

GENESIS
WEEK 2

REEDER

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THE PENTATEUCH I: GENESIS

WEEK 2

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PUZZLES FOR THE CREATION ACCOUNT

1 Length of Time

- A Genesis suggests that the universe went from nothing to the existence of humans in one week.
- B Modern cosmology suggests that this span of time was approximately 13.8 billion years.

2 Sequence of Events

- A Genesis suggests the sun is created after the plants.
- B Plants (third day) require photosynthesis; the earth (first day?) was formed by the gravitational activity of the sun.

3 Origin of Species

- A The third through sixth days suggest unique creation of broad biological categories.
- B According to current evolutionary theory, all life descends from single cell organisms.

PUZZLES FOR BIBLICAL GENEALOGIES

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“Young Earth” Chronology depends on Genesis genealogies:

① Start with the following passages:

- Adam to Noah (Genesis 5)
- Noah to Abraham (Genesis 11:10-26)
- Time in Egypt (Genesis 15:13)
- Time in the Desert (Joshua 14:7,10)
- Exodus to Solomon’s Temple (1 Kings 6:1)

② We can correlate Israel’s kings with external historical reference points.

③ Running backwards puts Adam’s creation at 4000 BC.

This is problematic for both the origin of humans ($\sim 3 \times 10^5$ years) and the origin of the universe ($\sim 1.4 \times 10^{10}$ years)

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SUPERFICIAL CONFLICT

It is tempting to feel cornered by these tensions. Here are some historical examples to slow us down.

- The heliocentrism of Copernicus, Galileo was considered at odds with verses implying the sun moved (Psalm 19:4-6) and the earth is fixed (Psalm 93:1). *Any geocentrists here?*
- Philo (1st C AD Jewish philosopher) and Augustine (4th-5th C AD) both believed that God created everything instantaneously; the days represent an ordering of nature
- Justin Martyr and Irenaeus believed that days represented long epochs citing 2 Peter 3:8, Psalm 90:4.

(See John Lennox's excellent *Seven Days That Divide the World*.)

DEEP CONCORD

Contrary to expectation, some evidence confirms Genesis:

BEFORE Modern Cosmologists for nearly a century believed that the universe existed forever.

NOW The Big Bang model fits the Biblical portrait of creation *ex nihilo*

BEFORE Evolutionary theory permits that humans could have developed in numerous places, from several genetic sources.

NOW Genetic studies indicate that there is one man and one woman from whom all current humans descend: “Y-Chromosomal Adam” and “Mitochondrial Eve”. [NB: These may not be our Adam and Eve, but things frequently viewed as scientifically outrageous are later the consensus.]

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CONFRONTATION WITH WORLDVIEW

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Much of the social force of evolutionary theory depends on its relationship to the larger worldview of naturalism. Without calling anything about evolution proper into question, there are significant scientific and philosophical hurdles for integrating evolution into the naturalistic worldview.

- A Abiogenesis
- B Apsychogenesis
- C Evolutionary Argument Against Naturalism

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ABIOTENESIS

Abiogenesis is the transition from non-living organic matter to some kind of functioning, self-sustaining organism.

There is no decisive evidence in favor of abiogenesis but there is an abundance of speculative hypotheses. Most versions involve some kind of roughly cumulative activity with some dramatic natural catalyst; i.e. proto-evolution.

ABIOGENESIS

Here are some difficulties:

- Any experiment used to demonstrate the viability of abiogenesis is conducted in a controlled environment with experimental design, intent and care; i.e. the researcher functions in this arrangement as a designer.
- DNA/RNA are essential to genetic mutation; there is no comparable information-theoretic molecule to explain the adaptation or mutation of these essential molecules. [Pareidolia vs. Sculpture; not differences of degree]
- The formation of complex molecules like DNA/RNA requires considerable energy. This kind of energy would be hazardous to its "life" without further organismal protection. [Cf. Second Law of Thermodynamics.]

Due to conceptual hurdles and the improbability of these outcomes within the limited geological timeline, some scientists deign to the preposterous thesis of extraterrestrial seeding.

APSYCHOGENESIS

Apsychogenesis is the transition from unconscious to conscious life.

The current conceptual resources of experimental science cannot describe (access?) essential aspects of consciousness. Some historically important thought experiments:

- What Mary Knows
- What Its Like to Be a Bat
- Inverted “Qualia”

APSYCHOGENESIS

What has to be explained is not just the lacking of organic life with a tincture of qualia but the coming into existence of subjective individual points of view—a type of existence logically distinct from anything describable by the physical sciences alone. If evolutionary theory is a purely physical theory, then it might in principle provide the framework for a physical explanation of the appearance of behaviorally complex animal organisms with central nervous systems. But subjective consciousness, if it is not reducible to something physical, would not be a part of this story; it would be left completely unexplained by physical evolution—even if the physical evolution of such organisms is in fact a causally necessary and sufficient condition for consciousness.
(Nagel, *Mind and Cosmos*, 44-5)

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PHILOSOPHICAL OPTIONS

Evolution as a bare scientific theory is compatible with numerous philosophical stand points:

- *Naturalism* The natural world is all there is; by a magnificent accident, nature itself gave birth to all material, biological diversity.
- *Theism* There is an eternal, personal Creator; God has engineered evolution to deliver other personal beings.
- *Panpsychism* Each part of the universe contains material and mental components; evolution has furnished highly complex manifestations of each in mankind

A BIRD'S EYE OF PLANTINGA'S ARGUMENT

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This argument comes from a variety of writings from Alvin Plantinga. An early form of it appears in CS Lewis' *Miracles*.

Claim: Assuming Naturalism+Evolution, we have an (undercutting) defeater for *all* of our beliefs. (Cf. Red Paper)

This argument has the structure of a *reductio ad absurdum*: if you want to show that something is false, assume it's true and show that it has absurd consequences.

We must reject either Naturalism or Evolution. No self-respecting naturalist will reject evolution. Hence, naturalism must go. How do we get there?

THE DEFEATER

- ① Assume that Naturalism and Evolution are true.
 - ② Under Evolution, survival drives natural selection.
 - ③ Under Naturalism, natural selection is *exclusively* responsible for the formation of our cognitive faculties (belief-forming mechanisms).
 - ④ Therefore, all cognitive faculties were selected for survival.
 - ⑤ But, cognitive faculties selected for survival are not guaranteed to yield true beliefs.
- ∴ All of our beliefs have an undercutting defeater; viz. their origin is in mechanisms shaped exclusively for survival.

THE AFTERMATH

Global skepticism is clearly unacceptable. Hence, the *reductio* argument yields the desired result: naturalism is false.

This argument leaves open the truth of evolution. We may chose to reject evolution anyway.

If we hold on to evolution, we may accept either theistic or panpsychic evolution. The latter seems automatically unacceptable.

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FRAMING THE INTERPRETATIONS

Waltke (2007, 73-77) offers five attitudes that Christians adopt towards the Bible:

- ① *Liberal theologians stand **above** the Bible.* “Liberals are the heirs of French skepticism... and English deism...who detract from the authority of the Bible by making reason, which includes experience, the ground floor of theological reflection.”
- ② *Neoorthodox theologians stand **before** the Bible.* These theologians ground their thought in Jesus as “the embodiment of God and God’s purpose for humankind, but regrettably not on the whole Bible.” So, “the words of the Bible *become* the word of God as the Bible’s audience encounters them...”
- ③ *Traditionalists place traditions **alongside** the Bible.* Traditionalists “find their *authority* in both the text and in the tradition that accompanies it.”
- ④ *Fundamentalists stand **on** the Bible.* Waltke describes “those who presume the Bible does not stray from their standards of accuracy, especially in matters of science and historiography.”
- ⑤ *Evangelicals stand **under** the Bible.* “I must allow the the Bible to dictate how it seeks to reveal God’s truth... With this posture, I continue to learn and allow myself to be taught and corrected by the Bible.”

YOUNG EARTH

Thesis Genesis 1-2:3 provides a chronological sequence of seven twenty-four hour periods.

Thoughts for consideration:

- This interpretation accepts a huge burden of proof as to why the Bible is so at odds with contemporary science.
- The word 'day' in Hebrew does not require twenty-four hour periods (e.g. Gen 2:4).
- The end of the passage on the seventh day passage does not contain the repeated idiom, "And there was evening, and there was morning."

THEISTIC EVOLUTION

Thesis Contemporary scientific theory (evolution and physical cosmology) provides best description we have of a *physical* cosmogony.

Thoughts for consideration:

- Theistic Evolution takes the biblical text the least seriously, though the extent is a matter of degree
- There are significant hermeneutical hurdles for this view to clear. Options: *What's wrong with each?*
 - Openly deny Genesis. It's not scientific and that doesn't matter.—*Raises serious issues for inspiration.*
 - John Walton argues that Genesis 1 is not an account of material origins, but describe the inauguration of God's temple (i.e. functional origin).—*Implausible interpretation, see review.*
 - Genesis provides a very generic sequence of the history of earth (gaseous and volatile; life starts with aquatics, ends with humans)—*Are such broad brush strokes good enough?*
- One gets the sense that this is a dishonestly conciliatory approach

GAP BETWEEN GEN 1:1, 2

Thesis There is a multi-billion year gap between "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth" (v.1) and the rest. The days are literal twenty-four hour days.

Thoughts for consideration:

- The earth "became" formless and void: the earth suffered a geophysical catastrophe during the judgment of Satan
- Unfortunately, there is not a shred of textual evidence to introduce a span of time between those verses.
- Case of *Obscurum Per Obscurius*: this level of detail on Satan is probably more exegetically subtle than Genesis 1.

More acceptable variation: the text of Genesis 1 is more like an accordion. Each part is 24 hrs, but *between* each day is a massive span of time.

Thesis The word 'day' functions as a long geological age.

Thoughts for consideration:

- On the positive end, this does not badly stretch the text
 - Gen 2:4-This is the account of the heavens and the earth when they were created, in the day that the Lord God made earth and heaven.
 - Psalm 90:4-For a thousand years in Your sight Are like yesterday when it passes by, Or as a watch in the night. (This psalm is Mosaic!)
- This interpretation is less stable if we insist on the sequence of Genesis.

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CHRONOLOGY

There are *textual* reasons to cast doubt on treating Genesis 1 as a straightforward chronology of ordinary days:

- The definite article ‘the’ does not appear before the expression ‘*nth* day,’ contrary to some English translations. This means that it could be translated as ‘an *nth* day’ suggesting the days may be “dischronologized” (Waltke et al., 62)
- God appoints the sun and moon to mark day and night *on the fourth day*. What was used for morning/evening on day one through three?
- There is a “recreation” event after the flood which takes almost a year.

CHRONOLOGY

Textual reasons to avoid using genealogies in chronological:

- There are exactly ten generations from Adam to Noah and another ten from Noah to Terah. This kind of pattern cannot be serendipitous.
- The author stops at 7 from Seth and 7 from Cain to remark on the godliness of Enoch and the wickedness of Lamech.
- Biblical examples abound of gappy genealogies (Matt 1, Luke 3; 1 Chronicles 6, Ezra 7)
- We would be faced with the following embarrassments:
 - Adam, Enoch and Methusaleh would be contemporaries
 - Noah and Abraham would be contemporaries
 - Shem (Noah's son) would have survived Abraham by thirty-five years

FORMLESS AND VOID

THE SIX DAYS EXHIBIT A REMARKABLE STRUCTURE THAT SUBVERTS
THE ORIGINAL CHAOS OF GEN 1:2.

Formless		Void	
Day	Form	Day	Substance
1	Light	4	Sun, Moon, Stars
2	Seas	5	Fish
	Sky		Birds
3	Ground	6	Beasts
	(and plants!)		Mankind
Day Seven: God Rests			

The above framework has some merit given this repeated phrase throughout the Scripture, “God made the heavens and the earth and the sea, and everything in them.” (Ps 69:34; Ps 89:11; Ps 96:11; Ps 146:6; Ex 20:11; Acts 4:24; Acts 14:15)

“...sequence and framework are not necessarily mutually exclusive.” (Lennox, 47)

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- ① God created absolutely everything: the sun, moon, sky, earth, animals.
 - Compare Ancient Near-Eastern (ANE) cosmogeny: many involve sexualized, or war-like encounters between facets of nature
 - Waltke points out that the stars play a very tiny role in the text (“the stars also”). ANE religion highly valued stars.
- ② Genesis 1 is written in a fashion so that it's understandable for any people, culture or time.
 - What good would it be *to us* (let alone an illiterate shepherd!) if Genesis 1 were written in mathematical or bio-chemical language?
 - Lennox points out that if God had used the language of a "completed" science, no one would understand it

FINAL REFLECTIONS ON SCIENCE AND GENESIS

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- ① Don't buy into aspects of evolution(cosmology) that don't have credible evidence.
 - Unlike the naturalist, our world view does not require an answer to these questions
 - Not uncommon for scientific research programs that extrapolate far beyond of the actual evidence.
 - We should expect the results of science to agree with Scripture in the long run.
- ② Don't get sucked into a God-of-the-gaps view either. When science lacks a credible answer that doesn't mean there was a miracle. Many of these could have straightforward natural explanations. Resisting God-of-the-gaps, Lennox (2015, 168) writes, "God is an explanation in terms of agency, and science in terms of mechanism and law."
- ③ It's probably a mistake to expect a direct translation between what we read in Genesis and what we find in science. One is a few hundred words, one fills libraries.

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