

COMING TO GRIPS WITH

# GENESIS

BIBLICAL AUTHORITY AND THE AGE OF THE EARTH

Terry Mortenson, Ph. D.  
Thane H. Ury, Ph.D.  
Editors

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## Foreword

Dr. Henry M. Morris

A volume such as this is long overdue and very much needed in the world of evangelical theology. And it is singularly appropriate that it be dedicated to my long-time friend and associate, Dr. John Whitcomb. I consider it a privilege to write a foreword endorsing the book and encouraging Christians everywhere to read it and use it in their own ministries and witness for the Lord. It is especially recommended that evangelical pastors and Bible professors in seminaries and Bible colleges carefully consider its evidences and arguments. Compromise on issues related to creation and primeval history has been much too common among Christian leaders. John Whitcomb, for nearly 50 years, has seemed almost like a voice crying in the wilderness, seeking to call his theological brethren back to the clear biblical teachings on these great themes. But now they *are* coming back, and the authors of the chapters in this book give good reasons why.

It has long seemed anomalous to me, as a professional scientist and non-professional Bible reader, that the modern revival of literal biblical creationism (the term I prefer to "young-earth creationism") has been led mostly by scientists rather than theologians. The book *The Genesis Flood* published in 1961, for example, contained more scientific discussion than biblical. The Creation Research Society was formed in 1963 as an organization of creationist scientists, and there has been a great proliferation of creationist organizations and ministries since that time; these have all been mainly staffed by scientists. Many other books on "creation-science" have followed, again written mostly by scientists.

It is true that there are many good scientific evidences pointing to special creation, a young earth, and the global Flood, and these have been persuasively advanced by creationist scientists in debates, seminars, and conferences for many years and with great results. But the *compelling* and *definitive* evidences are biblical, not scientific. Science and the scientific method do support creation, but can never either prove creation or disprove evolution. Nor can it determine the age of the earth or prove that there was a worldwide deluge in the prehistoric past.

The Bible is explicitly clear on these issues, however. There is not even a hint of evolution or the long ages implied by evolution in the Bible. Neither is there

any biblical intimation that the Genesis Flood was a local Flood or a tranquil Flood, as theological theories that compromise with evolution would require. One does not have to be a theologian or Bible scholar to see this. It becomes quite evident to anyone who simply reads the Bible and believes it to be the inerrant Word of God.

But why don't most theologians see this? Especially evangelical theologians and pastors trained in evangelical seminaries? That has been the anomaly. They all profess to believe the Bible as the inspired Word of God, and that is clearly what the Bible records.

Yet for a long time even orthodox, conservative, evangelical seminaries have been teaching their students to accommodate evolution — or at least the long ages of evolution — in their worldviews. They have used the gap theory or the day/age theory or even the highly ambiguous framework theory to try to do this.

But these don't work biblically and are unnecessary scientifically. I realize that the underlying motive in these compromise views has been to defend the gospel and win people to Christ in spite of the predominance of secularism in our society. But they certainly are not necessary. Seminaries do not usually include much science in their curricula, but the general feeling has been that since "science" has proved evolution and the geological ages to have occurred, these concepts *must* be incorporated somehow in our theologies, no matter how much we have to distort or "spiritualize" Genesis to do so.

I realize that the scientific establishment is still strongly committed to evolutionism, even though there are now literally thousands of what they call "young-earth creationists" who are fully credentialed scientists. The leading scientific journals and even most newspapers refuse to publish creationist articles and the scientific societies are all dominated by evolutionists. Their leaders vigorously oppose including creationism (or even the mention of any anti-evolution evidences) in the public schools. They repeat the mantra, "Creation is religion, evolution is science" over and over whenever the question comes up.

All this seems to intimidate most theologians to such an extent that true literal biblical creationism has long been taught almost as rarely in Christian seminaries as it has in state universities.

But evangelical theology ought to be governed by the Word of God rather than the pronouncements of scientists. That is why this volume is so timely and so necessary. The authors of these chapters are fully qualified to write on this subject from a biblical and theological perspective, and they have shown unequivocally that God's Word teaches special creation, a young earth, a worldwide Flood, and the God-centered worldview in general. For all who really believe in biblical inerrancy and perspicuity, these studies should settle the matter once and for all.

They won't do so, however, for secular evolutionists. The evolutionary worldview will almost certainly continue to dominate the world as a whole; in fact, biblical prophecy would indicate that this will be the case. But that does not justify evangelical compromise. We should "*let God be true, but every man a*



*liar*" if it comes to that (Rom. 3:4; KJV). It is His Word that will govern at the judgment seat of Christ, not that of "science."

As a matter of fact, there is no real scientific evidence for evolution anyhow. This has been amply demonstrated in the writings of many creationist scientists. No one has ever observed any genuine evolution taking place (macro-evolution, that is) in the thousands of years of recorded history — so it is certainly not a part of *observational* science (and real science should involve observation and repetition).

Furthermore, despite certain disputable claims, no one has ever demonstrated an authentic evolutionary transitional series among all the billions of fossils preserved in the sedimentary rocks of the earth's crust. So evolution did not occur in the past either, as far as the evidence shows.

In fact, evolution on any significant scale seems impossible scientifically. The law of entropy expresses the universal principle of decrease in organized complexity — certainly not molecules-to-man increase in complexity!

These truths are abundantly documented in the books and articles of many qualified scientists who are creationists. Theologians who think otherwise have not really studied these writings as they should.

In reality, evolutionism is a religion — not science at all. It is a belief system, attempting to explain the existence of all things without God. It might as well be called the religion of atheistic humanism, or the religion of the coming Antichrist. There is certainly no good reason for theologians or pastors or Bible teachers in general to defer to it or compromise with it any longer. "*Preach the word*" was Paul's closing admonition to young pastor Timothy (2 Tim. 4:2; KJV). The Word as it truly is, not some compromise with modern "*science falsely so called*" (1 Tim. 6:20; KJV).

That is also true with respect to the age of the earth and the global Flood. Creationist sciences have pointed out literally scores of worldwide natural processes that intimate that the earth is much too young for real evolution to have taken place. The recent RATE Project, carried out by scientists from the Institute for Creation Research and the Creation Research Society, have even shown that radioisotope time measurements (based on such processes as uranium decay and radiocarbon decay) indicate a young earth. Until now, these radiometric systems have been offered as clinching "proofs" for "deep time" and an old earth operating according to naturalistic, uniformitarian processes. But that "proof" cannot justifiably be used any longer.

The biblical record (especially 2 Pet. 3:3–6) makes it clear that uniformitarianism is a completely invalid premise when applied to events before or during the Genesis Flood. This premise, however, is exactly the basis on which the vast structure of the geologic column and the assumed geological ages has been erected.

Now, however, a growing number of geologists — though still committed to evolutionary naturalism — are abandoning uniformitarianism. They recognize the fact that practically every geologic formation of any size and significance was formed in at least some kind of local "catastrophe" — not slowly and gradually

over a long period of time. That is, uniformitarianism as a guiding principle in geological interpretation (“the present is the key to the past,” they used to say) is being replaced by “neo-catastrophism.”

Since it is generally recognized that there is no worldwide “time gap” in the geologic column, and since every significant unit in the column must have been formed rapidly and catastrophically, the necessary scientific conclusion ought to be that the entire column must have been formed rapidly and catastrophically, without any significant interruption. There are many other scientific indications that the global deluge did indeed occur.

None of this is real proof, of course. As Christians, we should not be looking to geology for our ultimate answers anyway. The only firm proof is that which has been recorded in the Word of God. For those who really believe the Bible to be the inspired and inerrant Word of God, that should be sufficient. But apparently it has not been sufficient for many evangelical theologians, who have labored mightily to explain the Bible records in some way that can accommodate the geological ages and a multi-billion-year age for the earth.

That stratagem will not work anymore, at least not for anyone who reads this book. The chapters of this book show convincingly that the biblical record is founded on recent creation and a worldwide Flood. Creationist scientists are increasingly demonstrating that true science supports this revelation. Like it or not, that’s how it is!

John Whitcomb has been stressing this great truth for many years. It is wonderfully fitting that so many other outstanding Bible scholars are now convinced of this too and have dedicated this splendid symposium to him and his time-tested, Bible-honoring teaching ministry.

— Henry M. Morris  
June 2005

### Editors’ Note

After a short series of strokes, on February 25, 2006, at the age of 87, Dr. Henry Morris (1918–2006) went to be with the Lord he loved and served so faithfully for so many decades. Ask any scholar who has delved into the central issues of literal biblical creationism, and the names John Whitcomb and Henry Morris immediately spring to mind as icons in the movement. Both editors were greatly influenced by many of Morris’s more than 60 books (including *The Genesis Flood*, co-authored with Dr. John Whitcomb in 1961) and his other writings. He was a godly, gracious scholar and scientist who carefully expounded and tenaciously defended the truth of God’s Word from the very first verse. All modern young-earth creationists stand on the shoulders of this giant of the faith. Although some of the chapters of this book were not done at the time of his death, he was confident from his knowledge of many of the authors that he could recommend the book to readers. We are honored to have his preface for this volume.



## *Foreword*

*John MacArthur*

The apostle Paul closed his first epistle to Timothy by urging the young pastor to guard the deposit of truth that had been entrusted to him, “avoiding the profane and idle babblings and contradictions of what is falsely called knowledge” (1 Tim. 6:20–21). In the King James Version, the text famously speaks of “*science* falsely so called.”

Over the course of human history, all kinds of speculative ideas have been falsely labeled “science” and mistakenly accepted as true and reliable knowledge by otherwise brilliant people. The now-discredited dogmas of older scientific theories are numerous — and in some cases laughable. They include *alchemy* (the medieval belief that other base metals could be transmuted into gold); *phrenology* (the Victorian belief that the shape of one’s skull reflects character traits and mental capacity); *astrology* (the pagan belief that human destiny is determined by the motions of celestial bodies); and *abiogenesis* (the long-standing belief that living organisms are spontaneously generated by decaying organic substances). All those false beliefs were deemed credible as “science” by the leading minds of their times.

Consider just one of those — abiogenesis. Popularly known as “spontaneous generation,” this idea has long been, and continues to be, one of the archetypal expressions of “science falsely so called.” It is also one of the most persistent of all demonstrably pseudoscientific fictions. The notion that aphids arise naturally from dew on plant leaves, mold is generated automatically by aging bread, and maggots are spontaneously begotten by rotting meat was more or less deemed self-evident by most of humanity’s brightest intellects<sup>1</sup> from the time of Aristotle until 1861, when Louis Pasteur conclusively proved that non-living matter cannot spawn life on its own.

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*Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture in this chapter is from the NKJV of the Bible.*

1. Alexander Ross, an early 17th-century Scottish writer and intellectual, harshly criticized Sir Thomas Browne for questioning the dogma of spontaneous generation. Under the heading “Mice and other vermin bred of putrefaction, even in men’s bodies,” he wrote: “He doubts whether mice can be procreated of putrefaction. So he may doubt whether in cheese and timber worms are generated; Or if Betels and wasps in coves dung; Or if

It is one of the great ironies of scientific history that the first edition of Charles Darwin's *On the Origin of Species* was published exactly two years before Pasteur's famous experiments proved that life cannot arise spontaneously from non-living matter. The publication of Darwin's book marked the apotheosis of evolutionary theory, and it was rooted in the basic presupposition that under the right circumstances, life can spring on its own from non-living matter. In other words, two years before abiogenesis was scientifically debunked, it was in effect canonized as the central dogma of modern secular belief about the origins of life. The discovery that fleas don't magically form out of decomposing dander on the backs of dirty dogs did not dissuade most in the scientific world from embracing the theory that all life in the universe arose by itself out of nothing. The belief that life spontaneously came from non-life remains to this day the great unexplained (albeit easily disprovable) assumption underlying the dogma of evolution.

The irony of that is utterly lost on many in the scientific community today, where evolution has become an article of faith — *unshakable* faith, it turns out.

Evolutionists have conveniently "solved" the problem of abiogenesis by repeatedly moving their estimates of the earth's age backward toward infinity. Given enough time, it seems, *anything* is possible. Trying desperately to keep the biblical concept of eternity at bay, evolutionists have thus devised an alternative kind of infinitude. Every time a challenge to current evolutionary theory arises, geologists and astronomers dutifully tack billions and billions of eons onto their theories about the earth's age, adding however many ancient epochs are deemed necessary for some new impossibility to be explained.

In 2001, I wrote a book dealing with Genesis 1–3. I began that book's introduction by suggesting that naturalism has become the dominant religion of contemporary secular society. "*Religion* is exactly the right word to describe naturalism," I wrote. "The entire philosophy is built on a faith-based premise. Its basic presupposition — a rejection of everything supernatural — requires a giant leap of faith. And nearly all its supporting theories must be taken by faith as well."<sup>2</sup> Here, then, is a classic example of what I was talking about: the typical evolutionist's *starting* point is this notion that life arose spontaneously from inanimate matter sometime in eternity past. That requires not merely the willful suspension of what we know for certain about the origins of life and the impossibility of abiogenesis — but also enough deliberate gullibility to believe that moving-target estimates of the earth's antiquity can sufficiently answer all the problems and contradictions sheer naturalism poses.

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butterflies, locusts, grasshoppers, shel-fish, snails, celes, and such like, be procreated of putrefied matter, which is apt to receive the form of that creature to which it is by the formative power disposed. *To question this, is to question Reason, Sense, and Experience: If he doubts of this, let him go to Egypt, and there he will finde the fields swarming with mice begot of the mud of [the Nile].* *Arcana Microcosmi*, (London: Newcomb, 1652), book 2, chapter 10, p. 156.

2. John MacArthur, *The Battle for the Beginning* (Nashville, TN: W Publishing Group, 2001), p. 11.



Meanwhile, in the popular media, evolutionary doctrine and ever-expanding notions of prehistory are being promoted with all the pious zeal of the latest religious sect. Watch the Internet forums, programs on the Discovery Channel, interviews and articles published in the mass media, school textbooks, and books aimed at lay readers — and what you will usually see is raw assertions, demagoguery, intimidation, and ridicule (especially when the subjects of biblical theism and the Genesis account of creation are raised). But question the dogma that all life evolved from a single spontaneously generated cell, point out that the universe is full of evidence for intelligent design, or demand the kind of proof for evolutionary origins that would ordinarily pass scientific muster, and the ardent evolutionist will simply dismiss you as a heretic or a bigot of the worst stripe. What they are tacitly acknowledging is that as far as they are concerned, evolution is a doctrine that must be received with implicit faith, not something that can be scientifically demonstrated. After all, the claims of true *science* can always be investigated, observed, reproduced, tested, and proved in the laboratory. So to insist that evolution and so-called “deep time” doctrines must be accepted without question is really just a tacit admission that these are not scientific ideas at all.

Consider these quotations from typical evolutionist writers:

- No biologist today would think of submitting a paper entitled “New evidence for evolution”; it simply has not been an issue for a century.<sup>3</sup>
- It is time for students of the evolutionary process, especially those who have been misquoted and used by the creationists, to state clearly that evolution is a *fact*, not theory. . . . All present forms of life arose from ancestral forms that were different. Birds arose from nonbirds and humans from nonhumans. No person who pretends to any understanding of the natural world can deny these facts.<sup>4</sup>
- Here is what separates real scientists from the pseudoscientists of the school of intelligent design. . . . One thing all real scientists agree upon is the fact of evolution itself. It is a fact that we are cousins of gorillas, kangaroos, starfish, and bacteria. Evolution is as much a fact as the heat of the sun. It is not a theory, and for pity’s sake, let’s stop confusing the philosophically naive by calling it so. Evolution is a fact.<sup>5</sup>

But as those statements themselves show, evolution is a dogma, not a demonstrable “fact.” I stand by the position I took in *The Battle for the Beginning*: “Belief in evolutionary theory is a matter of sheer faith. [It is] as much a religion as any theistic worldview.”<sup>6</sup>

3. Douglas J. Futuyma, *Evolutionary Biology*, 2nd ed., (Boston, MA: Sinauer Associates, 1986), p. 15.

4. R.C. Lewontin, “Evolution/Creation Debate: A Time for Truth,” *Bioscience* (1981): 31: p. 559.

5. Richard Dawkins, “The Illusion of Design,” *Natural History* (November 2005): p. 53.

6. MacArthur, *The Battle for the Beginning*, p. 12.



I'll go even further: *science* cannot speak with any authority about when the universe began, how it came into being, or how life originated on earth. Science by definition deals with what can be observed, tested, measured, and investigated by empirical means. Scientific data by definition are facts that can be demonstrated by controlled, repeatable experiments that always yield consistent results. The beginning of the universe by its very nature falls outside the realm of scientific investigation.

To state the case plainly: there is no scientific way to explain creation. *No one* but God actually observed creation. It did not happen by any uniform, predictable, observable, repeatable, fixed, or natural laws. It was not a natural event or a series of natural events. The initial creation of matter was an instantaneous, monumental, inexplicable miracle — the exact opposite of a “natural” phenomenon. And the formation of the universe was a brief series of supernatural events that simply cannot be studied or explained by science. There are no natural processes involved in creation; the act of creation cannot be repeated; it cannot be tested; and therefore naturalistic theories purporting to explain the origin and age of the universe are unverifiable.

In other words, creation is a theological issue, not a scientific one. Scripture is our only credible source of information about creation, because God Himself was the only eyewitness to the event. We can either believe what He says or reject it. But no Christian should ever imagine that what we believe about the origin of the universe is merely a secondary, nonessential, or incidental matter. It is, after all, the very starting point of God's self-revelation.

In fact, in its profound brevity, Genesis 1:1 is a very simple, clear, and unequivocal account of how the universe, the earth, and everything on the earth came to be: “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” That is not an ambiguous statement. Until Darwinian evolution undertook a campaign to co-opt the story of creation and bring it into the realm of naturalistic “science” — and especially before modernist skepticism began to seep into the Church — no one who claimed to be a Christian was the least bit confused by the Genesis account.

Christians should not be intimidated by dogmatic naturalism. We do not need to invent a new interpretation of Genesis every time some geologist or astronomer declares that the universe must be older than he previously thought. Nor should we imagine that legitimate science poses any threat to the truth of Scripture. Above all, we must not seek ways to circumvent the clear meaning of God's Word, compromise our trust in the Creator, or continually yield ground to every new theory of falsely so-called science. That is precisely what Paul was warning Timothy about.

Sadly, it seems evolutionary thinking and qualms about the Genesis account of creation have reached epidemic levels among professing Christians in recent decades. Too many Christian leaders, evangelical schools, and Bible commentators have been willing to set aside the biblical account of a relatively young earth in order to accommodate the ever-changing estimates of naturalistic geologists

and astronomers. They have thrown away sound hermeneutical principles — at least in the early chapters of Genesis — to accommodate the latest theories of evolution. When I encounter people who think evolutionary doctrine trumps the biblical account of creation, I like to ask them where their belief in the Bible kicks in. Is it in chapter 3, where the Fall of Adam and original sin are accounted for? In chapters 4–5, where early human history is chronicled? In chapters 6–8, with the record of the Flood? In chapter 11, with the Tower of Babel? Because if you bring naturalism and its presuppositions to the early chapters of Genesis, it is just a short step to denying *all* the miracles of Scripture — including the Resurrection of Christ. If we want to make science the test of biblical truth rather than vice versa, why would it not make just as much sense to question the biblical record of the resurrection as it does to reject the Genesis account? But “if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins! . . . If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable” (1 Cor. 15:17–19).

The contributors to this volume all take Genesis seriously and accept its account of a relatively young earth. Together they have given us a profoundly helpful resource on the subject. Whether you are a lay person seeking to understand how Scripture dovetails with true science, a seasoned pastor studying Genesis and grappling with conflicting opinions about the timing and duration of creation, or a scholar looking for credible resources explaining the young-earth view, you will be greatly edified by these essays.

It is a distinct and special privilege to commend this volume in honor of Dr. John C. Whitcomb’s teaching ministry. He is a pioneer and hero in the field of biblical creationism who fully understands that the origin of the universe is a theological question which is settled for us by *Scripture*. We salute him for his substantial preaching, teaching, and writing labors over the past six decades. He has faithfully upheld the truth about Jesus Christ, that “All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made” (John 1:3) and “by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible. . . . All things were created through Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist” (Col. 1:16–17) and “For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them” (Exod. 20:11).

I am delighted to participate with many of Dr. Whitcomb’s former students and friends who joined together for this tribute because of their common commitment to understanding that the Bible clearly and confidently teaches creation *ex nihilo* in such a way as to make the idea of a “young earth” not only reasonable, but certain.

— John MacArthur  
President

The Master’s College and Seminary



## Chapter 4

# Is Nature the 67th Book of the Bible?

*Richard Mayhew*

Dr. John Clement Whitcomb Jr. first crossed my path in January 1971 when I, as a freshly saved naval officer, attended lectures jointly given with Dr. Henry Morris on creationism at Scott Memorial Baptist Church in San Diego, California. By August 1971, having resigned my commission in the United States Navy, I sat in Dr. Whitcomb's class on Job at Grace Theological Seminary in Winona Lake, Indiana. Subsequently, he participated as a member of my Th.M. thesis committee and my Th.D. dissertation committee, all at Grace. This stalwart of the faith not only taught me throughout my student days, but he also then became a senior colleague in my junior teaching days (Greek and New Testament) at Grace where he always sought to be a personal encouragement. Some of my most treasured memories come from the times when he was a faculty prayer partner. Over the ensuing years, I have been immeasurably enriched by knowing "Jack" Whitcomb as a theological mentor and friend.

Throughout his Christian life, Dr. Whitcomb has taken 2 Timothy 4:7-8 and Jude 3 seriously in his teaching and writing ministries. While indefatigably contending for the once-for-all-delivered faith, passionately fighting the good fight, and relentlessly holding high the Holy Scriptures, he has been running the race non-stop, as a brilliant and articulate spokesman for the cause of his Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, especially in the matters of creation,<sup>1</sup> the Genesis Flood,<sup>2</sup> and the historicity of the Old Testament.<sup>3</sup>

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*Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture in this chapter is from the NAS95 version of the Bible.*

1. John C. Whitcomb, *The Early Earth*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1986).
2. Henry M. Morris and John C. Whitcomb Jr., *The Genesis Flood* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1967); John C. Whitcomb, *The World that Perished* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1988).
3. John C. Whitcomb Jr., *Darius the Mede* (Philadelphia, PA: Presbyterian and Reformed,



As a tribute to this special man who has contributed so much to my life over the past four decades, I gladly take pen in hand to write affirmingly on a theme for which he has expended much of his energies — the validation and defense of a young earth. With this chapter, I salute you, Dr. Whitcomb, because you have selflessly devoted your ministry to the glory of God as recited in His absolutely inerrant and wholly sufficient Word — the Bible — which provides the whole counsel of God (Acts 20:27).

### The Question

Is nature the 67th book of the Bible? Providing the answer to this provocative query demands much more time and effort than might be realized at first hearing. It involves matters of: (1) canonicity; (2) the correct interpretation of Psalm 19, Acts 14, Acts 17, Romans 1, and Romans 10; (3) the unique authority of Scripture; (4) the character similarities and differences between general and special revelation; (5) man's fallen mind and the empirical approach to science; (6) proper hermeneutical principles of biblical interpretation; and (7) a biblical worldview.

This significant question should not be taken lightly nor answered quickly. Yet, this appears to be the manner in which Dr. Hugh Ross<sup>4</sup> has treated this matter. In a discussion whose length falls short of three full pages, this popular author, uncritically and without reservation, writes what appears to be intended as a self-evident axiom, "The facts of nature may be likened to a sixty-seventh book of the Bible."<sup>5</sup> What is the reader to make of Ross's assertion? Is he right? Or, is he wrong?

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1963); John C. Whitcomb, *Esther: The Triumph of God's Sovereignty* (Chicago, IL: Moody, 1979); John C. Whitcomb, *Daniel* (Chicago, IL: Moody, 1985); John J. Davis and John C. Whitcomb, *A History of Israel from Conquest to Exile* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1980).

4. Hugh Ross earned a Ph.D. in astronomy at the University of Toronto (1973) and is president of Reasons to Believe ([www.reasons.org](http://www.reasons.org)), an organization devoted to promoting a progressive view of origins (over exceedingly long spans of time) in support of an old-earth theory based primarily on allegedly unassailable scientific research. His writings include: *The Fingerprint of God: Recent Scientific Discoveries Reveal the Unmistakable Identity of the Creator* (Orange, CA: Promise Press, 1991); *Creation and Time: A Biblical and Scientific Perspective on the Creation-Date Controversy* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 1994); *Beyond the Cosmos: What Recent Discoveries in Astronomy and Physics Reveal about the Nature of God* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 1999); *The Genesis Question: Scientific Advances and the Accuracy of Genesis* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2001); *The Creator and the Cosmos: How the Greatest Scientific Discoveries of the Century Reveal God*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2001); *A Matter of Days: Resolving a Creation Controversy* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2004).
5. Ross, *Creation and Time*, p. 56. His volume, especially the section in which the quoted

### Ross's Affirmation — Reliable or Suspect?

In six brief paragraphs and a small chart,<sup>6</sup> Ross swiftly breezes through this profound question without any apparent caveats or hesitations regarding his "Absolutely!" answer. He cites no authority other than himself in support of his rather dogmatic answer. While on the surface his own affirmation might appear sufficient to certify the point, to someone reasonably familiar with Scripture and/or to one trained in critical theological thinking, Ross's answer proves unsatisfactory for at least five major reasons.

First, Ross's chart<sup>7</sup> comprised of 23 biblical texts which supposedly authenticate his answer, upon further reflection, disappointingly turns out to be a result of proof-texting (i.e., citing a scriptural text in support of one's conclusion when upon closer inspection the text is either not directly related or actually contradicts the point being made). The following observations warrant this conclusion.

1. Ecclesiastes 3:11 and Romans 2:14–15 deal with general revelation in the human conscience, but not general revelation in nature, as Ross asserts.
2. Romans 10:16–17 and Colossians 1:23 refer to the preaching of the gospel by humans, not the general revelation of nature, as Ross says.
3. Psalms 50:6 (heavens refers to angels); 85:11 (attributes of King Jesus); 97:6 (heavens refers to angels); 98:2–3 (God's dealings with Israel) have alternative interpretations that are as likely or more likely than that of general revelation in nature, as Ross suggests.
4. Proverbs 8:22–31 is a speech delivered by "lady wisdom" personified, not about general revelation in nature, as indicated by Ross.
5. Job 10:8–14; 12:7; 34:14–15; 35:10–12; 37:5–7; 38–41; Psalms 8; 104; 139; and Habakkuk 3:3 deal with what one can learn about nature from the special revelation of Scripture, not what one can learn from general revelation in nature alone, as Ross teaches.

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sentence appears (p. 53–72), has received mixed reviews. Positive reviews include, for example, Paul Copan, *JETS* 39 (1996): p. 307–08; Guillermo Gonzalez, *PSCF* 46 (1994): p. 270. Others have been somewhat neutral, such as John A. Witmer, *BibSac* 153 (1996): p. 493. Many who have been critical, especially of Ross's handling of Scripture, are represented by Mark van Bebber and Paul S. Taylor, *Creation and Time: A Report on the Progressive Creationist Hugh Ross*, 2nd ed. (Gilbert, AZ: Eden, 1996); John MacArthur, *The Battle for the Beginning* (Nashville, TN: W Group, 2001), p. 60–62; Jonathan Sarfati, *Refuting Compromise: A Biblical and Scientific Refutation of "Progressive Creationism" (Billions of Years), as Popularized by Astronomer Hugh Ross* (Green Forest, AR: Master Books, 2004). Additional articles can be located at the websites of Answers in Genesis ([www.answersingenesis.org](http://www.answersingenesis.org)) and Institute for Creation Research ([www.icr.org](http://www.icr.org)).

6. Ross, *Creation and Time*, p. 55–58.

7. *Ibid.*, p. 57.



6. Only Psalm 19:1–6; Acts 14:17; 17:23–31; and Romans 1:18–25; 10:18 do, in fact, refer to general revelation in nature, which is the singular subject Ross addresses.

So, in Ross's answer to the question, "Is nature the 67th book of the Bible?" only five (22 percent) of the 23 passages he cites actually appear to support his basic point and then not to the depth or breadth that Ross intimates. Seventy-eight percent of the Scripture citations were misunderstood by him and thus mistakenly utilized. One's confidence in Ross's ability to objectively and skillfully handle the Bible quickly erodes in this torrent of error.

Second, Ross claims that Romans 10:16–17<sup>8</sup> and Colossians 1:23<sup>9</sup> refer to preaching the gospel to all the world through the general revelation of nature. However, even a cursory reading of Romans 10:16–17 makes it plainly evident that Paul is talking about the gospel in Scripture (i.e., "the word of Christ," being proclaimed by human preachers). While the interpretation of Colossians 1:23 is not so immediately obvious, the consensus of conservative, evangelical commentators confirms that Paul is referring to the human preaching of the gospel, either using hyperbole in referring to the then known world or proleptically in anticipation of the gospel being preached throughout the world.<sup>10</sup>

Third, Ross is mistaken in his understanding and application of general revelation. As demonstrated above in points one and two, this astronomer-by-training has badly interpreted Scripture in arriving at his proposed broad, philosophical approach to general revelation. He goes so far as to imply that all which is discoverable in the realm of "science" is general revelation and, as such, is equal in value and quality to the special revelation of Scripture. Ross asserts, without any reasonable or factual proof, that "the Bible teaches a dual, reliably consistent revelation."<sup>11</sup> By this, he intends to imply that general revelation is not only equal in its quality of revelation, but also its authority. Thus, general revelation, considered by him as any discoverable fact of science, would actually have the apparent authority to interpret Scripture, not the reverse.

The subject of general revelation will be examined in more detail later in this chapter. However, a few preliminary observations sufficiently prove Ross's view deficient.

1. Psalm 19 does compare general revelation (19:1–6) with scriptural revelation (19:7–11). But in fact, it actually contrasts them; thus, they are not

8. Ibid.

9. Ibid., p. 56–57.

10. This writer surveyed over 25 evangelical commentaries and not even one suggested that this text might refer to the preaching of the gospel through general revelation in nature. See Van Bebber's expanded discussion in *Creation and Time: A Report*, p. 37–39. Douglas E. Kelly, *Creation and Change* (Ross-shire, Great Britain: Christian Focus, 1997), p. 230–31, in notes 49 and 50, comments on Ross's tortured efforts in handling Scripture elsewhere.

11. Ross, *Creation and Time*, p. 56.



compared as absolute equals, like Ross teaches, but rather Psalm 19 exalts Scripture as the greater and most valued of God's revelation.

2. Ross places science on the same level as Scripture. He fails to distinguish between science as the alleged facts of nature explained by man and Scripture as the certain facts of God given and explained by God. Since science does not carry the inerrant quality of Scripture, one can conclude that Ross greatly overestimates nature/science and woefully undervalues Scripture.
3. He expands the concept of general revelation to include all discoverable/knowable information outside of Scripture. However, a careful analysis of the very few biblical passages that speak to this subject (i.e., Psalm 19:1-6; Acts 14:17; 17:23-31; Romans 1:18-25 and 10:18 severely limit the scope and purpose of this legitimate source of divine revelation).

Let the writer simply ask two questions about general revelation in nature to demonstrate that God intended it to serve more narrow purposes in contrast to the broad informative and authoritative scope of Scripture. First, if only general revelation was available, would we know about God like a person knows God from the Bible?<sup>12</sup> Second, could a person be redeemed based on general revelation alone?<sup>13</sup> The answer to both questions is a resounding "no!" Since this is so, why would anyone exalt the lesser to the same, if not greater, status as the actual greater?

Morris and Whitcomb anticipated Ross' claim<sup>14</sup> three decades earlier when observing:

It has often been maintained that God has given us two revelations, one in nature and one in the Bible and that they cannot contradict each other. This is certainly correct; but when one subconsciously identifies with natural revelation his own interpretations of nature and then denounces theologians who are unwilling to mold biblical revelation into conformity with his interpretation of nature, he is guilty of serious error. After all, special revelation supersedes natural revelation, for it is only by means of special revelation that we can interpret aright the world about us.<sup>15</sup>

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12. From nature, we would not know that God is portrayed as a person, as a male, as a Trinity, as the only true God, and as possessing incommunicable attributes (e.g., his glory and omniscience) and communicable attributes (e.g., his love and grace) to name just a few essential features of God as revealed in Scripture, but not by general revelation in nature. Our knowledge of God would be impoverished by comparison, if limited to what general revelation in nature provides.
  13. A brief glance at Romans 10:9-13 alone settles the issue.
  14. See Ross, *Creation and Time*, p. 56, 58 where he uses the word "dual" to express the equality of general and special revelation.
  15. Morris and Whitcomb, *Genesis Flood*, p. 458, n. 1.

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