

GENESIS

The creation of the world

IN THE BEGINNING OF CREATION, when God made 1
heaven and earth,^a the earth was without form and void, with darkness 2
over the face of the abyss, and a mighty wind that swept^b over the 3
surface of the waters. God said, 'Let there be light', and there was light; 4
① and God saw that the light was good, and he separated light from darkness. 5
He called the light day, and the darkness night. So evening came, and 6
morning came, the first day.

God said, 'Let there be a vault between the waters, to separate water 6
from water.' So God made the vault, and separated the water under the 7
vault from the water above it, and so it was; and God called the vault 8
② heaven. Evening came, and morning came, a second day.

God said, 'Let the waters under heaven be gathered into one place, so 9
that dry land may appear'; and so it was. God called the dry land earth, 10
and the gathering of the waters he called seas; and God saw that it was 11
good. Then God said, 'Let the earth produce fresh growth, let there be 12
③ on the earth plants bearing seed, fruit-trees bearing fruit each with seed
according to its kind.' So it was; the earth yielded fresh growth, plants 13
bearing seed according to their kind and trees bearing fruit each with seed
according to its kind; and God saw that it was good. Evening came, and 14
morning came, a third day.

God said, 'Let there be lights in the vault of heaven to separate day from 14
night, and let them serve as signs both for festivals and for seasons and 15
years. Let them also shine in the vault of heaven to give light on earth.' So 16
④ it was; God made the two great lights, the greater to govern the day and
the lesser to govern the night; and with them he made the stars. God put 17
these lights in the vault of heaven to give light on earth, to govern day and 18
night, and to separate light from darkness; and God saw that it was good.
Evening came, and morning came, a fourth day. 19

God said, 'Let the waters teem with countless living creatures, and let 20
⑤ birds fly above the earth across the vault of heaven.' God then created the
great sea-monsters and all living creatures that move and swarm in the 21
waters, according to their kind, and every kind of bird; and God saw that 22
→ it was good. So he blessed them and said, 'Be fruitful and increase, fill the
waters of the seas; and let the birds increase on land.' Evening came, and 23
morning came, a fifth day.

God said, 'Let the earth bring forth living creatures, according to their 24
kind: cattle, reptiles, and wild animals, all according to their kind.' So it 25
was; God made wild animals, cattle, and all reptiles, each according to its

^a Or In the beginning God created heaven and earth.

^b Or and the spirit

of God hovering.

26 kind; and he saw that it was good. Then God said, 'Let us make man in our image and likeness to rule the fish in the sea, the birds of heaven, the cattle, all wild animals on earth, and all reptiles that crawl upon the earth.'

27 So God created man in his own image; in the image of God he created
 28 him; male and female he created them. God blessed them and said to them, 'Be fruitful and increase, fill the earth and subdue it, rule over the fish in the sea, the birds of heaven, and every living thing that moves upon
 29 the earth.' God also said, 'I give you all plants that bear seed everywhere on earth, and every tree bearing fruit which yields seed: they shall be yours
 30 for food. All green plants I give for food to the wild animals, to all the birds of heaven, and to all reptiles on earth, every living creature.' So it was;
 31 and God saw all that he had made, and it was very good. Evening came, and morning came, a sixth day.

2 Thus heaven and earth were completed with all their mighty throng.
 2 On the sixth day God completed all the work he had been doing, and on
 3 the seventh day he ceased from all his work. God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on that day he ceased from all the work he had set himself to do.

4 This is the story of the making of heaven and earth when they were created.

The beginnings of history

5 **W**HEN THE LORD GOD MADE EARTH AND HEAVEN, there was neither shrub nor plant growing wild upon the earth, because the LORD God had sent no rain on the earth; nor was there any man to till the ground.
 6 A flood^a used to rise out of the earth and water all the surface of the ground.
 7 Then the LORD God formed a man from the dust of the ground^c and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life. Thus the man became a living
 8 creature. Then the LORD God planted a garden in Eden away to the east,
 9 and there he put the man whom he had formed. The LORD God made trees spring from the ground, all trees pleasant to look at and good for food; and in the middle of the garden he set the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

10 There was a river flowing from Eden to water the garden, and when it
 11 left the garden it branched into four streams. The name of the first is Pishon; that is the river which encircles all the land of Havilah, where the gold^d is. The gold^d of that land is good; bdellium^e and cornelians are also
 12 to be found there. The name of the second river is Gihon; this is the one
 13 which encircles all the land of Cush. The name of the third is Tigris; this
 14 is the river which runs east of Asshur. The fourth river is the Euphrates.

15 The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to till
 16 it and care for it. He told the man, 'You may eat from every tree in the
 17 garden, but not from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil; for on the
 18 day that you eat from it, you will certainly die.' Then the LORD God said,

^a Or mist.

^b Heb. adam.

^c Heb. adamah.

^d Or frankincense.

^e Or gum resin.

in turn, to a variety of tactics aimed at bringing scientific data and its interpretation into conformity with this literal interpretation of Scripture. Scientific investigation is made subservient to a theory of biblical exegesis—a theory, furthermore, which is repudiated by the vast majority of biblical scholars and theologians. The brand of science which results is likewise rejected by the vast majority of scientists. Yet, in discussions of conflicts between science and religion, the possibility of a faulty theory of biblical interpretation is never seriously considered, nor is the possibility of a resulting misunderstanding of the creation texts and of their relationship to scientific accounts of origins seriously entertained.

* G. I. Williamson, for example, in the course of dealing with the issue of conflicts between science and the Bible in his commentary on the Westminster Confession, states that “the *only reason* for conflict is that men have erred either (a) in their investigation of the facts, or (b) in their theories about the facts, or (c) in both.”¹¹ No consideration is given to the likelihood that this may be a two-way street. There is no acknowledgment that others might have erred on the *religious* side of the issue either (a) in their investigation of the facts concerning the biblical texts, or (b) in their theories about these texts, or (c) in both. All fault is laid at the door of misinformed and misguided scientists.

This is remarkable inasmuch as the arguments and assumptions used by the creationists have a long and inglorious history. They are essentially the same as those once offered by defenders of a flat earth and a geocentric cosmos. Only a century ago John Hampden, in upholding “the clear and unmistakable flat-earth teaching of the Bible,” wrote, “No one can believe a single doctrine or dogma of modern astronomy, and accept Scriptures as divine revelation.” Similarly, in affirming that the Bible teaches a creation in six literal twenty-four-hour days, he wrote, “If he can prove . . . that days do not mean days, then is the infidel fully justified in laughing to scorn every other phrase and every other statement, from the first verse to the last in the Bible.”¹²

What is “clear and unmistakable” is that today’s literalists can trace their ancestry—without any missing links—to yesterday’s proponents of a flat earth and an earth-centered universe, although the

former teachings are vestigial. The same domino theory of biblical interpretation is perpetuated by contemporary fundamentalism. First one equates doubts about literalism with doubts about the Bible and its teachings. Then one diverts all doubt in the direction of scientific evidence and theory. Finally one associates any other understandings of biblical and scientific teaching with infidelity and an assortment of other evils. Little humility is wasted on the literalist assumptions themselves.

For Henry Morris, a veritable Pandora’s box of dire fates awaits those who are said to “compromise” on a literal interpretation of Genesis and thus to permit an accommodation with evolutionary thought:

Belief in evolution is a necessary component of atheism, pantheism, and all other systems that reject the sovereign authority of an omnipotent personal God. [It] has historically been used by their leaders to justify a long succession of evil systems—including fascism, communism, anarchism, nazism, occultism, and many others. [It] leads normally to selfishness, aggressiveness, and fighting between groups, as well as animalistic attitudes and behaviour by individuals.¹³

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The Creation-Science Research Center claims to be able to demonstrate that evolutionary teaching, aided and abetted by nonliteral interpretations of Genesis, has brought about “the moral decay of spiritual values which contributes to the destruction of mental health . . . [and to] divorce, abortion and rampant venereal disease.”¹⁴ With this kind of police record, the inevitable conclusion is that evolutionary teaching is part of not only a communist but a satanic conspiracy. Again, it is the kind of charge once freely used against those who doubted the flat-earth and earth-centered “teaching” of the Bible, now brought forth to combat evolution:

One can discern the malignant influence of “that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world” (Revelation 12:9). As we have seen, it must have been essentially the deception of evolution which prompted Satan himself to rebel against God, and it was essentially the same great lie with which he deceived Eve, and with which he has continued to “deceive the whole world.”¹⁵

One of the more obvious dangers of this line of argument is that it can work both ways. If the literalists are incorrect in their assump-