nothing; (2) creation is distinct from God, yet always dependent on God; (3) God created the universe to show His glory; (4) the universe God created was very good; (5) there will be no final conflict between Scripture and science; and (6) secular theories that deny God as Creator, including Darwinian evolution, are clearly incompatible with belief in the Bible. Grudem then says that the age of the earth is much less important than two additional subjects to be treated later in his text: (7) the creation of the angelic world, and (8) the creation of man in the image of God (Grudem 1994, p.289).

But this statement about what is most important is simply an assertion. He gives no arguments or biblical evidence to support it. In response, we should note that his first point is not explicitly stated in Scripture, although it is a sound theological conclusion based on Scripture. Contrast that to the many explicit statements about the days of creation (in Genesis and other Bible passages) and the time since creation in the genealogies of Genesis 5 and 11 and the other chronological statements in Scripture covering the period from Abraham to Christ. Also, as I previously explained, points 3 and 4 affect our conclusions about the age of the earth and are consistent only with the young-earth view. The age of the earth is directly related to point 5 as well.

Furthermore, judging from how much God says

<sup>47</sup> Psalm 19:1, Psalm 97:6, Psalm 136:5, Job 38:31–33, Jeremiah 31:35–36 and 33:25–26. Someone might object that a process of creating the universe and earth over the course of millions of years could also show the carefulness of God in "setting up" the universe for life. But exploding stars and meteors and asteroids bombarding and disfiguring the earth and killing plants and animals (as all old-earth views necessarily accept) do not display much carefulness.

about the age of the creation (as presented earlier in this essay) compared to how much He says about most of these other matters that Grudem mentions, the age of the earth is far more important. And the age of the earth strikes at the heart of the question of the authority of Scripture. Whether secular scientific theories (based on antibiblical, philosophical presuppositions) should be the controlling judge in the exegesis of Scripture (the hermeneutic of the old-earth views) or whether Scripture truth should be determined by comparing Scripture with Scripture and careful attention to the text and context (as young-earth proponents insist) is vitally important.

Grudem is correct that secular theories which deny God as Creator, including Darwinian evolution, are clearly incompatible with belief in the Bible. But we can only say they are incompatible with the Bible, if we interpret literally the Genesis account about the creation of the first plants, animals, and people, where ten times God emphasizes that He made these creatures as distinct “kinds” in mature form ready to reproduce “after their kind” (rather than to change from one kind into a different kind). If this be the case, then why not take Genesis literally about the date and duration of creation week and the order of creation events? Why not reject the big bang cosmology completely because Genesis says that God created the plants before the sun, moon and stars? And why not assume that the global, world-destroying Flood would have produced a massive amount of lasting geological evidence (for example, sediment layers, erosional features, lava deposits and fossils), instead of following Davis Young’s tranquil flood view, as Grudem appears to do? Furthermore, the evolutionary theories for the origin of the universe and the earth over millions of years equally deny God as Creator and so are just as incompatible with belief in the Bible.

### The age of the earth

Turning to arguments regarding the age of the earth, Grudem begins with a discussion of the Genesis genealogies (Grudem 1994, pp.290–291). Earlier in his text he had said that no evangelical scholar today holds to Bishop Ussher’s date for creation (Grudem 1994, p.273). But this statement probably was incorrect when he wrote it in 1994 and

is demonstrably incorrect now, as several scholars have contended for no gaps in the Genesis 5 and 11 genealogies (Freeman 1998, 2008; Jones 2005; Pierce 2006.<sup>48</sup>) I and other scholars think their arguments are compelling as well. Grudem’s argument for gaps, which he takes from Francis Schaeffer,<sup>49</sup> is weak. The fact that Matthew 1 has missing names does not mean that Luke 3, or 1 Chronicles 1, or Genesis 5 and 11 do also.<sup>50</sup> The other verses Grudem uses are not genealogies but rather verses where (as he rightly shows) the verbal pattern “son of” does not mean a literal father-son relationship. However, Genesis 5 and 11 do not use this “son of” language but rather say that one man “begat” (בָּרָא, *yālad*) another. This construction always means a literal parent-child relationship (Ham and Pierce 2006).<sup>51</sup> In any case, these verses cited by Grudem are irrelevant to the question of Genesis for the same reason that Matthew is—unlike these verses cited by Grudem, the Genesis genealogies give detailed chronological information and other personal details. Grudem says “it seems only fair to conclude that the genealogies of Scripture have some gaps in them” (Grudem 1994, p.291). Actually, it is only fair, or rather faithful to all the biblical data, to say that *some* of the genealogical statements in Scripture have gaps. Neither Grudem nor his cited references have demonstrated that Genesis 5 and 11 have gaps.

Aware of the young-earth theodicy, Grudem devotes a mere two paragraphs to the issue of animal death before the Fall (Grudem 1994, pp.292–293). Earlier he had affirmed that the initial creation was called “very good.” But he added that, in spite of sin, the material world is presently good, citing 1 Timothy 4:4–5. However, in the context of the preceding verse, Paul is talking about food, not everything in the material world. Furthermore, Paul’s statement here must be interpreted in light of his Romans 8:20–23 teaching about the nonhuman creation’s bondage to corruption and longing for redemption. The present creation is not all good. It is a fallen, cursed creation with remnants of goodness from the original creation.

In the section on animal death, he says that “there was no doubt death in the plant world” before the Fall (Grudem 1994, p.292), but his comments reveal a need for further study of the creationist view on this point. He cites Romans 8:20–23, but does not discuss

<sup>48</sup> Ussher’s *Annals of the World* has been retranslated from the Latin original (Pierce 2003).

<sup>49</sup> Grudem mistakenly says Schaeffer’s 6-page argument about the genealogies is in *No Final Conflict* (Schaeffer 1975). It is rather in *Genesis in Space and Time* (Schaeffer 1972, pp.122–124, 154–156). Schaeffer was misled (as so many modern evangelical scholars have been) by the arguments in Green (1890). Freeman (1998, 2008); Jones (2005) and Pierce (2006) expose these mistaken arguments.

<sup>50</sup> In Luke, there are 41 names between David and Jesus which amounts to an average age of 24 for a father when the named son was born. Given that fathers had daughters and the first-born was not always the son recorded in Jewish genealogies, the possibility of missing names in Luke is most unlikely. Also, most of the names in Luke 3 are unknown people. What would be Luke’s purpose in leaving out names in this section of his genealogy, or in the pre-David section, especially since he was so committed to giving us the “exact truth” about Jesus (Luke 1:4)?

<sup>51</sup> Harris, Archer and Waltke (1980, vol. 1, p.379) assert that “the word [*yālad*] does not necessarily point to the generation immediately following”, but they offer no verses in support of that statement. Brown, Driver and Briggs (1996, pp.408–409) likewise provide no scriptural support for this claim that *yālad* is used in a nonliteral way (that is, not a parent-child relationship).

this very relevant text. His objection that Genesis 2:17 indicates that Adam's disobedience would only affect man is an argument from silence, which is invalid, given all the texts I discussed on this point earlier. I would agree with him that Romans 5:12 is irrelevant to this question (though it has often been mistakenly used this way by many creationists) because context shows that the verse is only referring to Adam and his descendants. But Grudem has not refuted the young-earth argument about no pre-Fall animal death. And as we have seen, some of his own statements weigh heavily against the acceptance of millions of years of death, disease, and extinction of animals before the Fall, including the extinction of the dinosaurs 65 million years ago, which Grudem leans toward accepting (Grudem 1994, p.293). In a footnote, he admits that having all that fossil evidence of death in a very good creation is a "difficulty" for old-earth views and "perhaps" favors young-earth Flood geology, but he asserts that "this is not a decisive objection" (Grudem 1994, p.305, footnote 75.) Why not? God's description of the pre-Fall creation, the impact of the Fall and the cosmic consequences of the full redemptive work of Christ is not decisive for a Bible-believing Christian?

In his later chapter on the Fall of man he does not discuss the impact of the Fall on the nonhuman creation. But in his chapter on the glorification of the believer he affirms that God cursed the ground because of Adam's sin, "so that it brought forth thorns and thistles and would only yield food useful for mankind by painful toil" (Grudem 1994, p.835). He quotes Romans 8:19–23 to say that the creation will be set free from corruption when Christians receive their resurrection bodies. He says,

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 (Grudem 1994, p.836).

But he apparently does not realize that in accepting millions of years, he is accepting that the thorns and thistles and all those other things were part of the pre-Fall "very good" creation. So, none of those things could be part of the curse of Genesis 3, as he previously said. Like Erickson, he has not carefully considered the implications of his belief in the cosmic impact of the Fall.

Grudem acknowledges that young-earth biblical arguments about death have "some force" (Grudem 1994, pp.295, 296 and 297). But he does not present those arguments very thoroughly, which significantly diminishes their force on the minds of his readers.

### **Science and the Flood**

Like Erickson, Grudem frequently refers to "scientific data about the age of the earth" and the "overwhelming evidence from geology," (Grudem 1994, pp.279, 295, 298, 302, 307, 308) as if the data and evidence speak for themselves and scientists are unbiased, objective pursuers of truth. And like Erickson, Grudem shows little grasp of the role of *assumptions* used in the *interpretation* of the geological (and astronomical) data relevant to the age of the earth. Therefore, he believes that the scientific evidence is against the young-earth view (Grudem 1994, pp.307–308).

In arguing against theistic evolution, Grudem says that "the scientific data do not force one to accept evolution" (Grudem 1994, p.279). But the scientific establishment insists that the biological and paleontological data *do* force us to accept evolution. Why then should we trust the conclusions of the same godless scientific establishment about the age of the earth, when that establishment insists that the geological and astronomical data also force us to accept millions of years and reject Noah's Flood? Why not believe God and doubt the evolutionists on all these points, especially since, as Grudem rightly says, "sin makes us think incorrectly about God and about creation" (Grudem 1994, p.79) and most evolutionists are unrepentant sinners? To believe some parts of Genesis 1–11 but not other parts is neither reasonable nor consistent.

While Grudem affirms belief in a global Noachian Flood (Grudem 1994, p.306), he does not accept the geological evidence for the Flood and a young earth (including why radiometric dating cannot be trusted) presented in nine of the thirteen young-earth creationist books that he cites in the bibliography. But it is not clear to what extent he has read those works that he cites, since he says that some of the titles were supplied by a young-earth creationist.<sup>52</sup> He states plainly that he leans toward an old-earth view because of the arguments of Davis Young, (Grudem 1994, p.307)<sup>53</sup> who for many years was a geologist at

<sup>52</sup> At the beginning of the bibliography for his chapter on creation (Grudem 1994, p.312) he tells the reader that he obtained several of the titles (he does not say how many or which ones) from a list prepared by Wayne Frair, a creationist biologist.

<sup>53</sup> He adds here that his views on astronomy have been influenced by Newman and Eckelmann (1977). While they raise the issue of distant starlight, they do not tell their readers that evolutionary cosmologists have a very similar light travel-time problem (called the "horizon problem"). So, the problem cannot be used as an argument against the young-earth view. See Lisle (2005). In the bibliography for his creation chapter, Grudem provides a subtle endorsement of Ross (1994), by giving the longest explanatory note of any of the notes he gives after the books in the list and calling Ross "an articulate and highly trained scientist" (p.313). While that is certainly true, it has not kept Ross from publishing many serious biblical, historical, theological and scientific errors. See Sarfati (2004), which is a thorough exposé of Ross's many biblical, historical, logical, theological and scientific errors. See also Mayhue (2008, pp.105–130). Mayhue exposes Ross' fallacious claim that nature is the "67th book of the Bible." Craig (1999) (although the page numbering of the article cited there is incorrect) reveals other serious theological errors in Ross's thinking.

Calvin College and who has accepted the naturalistic and uniformitarian assumptions that have controlled geology for the past 150 years. At the time of Young's 1977 book *Creation and the Flood* (which has greatly influenced Grudem), Young believed in a global, tranquil Flood which left no lasting geological evidence, a view that essentially turns the Flood into a myth.<sup>54</sup> Grudem accepts Young's interpretations of geological arguments but gives no reasons for rejecting John and Henry Morris's strong scientific rebuttals to Young's assertions, although Grudem cites the Morris book in a footnote.<sup>55</sup> He says that "the controversy over flood geology is strikingly different" from other aspects of the creation-evolution debate because "its advocates have persuaded almost no professional geologists" (Grudem 1994, p.306). Even at the time Grudem wrote that, there were a small number of Ph.D. geologists in many countries who were young-earth creationists. There are more now. But the number of geologists who accept flood geology should not be the criteria for determining the truth. If it is, then we all (including Grudem) should accept biological evolution too, since the vast majority of biologists do. But truth is not determined by majority vote.

If Grudem does not feel confident to assess the various geological arguments, why does he trust the Christian geologists who reject Noah's Flood and follow the assumptions and interpretations of godless, secular scientists rather than trusting Christian geologists and other geologically well-informed creationists who like Grudem do believe God's inerrant Word about that Flood? Furthermore, the unsoundness of trusting Young is shown in the fact that Young no longer holds to the day-age view defended in his two books that influenced Grudem.

When Grudem's theology text was published in 1994, he may not have been aware that at a 1990 conference on Christianity and science at Wheaton College, Young said that he had "repented" of his previous day-age view because of all the "textual mutilation" and "exegetical gymnastics" involved. But that so-called repentance did not lead Young to believe Genesis as literal history, as the Church did for eighteen centuries. Rather, Young advocated the utterly illogical view that Genesis 1–11 "may be expressing history in nonfactual terms."<sup>56</sup> Why should anyone trust a geologist (even if he professes to be an evangelical) who reasons and "repents" like that? Young has since abandoned the tranquil flood view and now argues (contrary to Grudem's view) that the Flood was localized in the Middle East (Young 1995, p.242). Such changing interpretations of Genesis result from Young's elevation of current majority views in geology and archeology (which are controlled by naturalistic, uniformitarian assumptions) above the authority of the Word of God. In Young's latest book, he is not sure what the Genesis text means for he does not clearly advocate any view, except for rejecting the young-earth view without dealing with the best defenses of that position (Young and Stearley 2008). This makes Young an unreliable guide for understanding both Genesis and the geological evidence.

### **The length of the creation days**

Grudem gives a few of the young-earth arguments in support of literal days (Grudem 1994, pp.295–297). He says that the repeated refrain of "there was evening and there was morning, the Xth day" in Genesis 1 is a "strong argument from context."

<sup>54</sup> How could a mere 4,500 years erase the evidence of the year-long global Flood that was designed to destroy not only all land animals, people and birds, but the surface of the earth itself (Genesis 6:7, 13) and involved global torrential rain (24 hours/day for at least 40 days and probably 150 days) and tectonic movements of the earth (fountains of the great deep bursting open) for 150 days? That is unbelievable. And yet Young (1977, pp. 172–174), believed that far more geographically and temporally limited floods or gradual processes of geological change have left thousands of feet of stratigraphic evidence that has endured for millions of years and even survived Noah's Flood with no noticeable change! This too is unbelievable.

<sup>55</sup> Morris and Morris (1983) refute many of Davis Young's geological arguments. See also Snelling and Austin (1992) for another example of Young's erroneous geological thinking about the Grand Canyon. Grudem is also influenced by the anti-creationist book by Van Till, Young and Menninga (1998). But Van Till and Menninga are also theistic evolutionists. Why does Grudem accept their scientific arguments, when he does not accept their handling of the Word of God on the topic?

<sup>56</sup> Leading up to that conclusion and describing his "repentance," Young explained, "The Day-Age hypothesis insisted with at least a semblance of textual plausibility that the days of creation were long periods of indeterminate length, although the immediate context implies that the term, *yom*, for 'day' really means 'day.' ... There were some textual obstacles the Day-Agers developed an amazing agility in surmounting. ..."

After discussing some examples of contradiction in order of events between Genesis 1 and evolution history, he continues, "This obvious point of conflict, however, failed to dissuade well-intentioned Christians, my earlier self included, from nudging the text to mean something different from what it says. In my case, I suggested that the events of the days overlapped. Having publicly repented of that textual mutilation a few years ago, I will move on without further embarrassing myself. ..."

Following an examination of other unsuccessful techniques for harmonizing Genesis with old-earth geology, Young confesses, "Genius as all these schemes may be, one is struck by the forced nature of them all. While the exegetical gymnastic maneuvers have displayed remarkable flexibility, I suspect that they have resulted in temporary damage to the theological musculature. Interpretation of Genesis 1 through 11 as factual history does not mesh with the emerging picture of the early history of the universe and of humanity that has been deciphered by scientific investigation. Dickering with the biblical text doesn't seem to make it fit the scientific data. ..." His conclusion now: "The Bible may be expressing history in nonfactual terms." See Young (1990), quoted in Lubenow (1992, pp.232–234). I have an audio recording of Young's lecture on file.

But he then objects that we could not have evening and morning before the sun was created on Day 4. He fails to note that all that is needed is a source of light external to the earth on the first three days. And God made that light on Day 1. Can our supernatural God not create the phenomenon of light without the sun? He did so in the middle of a sunny day to blind Saul on the road to Damascus (Acts 9:4 and 22:6) and will do so in the new creation (Revelation 21:23 and 22:5). Why not on Day 1 (Genesis 1:3)?

As noted at the beginning of this essay, Exodus 20:8–11 is a very important passage for the defense of young-earth creationism, and Grudem says that it “is hard to avoid” our conclusion. However, he attempts to neutralize these verses by saying that the passage teaches that the Jews were to work six days because God set a pattern of working six successive periods and resting on the seventh period (Grudem 1994, pp. 295–296). But if God created over six long ages of time and was only establishing a pattern of 6 + 1 for the Jewish work-week, He could have (and would have) used an indefinite time word or phrase,<sup>57</sup> rather than the only Hebrew word that means a 24-hour day. Also, Grudem declares that in the very next sentence (and commandment, Exodus 20:12) “day” means ‘a period of time.’” However, that verse does not use “day” singular, but “days” plural, and everywhere else “days” (Hebrew, *yamim*) is used in the Old Testament, the context shows that it always means literal days. Furthermore, when the commandment says that our “days may be prolonged” it does not mean that the days will be longer than 24 hours (and Grudem agrees), but that we will live a greater *number* of (literal) days, that is, a longer life. So, Grudem’s comments fail to refute the creationist argument from the fourth commandment.

His arguments against literal days and for the day-age view include the fact that Genesis 2:4 is a nonliteral use of *yôm* (day) in the creation account and *yôm* sometimes has a nonliteral meaning elsewhere in the Old Testament. But all his verses supporting the latter point have *yôm* connected to nouns in the construct state (for example, day of God’s wrath, day of battle, day of harvest, etc.). Furthermore, none of these verses prove a nonliteral meaning for *yôm*, because these phrases can also just as legitimately be interpreted as the first literal day of a longer time period

(for example, battle, harvest, etc.). Also, in Genesis 1 (as in Exodus 20:11) we do not have this grammatical construction (nouns in the construct state with *yôm*). Rather, in Genesis 1 we find *yôm* modified by number, which everywhere else in the Old Testament always means a literal day. A similar argument applies to Genesis 2:4 where the construction is *b’yom* (literally, “in day”), an adverb (functioning as a prepositional phrase) which is not used in Genesis 1 with respect to each day of creation. Numbers 7:10–84 provides a similar use of *b’yom* (in verses 10 and 84, referring to a 12-day period of Jewish sacrifice) in context with *yôm* + number (verses 12, 18, 24, etc. where the days are literal, when each Israelite tribe sacrificed). So, the nonliteral *b’yom* in Genesis 2:4 does not negate the literal interpretation of *yôm* in Genesis 1.

Grudem also raises the old (and frequently refuted) objection that too much happened on the sixth day of creation to fit into twenty-four hours. But no time duration for the events is given in the text. The miraculous events of creation (creating all the land animals, making the Garden of Eden, creating Adam, putting Adam to sleep and creating Eve) were instantaneous or required only minutes, at most. Surely, putting Adam in the Garden (for the purpose of caring for it)<sup>58</sup> and telling him not to eat from one tree took at most two minutes to accomplish. Grudem assumes that an “incredibly large number of animals” were named (Grudem 1994, p. 294). But what is that number? The text does not inform us of the number of “beasts of the field” and “birds of the sky” God brought to Adam to name (he did not need to name sea creatures, “beasts of the earth,” or creeping things). They may have only been only the animals that Adam would domesticate. Naming at the leisurely pace of six animals per minute, Adam could have effortlessly named 3,000 animals and birds in ten hours as God brought them by Adam (Genesis 2:19). Nor does the text require us to think that the names were technical (for example, double-Latin), taxonomic names based on extensive scientific observations, rather than simple names like dog, pig, cow, goat, horse, duck, chicken, or robin, which have no connection to the morphology or behavior of the animals. So there is no logical or textual justification for saying that these events of Day 6 could not happen even in just twelve hours. Contrary to Grudem’s

<sup>57</sup> For example, *dôr* (דור, period, time or generation, as in Genesis 7:1, Exodus 3:15 and Deuteronomy 32:7) or a phrase like “thousands of ten thousands” of years (cf. Genesis 24:60, Numbers 10:36) or “after many days” (Joshua 23:11). If those words were considered unsuitable, God could have borrowed some word from a neighboring language, as He did in the case of the Aramaic words used later in the Old Testament: *z’mân* (זמן, season or time, as in Nehemiah 2:6, Daniel 2:16, 21, 4:36 [Hebrew Bible: Daniel 4:33], 7:25) or *iddân* (ידן, period or time, as in Daniel 4:16, 23, 25, 32 [Hebrew Bible: Daniel 4:13, 20, 22, 29]).

<sup>58</sup> The Bible nowhere says that Adam actually did care for it for a long period of time before God gave him the task of naming the animals. Only the assignment was given on Day 6. We can assume that he started to fulfill that task of caring for the Garden. We cannot assume that he completed it before he received the assignment to name the animals. Nor does God give us the dimensions of the Garden. So we cannot make any assumptions about it being too large for Adam to tend it on the sixth literal day of creation. Archer (1982, pp. 59–60) makes the same unwarranted assumptions when he argues against literal days.



assertion, the “contextual considerations” (Grudem 1994, p.294) do *not* support the day-age view.

The fact that the seventh day of creation does not have the phrase “there was evening and there was morning, the seventh day” does not necessarily imply that it is continuing through to the present time, as Grudem suggests, and that therefore the six days of creation were not literal (Grudem 1994, p.294). The phrase’s absence may be a literary device to reinforce the fact that God completed His creation and did not resume creation activities on the eighth day of history. The parallel of the creation week to the Jewish week in Exodus 20:8–11 confirms that the seventh day in both weeks was completed, and it was the same length as the previous six days. Also, the past tense verbs<sup>59</sup> of Genesis 2:1–3 and Exodus 20:8–11 show that Moses is looking back at past completed days long before he wrote either book. Furthermore, Adam was created on the sixth day and lived on the seventh day and all the literal days of his literal life totaled 930 years of days (Genesis 5:5). So, if the seventh day is still continuing, then Adam is not yet dead. But also, if we accept that the seventh day of creation week continues to our time, then this means that God is not now creating but is resting. Consequently, the processes that scientists study today are not God’s creation activities, but rather His resting activities of providence. Therefore the old-earth theories, which rely on evolutionist geological and astronomical interpretations of and extrapolations from present-day processes to say how things came into existence and how long ago, are false.

Another objection raised by Grudem to the literal-day view is that although God could have used other time words in Hebrew (rather than *yôm*), if He wanted to say He created over long ages, “the original readers knew that the word ‘day’ could mean a long period of time,” so there was no need to use one of those other words (Grudem 1994, pp.294–295). But how does Grudem know that the Israelites at the time when Moses wrote Genesis knew this? He offers no biblical or logical justification for this assertion. None of the poetic or prophetic books of the Old Testament where a nonliteral *yôm* is used (and which Grudem cited earlier) were written at that time. So we can just as well say that the Jews only had literal uses of *yôm* to reference. Besides, orthodox Jews took the creation

days literally until they, along with most Christians, accepted the idea of millions of years in the early nineteenth century).

Grudem acknowledges that the young-earth argument from Jesus’ words in Mark 10:6 “has some force.” His one-sentence reply is that “Jesus is just referring to the whole of Genesis 1–2 as the ‘beginning of creation,’ in contrast to the argument from the laws given by Moses that the Pharisees were depending on (verse 4)” (Grudem 1994, p.297). But this is precisely what creationists believe, so this does not refute their argument.

Grudem expresses hesitancy about his views on the age of the earth more than once (Grudem 1994, pp.297, 308) and this is understandable, given his admitted need for further study. But given his uncertainty about the age of the earth, how can he be so confident in telling Christians that the age of the earth is not important and “that God may not allow us to find a clear solution to this question before Christ returns,” so that therefore old-earthers and young-earthers should just work together in peace? If the Bible teaches a young earth, then it is very important that we believe it and not compromise with contrary ideas.

### **Views of Gordon Lewis and Bruce Demarest *Integrative Theology*,**

**(Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996, 3 volumes in one)<sup>60</sup>**

Space prevents me from giving an equally thorough analysis of Lewis and Demarest’s theology text. Only a sampling of their problematic reasoning can be given.

### ***The days of creation***

Lewis and Demarest say that “Genesis 1 does teach a chronological order of origins,” (Lewis and Demarest 1996, vol.2, p.41) even stating that the solar system was not arranged until the fourth day, after the earth was created (Lewis and Demarest 1996, vol.2, pp.42, 44). They also suggest (though without any exegetical argument) that the sun was created on Day 1, but that on Day 4 God placed it at the right distance from the earth. But they do not realize that this view is incompatible with the secular cosmology which they are trying to fit into Genesis,<sup>61</sup> which says that the sun and some other objects in the solar system were

<sup>59</sup> The Hebrew verb does not carry the time tense, as English verbs do, but the form of the Hebrew verbs here and the context certainly confirm that the English, German, Czech, and other translators of the Bible (I have personally checked German and Czech), as well as the ancient Jewish translators of the Greek Septuagint, have been correct to put the verbs in these passages in past tense in their respective languages.

<sup>60</sup> The three volumes were published separately in 1987, 1990 and 1994 respectively. Most of their discussions related to the age of the earth are in volume 2 (published in 1990). I refer to the 3 volumes-in-1 edition published in 1996. I refer to the relevant pages of the section representing volume two.

<sup>61</sup> They appear inclined to follow the views of Newman and Eckelmann (1977), who accept the big bang theory, hold to the gap-day-gap theory (where all God’s creative activities take place in the “gap” periods, and who surprisingly dedicate their book to (among others) Carl Sagan, the late atheist astronomer.

made before the earth, and the sun was always the same distance from the earth as it is now.

They do accurately present many of the creationist arguments for literal creation days, but their objections are as weak as Erickson's and Grudem's. For example, they say that the term "day" can mean month (citing Genesis 29:14), seven sabbaths of years (Leviticus 25:8), "a long time" of forty years (Joshua 24:7) and a "long time" of Israelite rebellion (2 Chronicles 15:3) (Lewis and Demarest 1996, vol. 2, p. 44). But Lewis and Demarest should have looked more carefully at the Hebrew text in these cases. They fail to note that all these verses use the plural "days" (*yamim*), not the singular "day" (*yôm*) and that every use of *yamim* in the Old Testament means literal days. In Genesis 29:14 the Hebrew reads "month of days" (where "days" are literal). In Leviticus 25:8 the Hebrew text says "days of seven sevens of years" (which are literal days of literal years). The Hebrew of Joshua 24:7 and 2 Chronicles 15:3 has the same wording and reads "many days" (which may be a long time, but a time period consisting of literal days).

Like Grudem, and following Gleason Archer's erroneous argument,<sup>62</sup> Lewis and Demarest assert that in a 24-hour sixth day Adam could not have "completed the encyclopedic task of naming ... all the kinds of animals and birds God created" (Lewis and Demarest 1996, vol. 2, p. 44).

Additionally, they contend, "By assuming literal days before literal days were possible [i.e. Days 1–3] recent-creationists assume the point to be established. They fallaciously reason in a circle" (Lewis and Demarest 1996, vol. 2, p. 46). Even their own text shows that creationists do not *assume* the days are literal: we give strong exegetical arguments for all the creation days being literal. But a literal day is not possible before the sun was created Day 4? How do they know? All that is needed for a literal day is for the earth to rotate once on its axis in 24 hours. The sun does not cause a day, but merely serves as an instrument of measuring the passage of 24 hours of earth rotation. But a different light source external to the earth could also enable us to discern one day's time and God created that external light source on Day 1. So who really is assuming and reasoning fallaciously?

They assert, "A fully Christian doctrine of origins

integrates careful interpretation of all the relevant Scriptures,<sup>63</sup> a historical survey of the doctrine in the Church, a systematic formulation of the Scripture's teaching, an interaction with alternative views, and an application to life and ministry." But the combined writings of Henry Morris alone, without adding the many contributions of other creationists over the past 40 years, have done all this. Nevertheless, Lewis and Demarest state that "although the scientific creationist doctrine may provide some interesting data from science, it cannot, by its own limitations, provide an alternative full-orbed *theological* position for consideration" (Lewis and Demarest 1996, vol. 2, p. 46, italics in the original). It is understandable that they would come to this conclusion given that (judging from their text and endnotes) they refer to only three young-earth creationist books (one from 1974 and two from 1984), which mainly deal with scientific arguments, although they cite many more old-earth creationist books. But the apparent ignorance of creationist literature does not justify their criticism of creationist theological thinking.

### The Flood

In dismissing Flood geology they, like Grudem, rely heavily on Davis Young, apparently without considering the Morris response to Young's arguments.<sup>64</sup> And like Erickson, they depend on the arguments of Bernard Ramm. They say "Recent-creationist attempts to undermine the results of the several scientific methods of dating are insufficient to discount these methods entirely. The data for scientific dating are drawn from many different sources and show a significant degree of agreement" (Lewis and Demarest 1996, vol. 2, p. 46). However, recent creationists do not discount the dating *methods, per se*, but rather the *assumptions* hidden in those methods and the conclusions drawn from the *interpretations* of the data based on those assumptions.<sup>65</sup> Also, as creationists have documented, those dating methods do not all agree for a particular rock sample, except when evolutionists selectively force them to do so.<sup>66</sup> In support of their assertion about dating methods, Lewis and Demarest quote Richard Bube, who wrote, "The vast majority of professionally engaged geologists, both Christian and non-Christian, reject

<sup>62</sup> Ham and Mortenson (2009). See the critique of Archer's argument (under the subheading "The sixth day too short?") as it is used also by Moreland.

<sup>63</sup> Theologians should do this. But it was the late Dr. Henry Morris, the young-earth creation scientist with no formal theological training but with an incredible investment in the private study of the Scriptures, who is the only evangelical who has thoroughly done this with regard to creation. See his 276-page discussion of every relevant verse in every book of the Bible (Morris 1993a).

<sup>64</sup> Morris and Morris (1989) was published a year before Lewis and Demarest's volume two, where they deal with creation and the Flood.

<sup>65</sup> For a discussion of the three assumptions in radiometric dating methods see Morris (1994, pp. 51–66), and DeYoung (2005, p. 42).

<sup>66</sup> Consider this statement by a university geology professor: "In general, dates in the correct ballpark are assumed to be correct and are published, but those in disagreement with other data are seldom published, nor are the discrepancies fully explained." (Mauger, Associate Professor of Geology, East Carolina University, 1977, p. 37). See this selectivity in the dating methods in Lubenow's book appendix cited in footnote 41. See also Woodmorrappé (1999) for evidence that different dating methods give different dates on the same rock

the arguments for Flood geology as indefensible science.” What Lewis and Demarest do not tell their readers, (Lewis and Demarest 1996, vol.2, p.46) however, is that Bube has a Ph.D. in physics and taught materials science and engineering all his academic career.<sup>67</sup> Therefore, Bube is simply trusting the claims of old-earth geologists. But also, the fact that most Christian and nonchristian geologists regard Flood geology as indefensible means nothing. Truth has never been determined by majority vote. In fact, science has often progressed by the efforts of men who thought outside the limits of the majority view on a scientific problem. Also, there is a growing number of Bible-believing geologists and geophysicists in many countries who think geology does provide powerful confirmation of Noah’s Flood.

Lewis and Demarest misrepresent the creationist view of the Flood by saying that we believe that it “accounts for all the observable geological evidence by observable evidence from all areas universally” (Lewis and Demarest 1996, vol.2, p.47).<sup>68</sup> Creationists, however, are careful to say that the Flood produced *most* (not all) of the geological record of rock layers and fossils. Some layers are antediluvian deposits (without fossils and possibly formed on the third day of creation when God made dry land) and some were deposited after the Flood.

### **Facts or Interpretations of Science**

Like Erickson and Grudem, Lewis and Demarest frequently refer to the “findings” and “data” of science (Lewis and Demarest 1996, vol.2, pp.23, 40, 45, 46, 48, et al.). But they display no understanding of the philosophical *assumptions* that are used to *interpret* the data to arrive at the so-called “findings” (that is, interpretive conclusions). Lewis and Demarest tell us that “[s]cientific views that prevail today may in the future be regarded improbable. Hence we must avoid undue dogmatism concerning scientific evidence” (Lewis and Demarest 1996, vol.2, p.48). Furthermore, in discussing special revelation and general revelation, they even add that “the dangers of misinterpretation are less for the linguistic revelation [i.e., Scripture] than for the revelation in nature and historical events” (Lewis and Demarest 1996, vol.2, p.48). Given these statements, which are surely correct, is it not ironic and even inconsistent for Lewis and Demarest to argue for the day-age view, concluding that “ultimately, responsible geology must determine the length of the Genesis days”? (Lewis and Demarest 1996, vol.2, p.29). But, also, what is responsible geology? How would Lewis and

Demarest, as theologians, ever know when geologists are doing their research responsibly? Have the majority of geologists been doing so for the past 150 years when they have been telling us that the earth is millions of years old? Lewis and Demarest do not tell us.

So, for them, godless evolutionary theories about earth history, which are based on antibiblical philosophical assumptions, trump the plain reading of the biblical text, which has been rigorously defended by careful, responsible interpreters of Scripture for many years and was the orthodox Christian understanding for the first 18 centuries.

They do cite the verses which show that Jesus was a young-earth creationist (Mark 10:6 and 13:19 and Luke 11:51). But they do so only to contend that Jesus “endorsed the validity of the Old Testament creation doctrine” (Lewis and Demarest 1996, vol.2, p.33). They do not explain what they mean by that obscure statement, and they miss the truth of these verses related to the age of the creation.

Although they mention the creationist argument about no animal death before the Fall (Lewis and Demarest 1996, vol.2, p.45), they make no attempt to refute it in the chapter on creation. In their later chapter on the Fall, they quote twice from Romans 8:20–23 to say “God judged the entire animate and inanimate order” at the Fall and that natural evils such as hurricanes, volcanoes, and floods are a result of the curse (Lewis and Demarest 1996, vol.2, pp.195–196, 209). But like Grudem and Erickson, they fail to see that this militates against their and all other old-earth views.

### **Summary and Conclusions**

Although these three leading systematic theology textbooks have much helpful discussion of orthodox Christian doctrines, they are seriously flawed in their teaching on the age of the earth. I have cited several problem areas.

### **Weak exegesis of the relevant Scriptures**

They have failed to pay careful attention to the biblical text and deal with the best young-earth exegetical arguments and to some extent have not accurately represented the young-earth view which they reject. The limited exegetical arguments of Erickson and Lewis and Demarest and the more extensive exegetical arguments of Grudem (and the sources they reference) do not stand up under careful scrutiny and comparison with the best creationist biblical arguments.<sup>69</sup>

<sup>67</sup> He is Emeritus Professor of Materials Science and Electrical Engineering at Stanford University and past president of the theistic-evolution oriented American Scientific Affiliation.

<sup>68</sup> They say something similar about Flood geology, using “all” (Lewis and Demarest 1996, vol.2, p.23).

<sup>69</sup> See Mortenson and Ury (2008) and other sources therein.

### **Inadequate consideration of the relevant creationist literature**

Because of an inadequate consideration of the creationist literature, these men have uncritically accepted the millions of years that are proclaimed as fact everywhere in our culture by the scientific and educational establishment and media.

Erickson's acquaintance with creationist literature was very out-of-date in 1983 when he admitted that "at present we cannot be dogmatic. The age of the universe is a topic which demands continued study and thought."<sup>70</sup> But in the 15 years preceding the second revised edition in 1998 he made no changes in the chapter on creation and he apparently did no study on this subject, even as the creation-evolution issue has moved to center stage in the culture wars. Lewis and Demarest also reveal an unacceptably superficial acquaintance with creationist literature.

Grudem writes with considerable hesitation about his old-earth leanings. He does show an awareness of the existence of much creationist literature dealing with the age of the earth, but it is not clear from his text if he has carefully considered the young-earth (especially scientific) arguments in that literature.

In any case, even stronger biblical and scientific defenses of young-earth creationism have been produced since these three theology texts were written, especially on the subject of radiometric dating.

These and other theologians need to give more careful attention to the biblical text and to young-earth creationist arguments. A person does not require months of study to become well acquainted with the best creationist biblical and scientific arguments related to the age of the earth. I plead with my old-earth Christian brethren to become better informed on the most up-to-date scientific arguments for a young earth.<sup>71</sup>

### **Inadequate consideration of the impact of the Fall**

While these theologians all believe that the Fall of Adam and Eve was historical and resulted in the curse of God *on the whole creation*, they have failed to see the utter incompatibility of that biblical truth with their acceptance of millions of years. I have found from my reading and personal interactions with many theologians and other scholars, that most of them who espouse or lean toward acceptance of millions of years have not carefully considered this vital point.

All old-earth views of Genesis undermine the Bible's teaching about death, the curse, and the full effects of the redemptive work of Christ, and these views *unconsciously* and *unintentionally* assault the very character of God and His "very good" declaration about His initial creation.

### **Undermining the authority of Scripture**

The late James Montgomery Boice, respected pastor of Tenth Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia and chairman of the International Council of Biblical Inerrancy, wrote in his commentary on Genesis:

We have to admit here that the exegetical basis of the creationists is strong. ... In spite of the careful biblical and scientific research that has accumulated in support of the creationists' view, there are problems that make the theory wrong to most (including many evangelical) scientists ... Data from various disciplines point to a very old earth and an even older universe (Boice 1982, pp. 57–62).

Numerous examples could be given of other theologians who, like Boice and the theologians discussed in this essay, show that it is not Scripture, but evolutionary theory in geology and cosmology that is controlling their interpretation of Scripture.<sup>72</sup>

<sup>70</sup> Erickson (1983, p. 382). The 1998 edition says the exact same thing. He declares his need for further study about the dating of man also (in both editions the wording is identical—see, for example, Erickson [1983, p. 487]).

<sup>71</sup> I would highly recommend the following few books and DVDs. These resources are understandable to the nonscientist and are fully documented. Morris and Morris (1989) responds to the arguments of old-earth geologist, Davis Young. Morris (1994) is a good summary of the main geological evidences for Noah's Flood and a recent creation.

Several 60-minute DVDs explain the powerful testimony of the rocks to a young-earth and global Flood—see Snelling (2009b, 2009c, 2009d) and Austin (n.d.) (which shows what the catastrophic processes produced in hours or days, reminiscent of features in the Grand Canyon). Mortenson (2005a) looks at the history of the idea and Lisle (2006) deals with a very common objection to the young-earth view, namely, if the universe is only about 6,000 years old, how can we see galaxies that are millions of light-years away from us. Also three half-hour DVD lectures Mortenson (2005b) and Lisle (2005) are available separately or as a part of a 13-session course (Ham, Mortenson and Lisle 2005) which was designed for teens and laypeople in church and would be very suitable for seminary or Bible college classes as well. The course pack comes with a 200-page teacher's manual and five 90-page student manuals. More student manuals can be purchased separately.

<sup>72</sup> See, for example, the following. Archer (1985), p. 187: "From a superficial reading of Genesis 1, the impression would seem to be that the entire creative process took place in six twenty-four-hour days. If this was the true intent of the Hebrew author ... this seems to run counter to modern scientific research, which indicates that the planet Earth was created several billion years ago." Kline (1996, p. 15, footnote 47): "In this article I have advocated an interpretation of biblical cosmogony according to which Scripture is open to the current scientific view of a very old universe and, in that respect, does not discountenance the theory of the evolutionary origin of man." Moreland (1998, pp. 219–220): "The date of creation is a difficult question, but on exegetical grounds alone, the literal twenty-four-hour-day view is better. However, since the different progressive creationist views are plausible exegetical options on hermeneutical grounds alone, then if science seems to point to a universe of several billions of years, it seems allowable to read Genesis in this light."

In his excellent book *Evangelical Feminism: A New Path to Liberalism?*, Grudem documents the times when many liberal or liberal-leaning denominations and seminaries endorsed the ordination of women (Grudem 2006, pp.23–29). Many of them now also approve of homosexuality. Grudem recognizes that before those institutions embraced feminism and then homosexuality they had already abandoned belief in the inerrancy of Scripture. This, Grudem rightly says, is ultimately a rejection of the authority of Scripture. But looking back over the last 200 years, we can see much evidence that the most important reason these institutions and denominations rejected the inerrancy and authority of Scripture (which their denominational forefathers once believed) is their acceptance first of the idea of millions of years and then often later Darwinian evolution as well. The compromise with millions of years was the first step along the path to liberalism.<sup>73</sup> So, ultimately, what is at stake in the debate about the age of the earth is the authority of Scripture.

Now, the authors of these systematic theology texts would probably protest that the issue is not the authority of the Bible, but the correct interpretation of the Bible. However, we have seen that these theologians all admit (with varying degrees of hesitation) that the final arbiter in their interpretation of the Scriptures which deal with the age of the earth is evolutionist claims about the age of the universe and earth (even though these theologians demonstrate an inadequate understanding of the methods and *assumptions* used by the evolutionists to arrive at those claims). So, if secular scientific theories are allowed to override the plain meaning of the text, then those theories have become the final authority.

I am certain that *none* of these four evangelical theologians has *intended* to undermine the authority of Scripture. On the contrary, they love God's Word, believe it is inerrant and want to teach and defend its truth faithfully and accurately. Their good intentions to uphold the truth of Scripture are undoubtedly sincere and deeply felt. But their old-earth views (or leanings in that direction) nevertheless do *in effect* undermine the Bible's authority.

These otherwise fine systematic theology texts are misleading the Church by encouraging Christians to put more confidence in secular scientific theories than

they do in the teaching of the Word of God, which these theologians admit seems to teach young-earth creationism. And they do so because they (like all the rest of us) have been led to believe by the museums, national parks, zoos, science programs on TV, school textbooks, and the popular press that scientists have proven that the universe and earth are millions of years old. But they have not proven this. Paying careful attention to all the relevant Scriptures and to creationist biblical and scientific arguments will expose the myth of millions of years.

In my sense, from reading and from personal conversation, that many theologians and Bible scholars are old-earth or undecided because they do not feel qualified or knowledgeable enough to evaluate the scientific arguments for a young earth. So, they accept the majority view among scientists. I suspect that is what is happening with the authors of these systematic theology texts as well.

But there is an inconsistency in this position. A great many evangelical theologians (including the four reviewed in this essay) reject Neo-Darwinian biological evolution as an explanation for the origin of life from nonliving matter and for the origin of the various distinct kinds of plants and animals from the first living cell.<sup>74</sup> Yet the scientific establishment claims that biological evolution is a proven scientific fact just as dogmatically as it claims that the earth and universe are billions of years old. If the majority of scientists (most of whom are unbelievers)<sup>75</sup> are wrong about biological evolution, why should Christians accept what they say about the age of the creation, given that their theories about evolution and the age of the creation are based on the same antibiblical philosophical assumptions?

Why do so many evangelical theologians bow the knee to the majority view in science regarding the age of the earth, but reject the majority view regarding the origin of living things, even though for the most part theologians are no more academically qualified to understand and evaluate the technical arguments for biological evolution than they are to understand and evaluate the technical geological or astronomical arguments for millions of years? The Bible is equally clear on both points and equally incompatible with the dominant "scientific" view.

<sup>73</sup> See Mortenson (2008b). This slippery slide into liberalism and even apostasy has happened many times at the individual level also. See Ham and Byers (2000) for the sad story of the great evangelist, Charles Templeton, who died as an atheist.

<sup>74</sup> Sadly, the theological compromise with evolution is evidently more widespread among American seminary professors than might be expected. An August 2009 survey of seminary presidents and professors, conducted by Bruce Waltke (Old Testament professor at Reformed Theological Seminary, Orlando), revealed that less than 44% of the respondents see any biblical problems with accepting theistic evolution. See Waltke (2009).

<sup>75</sup> In 1998 a survey was conducted of 517 of the 1,800 members of the American National Academy of Sciences (these 517 scientists are in the sections of biology, geology, astronomy and physics). The survey found that of the 50% who responded to the survey 72% were overt atheists, 21% were agnostics and only 7% believed in the existence of a personal Creator God. It is most likely that the 50% who did not respond were unbelievers, since believers would likely want to register their existence in this highest scientific body in America. See Larson and Witham (1998).

And why do such theologians trust the professing evangelical scientists who follow the godless scientific majority, but dismiss with little or no careful examination the arguments by Bible-believing evangelical scientists who endured the pressure of getting their Ph.D. degrees under the supervision of evolutionists and have given thorough biblical and scientific arguments for a recent creation and global Flood? Is majority vote being used to determine truth here? Is there a fear of man, rather than a fear of God (Proverbs 29:25)? Is there a fear of being labeled “fundamentalist” or “biblical literalist” or “flat-earther”<sup>76</sup> or by some other pejorative term?

Furthermore, if theologians do not feel competent to judge the scientific arguments of young-earth creationists, then how can they have any confidence that the scientific arguments in favor of millions of years are valid? And besides all this, is this sense of inadequacy in judging scientific arguments a justifiable reason for rejecting the clear teaching of Scripture and the virtually unanimous belief of Christians for eighteen centuries about Noah’s Flood and the age of the earth? What is really happening here is that for the past two hundred years most theologians have abandoned the authority of Scripture on this issue and instead have submitted to the authority of the current majority of scientists. But most scientists are no more qualified or knowledgeable than the theologians are to evaluate the geological and astronomical arguments for billions of years, because they are specialists in some other field of science and so are laymen when it comes to the age of the earth or the universe. Even in geology and astronomy scientists are so specialized that they must take an enormous amount “by faith,” trusting that their colleagues have made accurate observations, collected sufficient data, and come to valid interpretations of the evidence directly observed by those colleagues. So, finite people are trusting finite fallible people. Yet the history of geology and astronomy is littered with examples of inaccurate or insufficient observations and invalid interpretations of the data collected, as well as examples of where the majority was wrong and often wrong for a long time.

The issue of the age of the earth really is an issue of authority. Do we believe the infallible, inerrant Word of God, who was there at the beginning and at Noah’s Flood, who knows everything, who always tells the truth, who never makes mistakes, and who inspired

men to write the Scriptures without error so that we would have an accurate account of the key events of history? Or, do we believe the fallible opinions of sinful men (in this case, scientists) who were not there to scientifically observe the events in the beginning or during most of their imagined millions of years, who know next to nothing compared to God, who do not always tell the truth (sometimes intentionally and sometimes through ignorance<sup>77</sup>), who make mistakes (which is why they keep rewriting their scientific textbooks), and most of whom are trying to explain the world without God so they do not have to feel morally accountable to Him? Whom do we believe? If we believe the Bible is the uniquely inspired and inerrant Word of God, if we believe there is no other divinely inspired, inerrant book, then how can we place the authority of the Bible under the authority of the scientific majority? The Bible’s divine inspiration necessarily implies its absolute authority on every thing it teaches. We cannot accept the one and deny the other.

Despite good intentions to the contrary, the teaching of these systematic theology texts on the issue of the age of the earth is weakening the Church by damaging the foundations of Christianity. All major and minor doctrines are directly or indirectly built upon the foundational truths of Genesis 1–11, such as the doctrines of God, sin, death, moral absolutes, the Messiah’s first coming to begin redemption, His second coming to create a new heavens and earth, marriage, male headship in the home, work and the six-day work-week, man’s dominion over creation, modesty in clothing, all people being descended from Adam (and so there is only one race of people), etc. The literal history of Genesis 1–11 is critically relevant to the social issues confronting our culture today: divorce, homosexuality, feminism, postmodern relativism, euthanasia, cloning, abortion, racism, pornography, school violence, drugs, etc. These things are the result of sin, of course. But as the history of the formerly Christian West over the past 200 years shows, the more people are taught that they are the product of blind evolutionary forces over millions of years, the more they reject Biblical truth and morality. They think the Bible’s credibility has been destroyed by “science.” So why submit to its authority?

Psalm 11:3 says, “If the foundations are destroyed what can the righteous do?” For the past 200 years

<sup>76</sup> That the Church never believed in a flat earth (except for a very few odd individuals) is soundly established by Russell (1991). Russell, a secular university historian, shows that it was evolutionist historians who popularized this myth about ancient Christians as part of their strategy to silence Christian opposition to Darwinism.

<sup>77</sup> But the former cause is more prominent than most people think. See Broad and Wade (1982). The dust cover states, “[The book] shows that corruption and deceit are just as common in science as in any other human undertaking. Drawing examples from astronomy, physics, biology and medicine, it reveals how the supposedly foolproof mechanisms of scientific enquiry often do fail to correct both the major and the minor frauds that have become endemic to modern science.” Broad is a reporter with the News and Comment section of *Science* (weekly journal of the American Association for the Advancement of Science) and Wade is an editorialist for *New York Times* and a former reporter with *Science* and deputy editor of *Nature*.

the enemies of the gospel have been hammering away at the foundations. The book of Genesis has been the most attacked book and Genesis 1–11 is the most attacked section of Genesis. It is no wonder that people's faith in the historical truthfulness of Genesis 1–11 has been destroyed by "what is falsely called knowledge" (1 Timothy 6:20–21) and that many have fallen away from their church upbringing, and many others have refused to seriously consider the gospel and instead are living in all kinds of moral depravity and theological error. As Ken Ham and Britt Beemer have shown, we are losing the next generation because we have allowed or even helped the foundations to be destroyed (Ham and Beemer 2009).<sup>78</sup> And this is not just happening in America, but is a worldwide problem in the church.

Erickson, Grudem, and Lewis and Demarest have written with some hesitation about their old-earth views and say that more study is needed. I hereby urge them to do more study and revise their theology textbooks as quickly as possible so as to defend the truth of Scripture on the age of the earth and Noah's Flood and to undo (at least partially) the negative effects of their errors on the Church in the English-speaking world as well as in those countries where their texts have been or are being translated. And I urge their readers to become familiar with the leading books and DVDs presenting the biblical and scientific evidence for a 6,000-year-old creation, so that they are not misled by these otherwise very helpful systematic theology texts written by good evangelical theologians.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> Based on a revealing national survey, the authors explain why we are losing the kids and what radical changes need to be made to stop and reverse the loss.

<sup>79</sup> There is a need for a systematic theology text with the same depth as the ones discussed here, which will rigorously defend the young-earth view. The following are helpful in this direction, although they do not go deep enough into this major issue of our day: Ryrie (1999) and Reymond (1998).

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