

## Review of John Lennox's Book *Seven Days That Divide the World: The Beginning According to Genesis and Science*

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### Abstract

The issue of the age of the earth is contested within evangelicalism with many leading evangelical apologists advocating an old earth. John Lennox has risen to prominence in the last few years as one of the foremost defenders of the Christian faith, influencing many in this generation. In his book *Seven Days That Divide the World* Lennox seeks to show that Christians need not be divided over the issue of the age of the earth, and that the Bible's account of creation in Genesis fits well with contemporary science. In doing this he attempts to show that the young earth view of creation is akin to believing in a fixed earth. Lennox reasons that the church has been wrong in the past over its interpretation of Scripture in light of scientific discovery, and that those holding to a young earth are wrong again.

This paper will show that Lennox's arguments for an old earth cannot be supported either by Scripture or the history of the church.

**Keywords:** Lennox, young earth, old earth, Galileo, church fathers, days of creation, Creation Week, fourth day, death and suffering, age of the earth

### Introduction

John Lennox is a professor of mathematics and a fellow in the philosophy of science at Oxford University. He is a devoted follower of Christ and a skilful apologist.

In his book *Seven Days That Divide the World*, Lennox explores the “potential minefield” of the controversy of Genesis and science. He wrote the book for people who have been put off considering the Christian faith because of the “...very silly, unscientific story that the world was made in seven days,” (Lennox 2011, p. 12),<sup>1</sup> for convinced Christians who are disturbed by the controversy, as well as for those who take the Bible seriously but do not agree on the interpretation of the creation account (Lennox 2011, p. 12). Although the book is not intended to be exhaustive in its scope, it has been written in response to many requests made of Dr. Lennox over the years. It is important to respond to this book as Dr. Lennox is influential in evangelicalism, and the book itself is endorsed by many leading evangelical apologists.<sup>2</sup>

In previous writings Lennox has noted that the meaning of the term “creationism” has mutated and now comes with the idea that the earth is only a few thousand years old. According to Lennox this has three unfortunate effects:

1. It polarizes the discussion giving a soft target to those who reject out of hand any notion of intelligent causation in the universe.

2. It fails to do justice to the fact that there are different interpretations of the Genesis account even among those Christians who ascribe final authority to the Bible.

3. It obscures the (original) purpose of using the term “intelligent design,” which is to make a very important distinction between the recognition of design and the identification of the designer (Lennox 2009, p. 11).

Lennox, an advocate of old-earth creationism, does believe that man is a “direct special creation” by God (Lennox 2011, p. 69), and that humans have not evolved. He affirms that “it is crucial to the theology of salvation that Adam was the first actual member of a human race physically distinct from all creatures that preceded him” (Lennox 2011, p. 73).

This review of John Lennox's book *Seven Days That Divide the World* will critique seven arguments Lennox uses for an old-earth interpretation of the creation account in Genesis.

### A History Lesson

Lennox recognizes this is a controversial topic, and that disagreement over it has been acrimonious at times. In order to gain perspective on the way to handle this controversy, he looks at another major controversy in history—the Copernican Revolution.

However, Lennox merely raises the issue of geocentrism, noting that the Bible, in certain

<sup>1</sup> This quote does not represent Lennox's attitude, but the attitude of someone else that Lennox is quoting. However, the implication of Lennox's arguments in the book leads the reader to the same conclusion, that young earth creationism is very silly and unscientific.

<sup>2</sup> Those who have endorsed the book include Paul Copan, Ravi Zacharias, Alvin Plantinga, C. John Collins, Doug Groothuis, and Henry F. Schaefer III.

passages, seems to suggest a fixed earth (see 1 Chronicles 16:30; Psalm 93:1; Psalm 104:5; 1 Samuel 2:8) and that the sun moves (Psalm 19:4–6; Ecclesiastes 1:5) (Lennox 2011, pp. 16–17). Presuming that his readers now accept the heliocentric view, Lennox asks:

Why do Christians accept this “new” interpretation, and not still insist on a “literal” understanding of the “pillars of the earth”? Why are we not still split up into fixed-earthers and moving-earthers? Is it really because we have all compromised, and made Scripture subservient to science? (Lennox 2011, p. 19).

Unfortunately, the insinuation here is that young-earth creationists are akin to fixed-earthers, and that they should catch up with the Galileos of this world. Old-earth creationists, on the other hand, are portrayed as having shown that the “fixed earth” and “young earth” are misinterpretations of both science and Scripture.

For some reason he brings up this issue throughout the book, insisting that if we applied the same reasoning we use to interpret the days literally to the interpretation of the foundation and pillars of the earth, then we would be still insisting that the earth does not move (Lennox 2011, p. 61). Lennox emphasizes that the issue raised by the Galileo controversy focuses on how the Bible should be interpreted. He rightly notes that there is different literature in the Bible, and that our interpretation should be guided by the “...natural understanding of a passage, sentence, word, or phrase in its context, historically, culturally and linguistically” (Lennox 2011, pp. 21–22). He also points out that a literal understanding of a text in places will not work as the Bible contains figures of speech and metaphors (Lennox 2011, pp. 23–25).

The lesson Lennox wants us to learn from the Galileo affair is that

...Christians eventually came to accept this “new” interpretation [moving earth] and ceased to insist on a literalistic understanding of the foundations and pillars of the earth (Lennox 2011, p. 27).

He goes on:

Were these differences simply driven by a desire on the part of the moving-earth faction to fit in with the advances in science...Did the moving earthers necessarily compromise the integrity and authority of Scripture? (Lennox 2011, p. 27).

The obvious parallel Lennox tries to draw is that young-earth creationists are like the fixed-earth proponents of old, implying that they are scientifically illiterate and need to catch up with science (Lennox 2011, p. 31). This is an unfortunate caricature of young-earth creationists by Lennox, since the genre of the creation account in Genesis has long been explained by young-earth creationists. Every passage cited above that speaks of a fixed earth is taken from a poetic passage.

For example, Psalm 93:1 states, “Surely the world is established, so that it cannot be moved.” Therefore, because passages such as this are poetic, and are heavily laden with figurative speech, we should be careful of concluding that a specific verse should be read literally. The Psalmist was merely stating that God established the earth and no one can overturn His purposes for it.

Genesis 1–11 is clearly written as historical narrative, although this does not exclude figures of speech. The repeated use of the *waw* consecutive, which is an essential characteristic of narrative adding to the past narration an element of sequence, helps to identify it as so (Kaiser 2001, p. 80). Appearing 55 times in the 34 verses in Genesis 1:1–2:3 the *waw* consecutive is consistent with the narrative material found in the remainder of Genesis (McCabe 2009, p. 217).

The primary element of Hebrew poetry is parallelism and strophes (Osborne 2006, p. 238) with figurative language being more predominant than in prose and more difficult to understand (Osborne 2006, p. 239). But parallelism is not found in Genesis 1:1–2:3 as E. J. Young states:

...it is not poetry. For one thing the characteristics of Hebrew poetry are lacking, and in particular there is an absence of parallelism (Young 1964, pp. 82–83).

Although there may be a discussion concerning artistic elements of the Genesis creation account, it is an undisputed fact that Genesis is not a poetic text (Blocher 1984, p. 32; Hasel 1994, pp. 19–21; Kaiser 2001, pp. 80–82).

The history of the Galileo affair shows that the church was wrong in its interpretation of certain passages of Scripture. The answer to Lennox’s question as to why we are not split into fixed-earthers and moving-earthers is:

1. The Bible does not teach a fixed earth.
2. Observational science is more consistent with the heliocentric view.

The church in Galileo’s day mistakenly thought that the Bible supported a geocentric system by allowing Aristotelian philosophy to influence theology. Geocentrism of the Ptolemaic and Aristotelian system was the scientific establishment’s worldview of that day, which resulted in the church interpreting the Scriptures according to this system and holding to tradition rather than to sound biblical teaching.

Galileo himself believed in the trustworthiness of the Bible. He was contesting against the geocentric understanding of the universe and was seeking to show that the Bible lined up with the heliocentric system. Galileo was fighting against the interpretive principles of the church of his day, blinded by Aristotelian philosophy.

The irony of this history lesson is that, in Galileo's day, the church was interpreting poetical passages of the Bible literally whereas today some Christians are saying that Bible passages written as historical narrative, such as Genesis 1–3, should be read as poetry.

The unfortunate lesson from the Galileo incident is that many Christians have not learned from history. They are repeating the errors of the past by insisting on taking the popular ideas of the age, such as evolutionary naturalism, as their authority rather than the Bible. The history of the Galileo affair should serve as a warning to theistic evolutionists and old-earth creationists.

### The Church Fathers

Lennox does recognize that neither young-earth creationists nor old-earth creationists are recent inventions and rightly notes that Luther, Calvin, and the *Westminster Confession of Faith* held to the 24-hour-day view (Lennox 2011, p. 40). He also admits that “the understanding of the days of Genesis as twenty-four hour days seems to have been the dominant view for many centuries” (Lennox 2011, p. 42).

Nevertheless, he does cite the Jewish scholar Philo and the church Fathers Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, Origen, and Augustine to support his old earth views (Lennox 2011, pp. 40–42), emphasizing that they were not

influenced by contemporary science, such as geology and evolutionary biology but yet did not believe the days of creation were of twenty-four hours (Lennox 2011, p. 42).

Unfortunately, it seems that whenever the church fathers are brought up in the discussion over Genesis, there is either a preference over which fathers to use to make the case, or there is a misrepresentation of what they believed in order to support a particular view.

Even though Philo, Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, Origen, and Augustine were not influenced by *modern* science, they did have other influences, including the science of their own respective time. The Jewish philosopher Philo was inclined to a more

...allegorical interpretation of Scripture that made Jewish law consonant with the ideals of Stoic, Pythagorean, and especially Platonic thought (Bassler 1985, p. 791).

Thus, to appeal to Philo for interpreting of Genesis is problematic. Philo's commitment to Greek philosophy led him to allegorize the text of Genesis rather than seeking careful exegesis of the biblical text. On the contrary, a contemporary of Philo, the first century Jewish military commander-turned-historian

Josephus, understood the creation account in Genesis as literal history (Josephus 1897, pp. 28–29).

Lennox recognizes that the early church fathers Justin Martyr and Irenaeus based their ideas on the days being epochs on Psalm 90:4 and 2 Peter 3:8. However, Davis Young notes that

...the interesting feature of this patristic view is that the equation of the days and millennia was not applied to the creation week but rather to subsequent history. They did not believe that the creation had taken place over six millennia but that the totality of human history would occupy six thousand years, a millennium of history for each of the six days of creation (Young 1982, p. 20).<sup>3</sup>

Origen and Augustine were influenced by neo-Platonic philosophy. While they did not believe that the days were literally 24 hours, they also did not believe the earth to be ancient, but rather less than 10,000 years old (Augustine 12.11; Origen 1:19). In fact, Augustine did not believe the days were vast expanses of time, or that the earth was very old. Rather, he made precisely the opposite mistake of believing that creation was instantaneous, due to the outside influence of neo-Platonic philosophy. Augustine understood from Genesis 2:4 that everything was created simultaneously. However, he had to rely on the Old Latin translation of the Bible, the *Vetus Latina*. Since he did not know Hebrew he was likely unaware that the Hebrew word for “instant” (*rega'* in Exodus 33:5 and Numbers 16:21) is not used in Genesis 2:4 (Sarfaty 2004, p. 118).

Lennox's selective use of Philo, Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, Origen, and Augustine, in order to justify his old earth views, is unwarranted for two reasons. First, they did not believe the days were long periods of time or that the earth was old. Second, their interpretation of the creation account in Genesis was influenced largely by Greek philosophy, just as many scholars today have been influenced by a worldly philosophy (evolutionary naturalism).

### The Days of Creation

When it comes to the Genesis account of creation, Lennox, unlike theistic evolutionists, rightly understands that it is a historical narrative. Affirming that Scripture is God's revelation he correctly points out,

If we believe in the inspiration of Scripture, we must take the text seriously because it is Scripture that is inspired and not my particular understanding of it... (Lennox 2011, p. 48).

The “unmistakable impression” of the text according to Lennox, is that of a “chronological sequence of events, giving the briefest of brief histories of time...”

<sup>3</sup> It should be noted that Davis Young believes the earth is old.

(Lennox 2011, p. 48). He rightly notes that the word “day” can have a number of definitions, and points out four different meanings of the word in Genesis 1:1–2:4 (Lennox 2011, pp. 50–51).

In Genesis 1:5 two primary meanings for the word “day” appear in the same verse: “daytime” and “twenty-four hours.” He points to the third meaning of the word “day” on the seventh day since there is no mention of “evening and morning” as with the first six days. He believes that the seventh day is arguably different from the first six days, which are the days of creative activity. As do other long agers, Lennox cites Hebrews 4:3–11 to claim that we are still in God’s Sabbath rest (Lennox 2011, p. 50). Fourth, he notes that in Genesis 2:4 the word “day” is used to describe a period of time. He concludes that in Genesis 1:1–2:4, the word “day” has several distinct meanings, each of which are natural, primary, “literal” meanings (Lennox 2011, p. 51). Lennox also points out that the first five days in the Hebrew text are missing the definite article although this is present in Days Six and Seven. Lennox asks, “How should we interpret them?”

Lennox is correct in pointing out that the word “day” can have a number of different meanings, although young-earth creationists have long pointed this out. He is correct in his interpretation of the two meanings of “day” in Genesis 1:5, and its meaning in Genesis 2:4, but this does not prove his conclusion.

It is important to stress that when it comes to interpreting the days of creation we do not commit the hermeneutical fallacy of the unwarranted adoption of an expanded semantic field (Carson 1996, pp. 60–61). This occurs when one takes a word that can have more than one meaning from one context and placing into another context where it cannot mean that.

The singular use of “day” (*yom*) in Genesis 2:4 is often cited as evidence to demonstrate that the word refers to the entire Creation Week. However, the word here is used with the preposition *be* prefixed to the construct noun *yom* resulting in “*beyom*”. These words are followed by an infinitive construct. This construction “*beyom*”, meaning “when” (McCabe 2000, p. 117) (see also Genesis 2:17; Exodus 10:28) is often simply translated idiomatically summarizing the entirety of the six days of creation. Therefore, to use the word “day” here as an example of the days being figurative in chapter 1 is a failure to recognize the difference between the absolute noun “day” (Genesis

1) and the construct noun “day” (Genesis 2:4).

Lennox’s conclusion regarding the seventh day is simply inaccurate. Why is there no mention of “evening and morning” on Day Seven? First of all, it should be noted that God’s created work did not cease on the seventh day but that it was finished “by the seventh day.” Thus God had completed (*kala*) all His work, and all their hosts (*tsaba*), referring to everything in heaven and earth being completed. The words of Genesis 2:1 introduce the completion of God’s creation. The seventh day is mentioned three times in these verses revealing its uniqueness and importance. The verbs “completed,” “rested,” and “blessed” indicate the uniqueness of this day, and these are all associated with the work of God. Day Seven, like the other days, is a literal historical day of 24 hours.<sup>4</sup> It is not a day of creation, but a day of rest.

Dr. Robert McCabe<sup>5</sup> showed there is a five-fold framework apparent in the first six days, which is absent in Day Seven. This framework is used in Genesis 1:1–2:3 to shape each of the days:

“God said...”

“let there be...”

Fulfillment: “there was”

Evaluation: “God saw that it was good”

And conclusion: “there was evening and morning”

The evening and morning formula that has been used with the other days is no longer needed on Day Seven as it had a rhetorical function to mark the transition from the concluding day to the following day. The Creation Week is now complete and therefore it was not necessary to use the formula “evening and morning.”

However, it is not only “evening and morning” that are missing from the seventh day, none of the other parts of this framework are used on the seventh day. The framework is used to represent accurately God’s work involved in His creative activity. The reason this framework is not used on the seventh day is to show that God had ceased creating. Therefore, the reason evening and morning are not used is related to the other parts of the framework.

In addition, the reason the definite article is used for the first time on the sixth day is to indicate the completion of the work of creation upon that day (Keil and Delitzsch 1980, p. 50).

Is the seventh day unending according to Hebrews 4? No, Hebrews 4:3 is referring to the spiritual rest that all believers enter. Hebrews 4 quotes Genesis

<sup>4</sup>This conclusion is based on the following arguments. First, it is included in a numbered sequence with the other days of creation, which are to be understood as ordinary-length days. Second, Hebrews 4:3–5 does not state that Day 7 is still continuing; it states that God’s rest is ongoing. Third, Adam and Eve must have lived through Day 7 prior to being driven out of the garden; otherwise, God would have necessarily cursed the earth on the same day that He blessed and sanctified. Finally, if the absence of “evening and morning” mandates that the day is longer than a normal-length day (as argued by old-earth creationists), then this seems to be an inadvertent admission that the first six days were normal length. See also Chaffey and Lisle 2008, pp. 51–52.

<sup>5</sup>The following argument regarding “evening and morning” can be found in McCabe (2009, pp. 225–242).

2:2 and Psalm 95:7–11, and it is used by the author as an argument to warn of the danger of unbelief. Furthermore, if the seventh day is unending then this surely raises some theological problems of God cursing the earth while at the same time blessing and sanctifying it (Whitcomb 1973, p. 68).

### The Nature of the Creation Week

Lennox believes that the initial act of creation (Genesis 1:1–2) is separated from the six days of creation that follow because of the pattern to the days. Each day begins with the phrase “And God said” and ends with the statement “and there was evening and there was morning, nth day” (Lennox 2011, p. 52). This leads him to conclude that Day One begins in verse 3 and not verse 1 (Lennox 2011, p. 52). He points out that the verb “created” in Genesis 1:1 is in the perfect tense, and that

the normal use of the perfect at the very beginning of a pericope is to denote an event that took place before the storyline gets under way. The narrative begins in verse 3 (Lennox 2011, p. 52).

This implies that “the beginning” of Genesis 1:1 did not necessarily take place on Day One as is frequently assumed (Lennox 2011, p. 53). According to Lennox, the initial creation took place before Day One, but Genesis does not tell us how long before.

In Lennox’s view, this is one of the main reasons for believing

that the question of the age of the earth (and of the universe) is a separate question from the interpretation of the days, a point that is frequently overlooked. In other words, quite apart from any scientific considerations, the text of Genesis 1:1, in separating the beginning from day 1, leaves the age of the universe indeterminate (Lennox 2011, p. 53).

He also puts forward C. John Collins’s view that the days are “analogical days” as a possible way to interpret the days. This view takes the word “day” in its ordinary meaning, but applies in analogically.

With regards to Exodus 20:8–11 being support for a six-day Creation Week, Lennox believes that although there are similarities between God’s Creation Week and our work week, there are also obvious differences meaning that it is not possible to draw straight lines from Genesis to our working week. Therefore, Exodus 20:8–11 does not demand that the days of Genesis 1 be the days of a single week (Lennox 2011, p. 57).

When replying to Dr. Stephen Hawking in a previous book Lennox (2010, pp. 45–46) chides him for not reading widely enough and engaging with scholarship when discussing the biblical data of Genesis 1:1. It seems that Lennox would do well to take his own advice since he clearly has not engaged with any of the reputable young-earth creationist scholars who have long ago refuted his old-earth

creationist arguments.

Lennox’s reasoning behind Genesis 1:1–2 being separated from verse 3 is simply a sophisticated version of the gap theory. In verse 1 the verb is in the perfect tense form and in verse 3 the *wav* consecutive is used. Verse 2, however, begins in a different way with the *wav* attached to the noun “the earth” rather than being connected to the imperfect verb. This is called the *wav* disjunctive. It means that verse 2 is a little parenthetical statement saying something about what the earth was like when God first created it. The narrative of events goes from verse 1 to verse 3. Verse 2 is not a narrative of events but a description of what the earth is like.

Moreover, in verse 4 God separates the light from the darkness, and in verse 5 He calls the darkness “night”—both have the definite article. However, the only darkness that has been mentioned so far is in verse 2, which means that verse 2 is describing the state of the earth at the beginning of the first night. Verse 5 has the first night between evening and morning as it defines the day. There is no need to place a gap anywhere in the days of creation unless you are trying to fit something in, which is ultimately what Lennox is trying to do.

With regard to Exodus 20:8–11 and the days as being analogous to God’s day of rest, this oversimplifies and misrepresents the correlation between the two texts. Exodus 20:8–11 has a number of connections with the Creation Week: a “six-plus-one” pattern, “the heavens and the earth,” “the seventh day,” “rested,” “blessed,” and “made it holy.” All of this suggests that, at the least, one of God’s purposes in creating the heavens and the earth within six, successive literal days followed by a literal day of rest was to set up a pattern for his people to follow. Also, Exodus 20:8–11 uses an adverbial accusative of time (“in six days”) which indicates the duration of God’s creative activity (Waltke and O’Connor 1990, p. 171).

The pattern of the Creation Week is also mentioned in Exodus 31:14–17 as Israel’s observance of the Sabbath was a sign of the Mosaic covenant. Both Exodus 20 and 31 affirm that the Creation Week was literal and not analogous.

### The Problematic Fourth Day

Lennox has previously suggested that his interpretation of Genesis is primarily textual and has not been influenced by “science” (Lennox 2011, p. 53) but this is hard to believe given his objection regarding the fourth day. He asks: “If there is a chronological dimension to the days, how is it that the sun was made on day 4?” There is no problem in the text with the sun being created on Day Four unless you are trying to accommodate a secular view of solar origin, which is what Lennox is attempting to do (Lennox 2011, p. 154).

In these views the sun and stars come before the earth.

He simply cannot understand how the first three days can be 24-hour days if the sun is not yet there (Lennox 2011, pp. 58–59). For Lennox,

the logical alternative is that the sun existed at the beginning of the Genesis week; and that the account of day 4 would have to be read in light of that fact (Lennox 2011, p. 59).

To do this he looks at two arguments used by Hugh Ross and C.J. Collins. Referencing Job 38:9 Ross argues that the sun, moon, and stars were not created on Day Four, but appeared when the cloud cover that had concealed them dissipated (Ross 2001, p. 43). Meanwhile, Collins suggests that the verb “made” (*asah*) in Genesis 1:16 does not specifically mean “create”; although *asah* means “to create,” it often refers to “working in something that is already there,” or even to something that has been “appointed.” Lennox favors Collins’ interpretation as it fits well with the function of the sun and moon as visible lights in the sky. Essentially, God is speaking about their role in the cosmos, and not their creation or appearing (Lennox 2011, p. 59).

In order to dismiss the argument of the sun being created on Day Four, Lennox says:

some have tried to overcome this by postulating the existence of a non solar light source that functioned for the first three days...though we know nothing about such a light source, either from Scripture or science (Lennox 2011, p. 59).

This is simply not true. The Bible tells us that God created light on Day One (Genesis 1:3), yet it does not tell us what the source was. Is it really too difficult for the God who is light (1 John 1:5) to create a source of light without the sun or the stars? Not at all! In any case, we are told that there will be no need for the sun in the new heavens and earth, because the presence of the glory of God provides the needed illumination (Revelation 21:23).

Lennox fails to understand how the first three days could have been literal days without the sun, but young-earth creationists have long provided the easy solution to this proposed dilemma. Genesis is clear that the sun was created on Day Four, and not at the beginning of Creation Week. Did the sun merely appear on Day Four? A word for “appear” (*ra’ah*) is used in Genesis 1:9, so why would the author not use this word if he meant that the sun and stars appeared on Day Four? It is true that the roles of the sun and stars are described on the Fourth Day, but this does not prohibit them from being created that day. Perhaps the greatest weakness of this argument is that the word for “make” (*asah*) is used throughout Genesis 1, and is even used interchangeably with “create” (*bara* in Genesis 1: 26–27) (Mortenson 2007).

## Death and Suffering

Lennox realizes the limitations of dealing with the issue of death and suffering in a short book (Lennox 2011, p. 76). Nevertheless, he does recognize that the Apostle Paul’s statement in Romans 5:12 is

a serious issue with profound implications for the doctrine of salvation, as...if Paul is wrong in his diagnosis of the origin of sin and death, how can we expect him to be right regarding its solution? (Lennox 2011, p. 76).

He rightly understands that Romans 5:12 refers to human death, believing that Paul leaves open the question of death at levels other than human (Lennox 2011, p. 78). For example, he reasons that since man ate plants then plant death cannot be an issue or a consequence of human sin, even though plants did die (Lennox 2011, p. 78). This overlooks the fact that plants are not looked upon as being “alive in biblical Hebrew or in second Temple Jewish literature” (Kennard 2008, p. 169).

What about animal death? Lennox argues that there must have been death before the Fall because mammals such as whales, who do not live on green vegetation but on live sea food, must have caused death while eating (Lennox 2011, p. 78). In doing this he rules out the possibility of the existence of other foods.

He also suggests that no animal death before human sin makes the existence of predators problematic (Lennox 2011, p. 79), suggesting that if predators were the result of the Fall:

... would it not make that sin the trigger of a creation process—a feature that seems very unlikely, and on which the Bible appears to be silent? Or did God foresee the change, build the mechanisms into the creatures in advance, and then do something to set them in operation? (Lennox 2011, p. 79).

The problems that Lennox raises for no animal death before the Fall are understandable, but they can be answered within a biblical framework. The Bible never uses the Hebrew term *nephesh chayyah* (living soul/creature) when referring to invertebrates, but it does when referring to humans and fish (Genesis 1:20; 2:7). Also, insects do not have the same sort of “blood” that vertebrates do, yet “the life of the flesh is in the blood” (Leviticus 17:11) (Sarfati 2004, p. 211). It is reasonable then to assume that the pre-Fall diet of animals could have included invertebrates. Even so, if we consider the fact that God foreknew the Fall (1 Peter 1:18–20; Ephesians 3:11; Revelation 13:8), then it is also logical that

He programmed creatures with the information for attack and defense features, which they would need in a cursed world. This information was “switched on” at the Fall (Sarfati 2004, p. 212).

In order not to have to argue this way, Lennox thinks that Occam's Razor (all things being equal, the simplest solution tends to be the best one) may need to be applied at this point in order to restrict the multiplication of unnecessary hypotheses (Lennox 2011, p. 79). However, his application of Occam's Razor is used with regards to Paul's statement in Romans 5:12, which is not a text informed young-earth creationists would use to argue for animal death. He would be correct in his application only if Romans 5:12 were being used this way. Occam's Razor is to be preferred when used with the correct biblical texts concerning no death of any kind before the Fall (Genesis 1:29–31; 3:1–24; Romans 8:19–22; Revelation 21:4; 22:3).

Lennox anticipates the objection that Romans 8:20–21 refers to all death being the result of sin (Lennox 2011, p. 79). Believing that corruption, disease, and human death may well be a consequence of human sin but animal and plant death are not, however, he does not comment on Romans 8:22 (Lennox 2011, p. 80).

He goes on to imply that there was only no death in the Garden of Eden: "From the Biblical text one does not get the impression that the entire world was like Eden" (Lennox 2011, p. 81). Asking

Was there...a difference between the behavior of animals outside the Garden of Eden and that of those in the idyllic situation inside? (Lennox 2011, p. 82).

The Bible nowhere makes these implications. Rather it tells us that all of God's creation was "very good" (Genesis 1:31). The phrase "very good" is God's pronouncement of the culmination of all of His creation where he already called things "good" six times. In their commentary on Genesis, 19th century theologians Keil and Delitzsch, experts on biblical Hebrew, commented on Genesis 1:31:

By the application of the term "good" to everything God made, and the repetition of the word with the emphasis "very" at the close of the whole creation, the existence of anything evil is absolutely denied, and the hypothesis refuted... (Keil and Delitzsch 1980, p. 67).

The very good world which God had made is not simply a reference to morals. Verses 29–30 show that "very good" was also a statement concerning the vegetarian diet of man and animals. There was no "kill or be killed" or survival of the fittest in God's very good creation.

Although Lennox implores us to note carefully what Scripture says, at times he does not follow his own principle. Regarding Genesis 1:30 he believes that the instruction concerning vegetation as food was given to humans and not animals (Lennox 2011, p. 89). His reason being:

The humans had just been told what their food was

to be. They had been commanded to subdue the fish, animals, and birds. It would be important for them to know that the subduing did not include keeping the animals away from the humans' food, suggesting that at least some of them may have been nonvegetarian food (Lennox 2011, p. 89).

Yet he seems to miss completely the connection with what the previous verse says. Genesis 1:29 states explicitly that the food for humans was to be vegetation while verse 30 tells us that animals also were to eat green plants for food. This means that both animals and humans were vegetarian from the start. As Hamilton notes:

At no point is anything (human beings, animals, birds) allowed to take the life of another living being and consume it for food. The dominion assigned to the human couple over the animal world does not include the prerogative to butcher. Instead, humankind survives on a vegetarian diet (Hamilton 1990, p. 140).

In trying to fit plant and animal death into the pre-Fall world, Lennox fails on a number of points. First, he fails to recognize that plants do not have that life principle (*nephesh* in Hebrew) that animals and humans have. Second, although he is correct to point out that Romans 5:12 refers to human death, his obvious lack of engagement with young-earth creationist writings means that he is unaware of the fact that this is not a text young-earth creationist use in arguing for no animal death before the Fall.

Biblically, there are a number of reasons for no death of any kind before the Fall. Since God made His creation "very good" (Genesis 1:31), and since both humans and animals were originally vegetarian (Genesis 1:29–30), then death could not have been a part of God's creation. Even after the Fall the diet of Adam and Eve was vegetarian (Genesis 3:17–19). It was not until after the Flood that man was permitted to eat animals for food (Genesis 9:3). The Fall in Genesis 3 would best explain the origin of carnivorous animal behavior.

Furthermore, Isaiah 11:6–9 and 65:17–25 refer to a future state of the earth which seems to parallel the pre-Fall world, when there was no carnivorous activity. It is also a fallacy to read the present state of the world, which includes predators, back into the biblical account of creation. This is the uniformitarian principle "the present is the key to the past" (popularized by Charles Lyell), which assumes that the processes we observe in our present world is the way it has always been. This is a common assumption among old-earth creationists. However, revelation, and not the present, is the key to understanding the past.

Regarding Romans 8:19–22, the word "creation" in verse 19 has been the subject of some debate. Both

Dunn and Moo point out this word clearly refers to the non-human creation (Dunn 1988, p.469; Moo 1996, p.514). In verse 20 Paul explains why creation is anticipating the revelation of the sons of God. “The reason, Paul says, is that the subhuman creation itself is not what it should be, or what God intended it to be” (Moo 1996, p.515). It is this way because God subjected it to frustration, He “...alone has the right and power to condemn all of creation to frustration because of human sin” (Moo 1996, p.516). Schreiner believes Paul is probably drawing on the tradition found in Genesis 3:17–19, where creation is cursed due to Adam’s sin. He points out that “futility” means that creation has not filled the purpose for which it was made (Schreiner 1998, p.436). Dunn writes that “subjected by God...is a divine passive with reference particularly to Genesis 3:17–18” (Dunn 1988, p.470). Paul’s point in verse 22, a verse that Lennox does not discuss, is that the creation, which again is non-human (Dunn 1988, p.472), is groaning and suffering, not from natural disasters and suffering before the Fall, but because of the Fall of Adam in Genesis 3 as Romans 8:19–25 makes clear.

The Bible also talks about a time when creation will be restored (Acts 3:21; Romans 8:21) because the whole of creation “was subjected to futility” (Romans 8:20–22). Old-earth creationists must be able to explain what creation will be restored to. Will it be restored to a state of death and suffering? The book of Revelation also makes it very clear that in the new heavens and earth there will be no more pain or death (Revelation 21:4) and the curse will be no more (Revelation 22:3). How could anyone look forward to a new heaven and earth filled with death of any kind.

### Age of the Earth

When it comes to the age of the earth, Lennox is not convinced that the old-earth reading is less natural than the young-earth reading, if we are simply thinking in terms of the age of the earth (Lennox 2011, p.66). The reason is that the text of Genesis 1, he believes, separates the initial creation from the first day. The age of the earth is a logically separate matter from the nature of the days (Lennox 2011, p.66).

However Lennox’s understanding of the age of the universe is controlled more by the big bang theory than the biblical text:

...the standard (Big Bang) Model developed by physicists and cosmologists can be seen as a scientific unpacking of the implications of the statement, “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” There is a certain irony here, in that the very same big bang cosmological model of the universe that confirms the biblical claim that there was a beginning also implies that the universe is very old

(Lennox 2011, p.154).

Unfortunately, Lennox assumes the standard big bang model without argument and fails to address the biblical and scientific problems with it (Williams and Hartnett 2005).

His reliance upon the big bang is unfortunate as it is not only based upon philosophical naturalism (the belief that nature is all there is), but it contradicts the biblical account of creation in several ways. First, accepting the big bang model is to ignore what the Creator has revealed concerning how He created the universe. The Bible clearly teaches that God created everything in heaven and earth within six days (Exodus 20:11). This is in contrast to the big bang model, which explains the universe and earth as being created over billions of years. The big bang theory has the stars existing for billions of years before the earth while the Bible teaches that the stars were created (not “appeared”) on Day Four, three days after the earth was created. The Bible also teaches that the earth was made from water (Genesis 1:2–9; 2 Peter 3:5), whereas the big bang model teaches that the earth started out as molten rock.

In looking for a way forward in this controversy he suggests four considerations:

1. The current scientific evidence for an ancient earth.
2. The honest and admirable admission of prominent young-earth creationists that “recent creationists should humbly agree that their view is, at the moment, implausible on purely scientific grounds...”
3. The fact that Scripture, although it could be interpreted in terms of a young earth, does not require such an interpretation.
4. The fact that we do not know everything (Lennox 2011, pp.86–87).

Unfortunately, Lennox’s argument for an old earth from Genesis 1 simply does not work, and is imposed on the text rather than read out of it. The controlling factor in his interpretation of an old earth is “scientific evidence,” which is simply the result of uniformitarian assumptions used to interpret the evidence, rather than biblical presuppositions.

Lennox’s choice of Nelson and Reynolds as young-earth creationists to interact with is strange. It was mystifying enough that they were asked to argue for young-earth creationists in the *Three Views On Creation and Evolution* book (Nelson and Reynolds 1999, pp.39–75) given their background is in philosophy, and not in science or theology.

His admission that Genesis can be interpreted in terms of a young earth is commendable, but his assertion that Genesis does not have to be interpreted that way has nothing to do with the text, but everything to do with his a priori assumptions concerning the

age of the earth. He is also right that we do not know everything, but we do know the One who does, and we can trust Him when He tells us how long He took to make everything.

## Conclusion

John Lennox is a committed Christian whose writings and debates against the New Atheists, such as Christopher Hitchens and Richard Dawkins, have done much to encourage Christians to hold firm to and defend their faith. However, one of the major disappointments with the book is that Lennox has clearly not engaged in a meaningful way with any of the foremost young-earth creationist literature of our day. If he had done so then he may not have had to write the book as most of his arguments have long been refuted. The only young-earth creationist position that Lennox seems to have read is the view in the book *Three Views of Creation and Evolution* (Lennox 2011, pp.66, 86), which is a very weak presentation of young-earth creation, argued for by people who are not at all well-known defenders of that view. His arguments for old-earth creation are seriously flawed in light of Scripture, and sadly, history has shown that compromise on Genesis undermines the Bible.

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