

A Critique of Progressive Creationism in the Writings of Hugh Ross

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Abstract

Naturalistic evolutionism, theistic evolutionism, progressive creationism, and the day-age theory are briefly defined, contrasted, and discussed. Two major books of a contemporary progressive creationist, Hugh Ross, are analyzed and compared. Nine of his corollaries are examined, and any that have already been refuted by other authors are treated briefly. Recent developments in his progressive creationism, and claims that have not yet been countered, are examined more extensively.

Introduction

Naturalistic evolution is the concept that the cosmos and life originated and developed by natural means alone. *Theistic evolution* is the teaching that God originated and controlled evolution. *Progressive creationism* (PC) is the position that God periodically overruled evolution by miraculously creating new forms, which then underwent evolutionary changes. The day-age theorists (DATists) believe that the “days” of creation (Genesis 1) are really six long ages.

In the mid-twentieth century Ramm (1954) popularized the practice of calling evolutionism “creation” as long as it was recognized that the process was controlled by God rather than by chance alone. He was one of the early and influential progressive creationists (PCists). Hugh Ross (1994, 2004) has continued promoting PC and has identified himself with “old

earth creationists” and as having an “old earth position” (Ross, 2004).

The theses of Ross have changed very little in the decade between 1994 and 2004, so that his latest book (Ross, 2004) reads in places like the earlier one (Ross, 1994). For example, page 19 of his book *A Matter of Days* (Ross, 2004) is virtually identical to page 10 of the 1994 book, *Creation and Time*. Ross’s earlier book was critically analyzed by several authors (e.g., Van Beber and Taylor, 1994; Sarfati, 2004). Points previously criticized will be listed and discussed in brevity and in the context of his *Creation and Time*. Salient revisions, changes, or new theses included in the book, *A Matter of Days* (Ross, 2004) will be analyzed more extensively. The purpose here is not to evaluate the Christian faith of Ross but to identify the errors in biblical scholarship found in his writings.

Ross has been generally regarded

as a leading contemporary spokesman among the PCists. Like other PCists, Ross is also a DATist (1994) and equates the day-age theory (DAT) with progressive creationism (1994). His arguments for the DAT are essentially the same as those used by other PCists to buttress their views.

Analysis of Ross’s Arguments

PCists Assert That Creation Should Include Long Ages

Ross acknowledged that “the word *creationist* implies the young-universe position” but then sought to widen the meaning of creation with the comment that “many orthodox Christians who believe in creation (and deny Darwinism) hold different views regarding the timing of creation” (Ross, 2004, p. 11). Ross’s claims amount to saying that only atheists should be considered evolutionists, and he expressed explicitly his belief that the universe is very old: “God created as He did, for billions of years” (Ross, 1994, p. 68). Although having expressed belief in the

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direct creation of Adam and Eve from dust, Ross wrote that God “stepped in many times to create replacements or improved models—sometimes completely abandoning entire groups of animals, changing the previous course of life on earth” (Van Bebber and Taylor, 1994, p. 11). Ross asserts that “the whole cosmos was assembled step-by-step over billions of years” (Ross, 1994, p. 137), that “3.8 billion years of plant and animal death and extinction ... preceded humanity” (Ross, 2004, p. 103), and that “the earth and the universe are several billion years old” (Ross, 2004, p. 213).

In short, under the name of creation, Ross has encouraged church people to embrace long ages and limited evolutionism.

Progressive Creationists Teach That Genesis 1 Describes Evolution

To set the stage for this claim, Ross (1994) maintained that

In its ordinary usage among scientists and non-scientists alike, especially among physical scientists, *evolution* simply means ‘change with respect to time’ ... The time can be short or long. The change can be small or great and more or less gradual. The cause can be intelligent or nonintelligent (p. 74).

Such a definition of evolution is disingenuous at best. Wells (2000) observed:

When proponents of [evolution] are responding to critics, they sometimes claim that ‘evolution’ means simply change over time. But this is clearly an evasion. No rational person denies the reality of change, and we did not need Charles Darwin to convince us of it. If ‘evolution’ meant only this, it would be utterly uncontroversial (p. 5)

Physical scientists, including astronomers, view evolution not just as

any change, but as an upward change in complexity (Henry, 2003a). Nevertheless, building on his fallacious definition of evolution, Ross (1994) concluded, “By this definition, we could say that Genesis 1 describes evolution, for it describes change in the realm of nature” (p. 74). Thus Ross redefined evolution in such a way as to force Genesis 1 into an evolutionary framework.

Progressive Creationists Claim That *Yom* in Genesis 1 Is a Long Time Period

“The Hebrew word *yom*, translated *day*, may be used (and is) in biblical Hebrew, as it is in modern English, to indicate ... a segment of time without any reference to solar days (anywhere from weeks to a year to several years to an age or epoch)” (Ross, 1994, p. 46). Then several references follow in which Ross claimed *yom* to have been used non-literally in Genesis (Ross, 2004, pp. 73–75). Ross’s claim of non-literality, however, does not apply to the context of *yom* in Genesis 1. James Barr of Oxford University has written:

Probably, so far as I know there is no professor of Hebrew or Old Testament at any world-class university who does not believe that the writer(s) of Genesis 1 through 11 intended to convey to their readers the ideas that (a) creation took place in a series of six days which were the same as the days of 24 hours we now experience; (b) the figures contained in the Genesis genealogies provided by simple addition a chronology from the beginning of the world (Barr, 1985. Personal communication to D.C.C. Watson, quoted in Morris, 1999, p. 31).

A straightforward reading of Genesis 1 communicates a literal six-day sequence, a fact acknowledged even by Pattle Pun, a biologist and PCist at

Wheaton College:

It is apparent that the most straightforward understanding of the Genesis record ... is that God created heaven and earth in six solar days, that man was created in the sixth day, that death and chaos entered the world after the Fall of Adam and Eve, that all of the fossils were the result of the catastrophic universal deluge which spared only Noah’s family and the animals therewith (Pun, 1987, p. 14).

Does Pun believe this? Unfortunately, no, for this quotation omits the qualifier that in Pun’s view negated the obvious reading of Genesis; the obvious reading is not valid “without regard to all the hermeneutical considerations suggested by science” (Pun, 1987, p. 14). In spite of these statements by Barr and by Pun, Ross claimed that:

Young-earth creationists have argued for twenty-four-hour days on the basis that *yom* when attached to an ordinal (second, third, fourth, etc.) always refers to a twenty-four-hour period. This argument can be challenged on several grounds. For one, it is true only for passages describing days of human activity rather than days of divine activity (Ross, 1994, pp. 46–47).

This is a statement for which Ross gave no documentation. “More important, the rules of Hebrew grammar do not require that *yom* must refer to twenty-four hours, even when attached to an ordinal” (Ross, 2004, p. 74). This is misleading because it is hermeneutics, not “grammar,” that would make such a requirement. Hermeneutics, applied to the context of Genesis 1, show that Ross’s claims are false and the distinction between human and divine activity is linguistically irrelevant.

In the Hebrew, day one of creation is not preceded by an ordinal number; “first day” as rendered in English trans-

lations is literally “one day” in Hebrew. Steinmann (2002) pointed out that this Hebrew construction signifies that day one of creation was a literal day as we commonly understand it: “Gen. 1:5 begins the cycle of the day. With the creation of light it is now possible to have a cycle of light and darkness ... Hence the following equation is what Genesis 1:5 expresses: Evening + morning = one day” (p. 583). The “one day” construction of Genesis 1:5 also appears in Zechariah 14:7, which refers to the “day of the Lord.” Ross (2004) attempted to rebut Steinmann’s conclusion by asserting that the “day of the Lord” is “a time period longer than 24 hours” (p. 75). In the context of Zechariah 14:4, however, this day is one in which the Lord returns, an event occurring in a moment, not a long period of time. Use of the “one day” construction in Zechariah 14:7 actually strengthens Steinmann’s conclusion.

Howitt (1953) wrote to nine leading universities asking credentialed professors:

Do you consider [that] the Hebrew word ‘Yom’ (day) as used in Genesis 1 accompanied by a numeral should properly be translated (a) a day, as commonly understood, (b) an age, (c) either an age or a day without preference? (p. 15).

Professors at Columbia, Harvard, London, Manitoba, McGill, Toronto, and even Yale answered that in Genesis 1 *yom* is a day as commonly understood. Robert H. Pfeiffer of Harvard explicitly specified the days in Genesis 1 as twenty-four hours long (Howitt, 1953). Only faculty from Oxford and Cambridge did not respond to Howitt’s question. As mentioned previously, however, Barr of Oxford affirmed that “day” in Genesis 1 was meant to signify twenty-four hours.

It is no wonder, therefore, that even DATist Davis Young acknowledged that “the exegetical arguments for the

twenty-four-hour-day hypothesis also have support in Scripture,” though he admitted he was disinclined to accept “that hypothesis” (Young, 1982, p. 160). Earlier he gave the reason for his disinclination as follows: “Christians who believe that the Earth is very ancient are generally persuaded by scientific arguments that such is the case” (Young, 1982, p. 14). In other words, the Bible speaks clearly for itself, but “science” added to the Bible demands a different message than the one intended by God.

Another argument against literal days in Genesis 1 is that the seventh day still continues. Ross (1994) claimed that:

Of the first six creation days Moses wrote, ‘There was evening, and there was morning—the Xth day.’ This wording indicates that each of the first six creation days had a beginning and an ending. However, no such wording is attached to the seventh creation day, neither in Genesis 1–2 nor anywhere else in the Bible. Given the parallel structure marking the creation days, this distinct change in form for the seventh day strongly suggests that this day has (or had) not ended. ... We gather that the seventh day of Genesis 1–2 represents a minimum of several thousand years and a maximum that is open ended (but finite). It seems reasonable to conclude, then, given the parallelism of the Genesis account, that the first six days may also have been long time periods (p. 48–49).

More recently, Ross (2004) made a similar statement (see pp. 83, 94). The “parallel structure” of the days, to which Ross alluded above, is a feature of the “framework hypothesis,” which originated with Arie Noordtjiz in 1924 (Young, 1964). The framework hypothesis views Genesis 1 not as a literal historical account, but as a “the-

ology of the Sabbath” in which days 1, 2, and 3 are parallel to days 4, 5, and 6 (Blocher, 1984, p. 51). The seventh day therefore stands alone and is unlike the other days. The framework hypothesis fails when subjected to contextual analysis as in Steinmann (2002, p. 584), who affirmed that the seventh day, and the other days of creation, were “regular solar days.” Additional PCist arguments for a continuing seventh day will be analyzed below. Ross further avowed that:

Old-earth creationists [have found] many scriptural reasons, apart from science, for interpreting the creation days as long periods. [The first of these reasons is as follows.] 1. The length of God’s days. The same author of Genesis (Moses) wrote in Psalm 90:4, ‘For a thousand years in your sight are like a day that has just gone by, or like a watch (four hours) in the night.’ Moses seems to state that just as God’s ways are not our ways (Isaiah 55:9), God’s days are not our days (Ross, 1994, p. 46; brackets added).

This statement is unwarranted, however, because the Hebrew construction of Genesis 1 does not permit the extension of the meaning of “day” in Psalm 90:4 to the specific context of Genesis 1. Carson (1996) described this fallacy as the “unwarranted adoption of an expanded semantic field,” (p. 60) by which he was referring to the illegitimate practice of forcing all the possible meanings of a word into a context that demands a specific meaning. Ross has committed this error repeatedly. Peter’s allusion to Psalm 90:4 in 2 Peter 3:8 is likewise exploited to argue non-literal creation days. The context of 2 Peter 3:8, however, does not concern chronology but events preceding the return of the Lord. Thus, there is every reason to hold that the days in Genesis 1 are literal, not figurative.

PCists Claim That Too Much Happened on Day Six for It to Be Literal

On day six, God did too much work for one literal day, including the following according to Ross (2004, p. 80):

- (1) "God planted a garden in Eden."
- (2) Adam received "instructions from God" about caring for the Garden.
- (3) Adam "worked and cared for the Garden of Eden."
- (4) Adam "carried out his assignment from God to name all the animals."
- (5) "God put Adam into a deep sleep [and] performed an operation" to create Eve, after which Adam exclaimed "now at length" he had found a help meet for him.
- (6) Adam "[learned] how to relate to Eve."
- (7) "Adam and Eve [received] instructions from God for managing plants, animals, and other of Earth's resources."
- (8) "Adam and Eve learned how to manage Earth's resources."
- (9) Fischer (2003, p. 224) claimed that on day six in addition to the above events there had to be time in which "the garden grew and matured to the extent that the seed which God planted became trees bearing edible fruit." [Material in quotes is from Ross, 2004, p. 80. Materials not in quotes and material in brackets are added.]

Besides Ross, other PCists and DATists have claimed that naming the animals was a very lengthy process. According to Fischer (2003, p. 224), this included "all the world's thousands and thousands of animal species," and according to Archer (1982, p. 60), this task "must have taken a good deal of study for Adam to examine each specimen and decide on an appropriate name." In the PC view, each day six

event was extremely time consuming. Fischer (2003, p. 224) claimed that the language of Genesis 2:23 implies that Adam was introduced to Eve only "after a long wait or lengthy search." Ross (2004, p. 80) claimed that day six must have covered "many weeks', months', or even years' worth of activities." Archer (1982, p. 60) concurred that just the "comprehensive inventory of all the birds, beasts, and insects that populated the Garden of Eden" would have required "some years, or, at the very least, a considerable number of months."

If the best that Ross and others can do is to stretch day six into a few months or even a few years, this is hardly warrant for expanding day six or any creation day any further into millions of years of geologic ages as Ross (2004) did elsewhere. Even Ross's and Archer's expanded day six leaves no room for conventional chronology. The demand for excessive time to fulfill each of the nine events listed on day six above is faulty, as we will now see by examining each one of the day six events.

Event #1. When God "planted a garden" (Genesis 2:8), He did so by instantaneous fiat as with nearly every other action in the Creation Week. The only Divine acts of creation that were not done by instantaneous fiat were the creation of Adam from the "dust of the ground" (Genesis 2:7), and the creation of Eve from Adam's rib (Genesis 2:21–22). But even these two were done rapidly—within one real day.

Event #2. The Bible does not say that God gave Adam instructions about caring for the Garden; Genesis 2:15 says instead that God "put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and keep it." This is not an action that would take hours, days, or weeks, or longer.

Event #3. Genesis 2:15 states merely that Adam was supposed to dress and keep the Garden of Eden,

not that he actually did so on day six. Thus work and care for the Garden occupied no time on day six.

Event #4. Adam did not name all the animals, only cattle, fowl, and beasts (Genesis 2:20). He did not name insects, as Archer claimed, or marine creatures. The claim that Adam named all the animals and that such a task would have demanded a far longer time than one day has been carefully and thoroughly refuted by Van Bebber and Taylor (1994, pp. 80–82). The distinction between "kinds," a broad classification of creatures made by creationists, and "species," a much smaller subdivision, is an important concept in Van Bebber and Taylor's argument.

Event #5. To create Eve, God put Adam into a deep sleep, took one of his ribs, closed up Adam's flesh, and made Eve from the rib (Genesis 2:21–22). Even if we suppose that this divine surgery required several hours, we have together with Adam's naming of the animals a span of time typical of an average working day. On the other hand, all the miracles of healing in Scripture were instantaneous. In the KJV, Adam's exclamation about Eve in Genesis 2:23 is rendered "This *is* now bone of my bones," which suggests immediate sequence. Ross (2004, p. 80) has contended that the rendering should be, "this is now *at length* bone of my bones," implying a long interval between Adam's creation and that of Eve. During day six Adam named the animals, gradually realizing that there was not a "help meet for him" (Genesis 2:18). In II Timothy 2:13 Paul stated, "For Adam was first formed, then (Greek *eita*) Eve." In the New Testament, *eita* signified one action soon following another, a conclusion evident from verses in which *eita* appears, such as John 13:15, 19:26–27, 20:27, Mark 4:15, 8:25, Luke 8:12, and James 1:14–15.

Event #6. Genesis 2:23–25 does

not say that Adam learned “how to relate to Eve” (Ross, 2004, p. 80). Like Event #3 above, this was really a nonevent of day six!

Event #7. God’s instructions to Adam and Eve about earth stewardship occupied only three verses of text (Genesis 1:28–30) and would have required only a few minutes.

Event #8. The Bible nowhere says that “Adam and Eve learned how to manage Earth’s resources” on day six as Ross (2004) claimed. Indeed, this is an ongoing human activity that continues to this day.

Event #9. Genesis 2:9 says that God made “to grow every tree” in the Garden, but not that trees grew from seed over a period of years. If they needed time to grow from seeds, why does the text imply that God planted trees, not seeds? “Actually there is nothing to suggest that the Hebrew can’t simply mean that the trees were created as growing, as long as they were still mature enough to produce seeds” (Sarfati, 2004, p. 89).

Besides inflating the time required for the events of day six, Ross envisioned supposed events that according to the Bible never really happened. The real events of day six occupied a typical working day, and probably less, and so pose no challenge to day six being a literal day. In fact, Van Bebbler and Taylor (1994) showed that the “events of Day Six are no problem for young-earth creationists [but] they are virtually impossible for Progressive Creationists” (p. 83–84).

PCists Claim That Day Seven Is Continuing and So Is Not Literal

Ross (2004, p. 81) stated that: “While each of the first six creation days is marked by a beginning (‘morning’) and an ending (‘evening’), no such boundaries are assigned to the seventh creation day, neither in Genesis 1 and 2 nor anywhere else in the Bible.” Ac-

cordingly, a seventh day that is at least several millennia (and possibly eternal) means that the first six days must also have been long and indefinite intervals (Ross, 1994, 2004; Kline, 1996). But even if day seven could be shown to be extremely long, this “would say absolutely nothing about the length of the other six days” (Thompson, 2000, p. 215), because Ross in his words put day seven in a category separate from the other six days. Van Bebbler and Taylor (1994) have extensively refuted Ross’s assertion that the seventh day was (and therefore all of the six days were) a long and indefinite period of time.

PCists Claim That Literal Creation Days and Recent Creation Are New Ideas

Ross claimed that until the “scientific age,” Christians were led to believe wrongly that there was “general agreement” that the six days of creation were twenty-four-hour days (Ross, 1994, p. 16; Ross, 2004, p. 15). Ross then discussed the views of early scholars, including Philo, Josephus, Irenaeus, Justin Martyr, Hippolytus, Clement of Alexandria, Origen, Lactantius, Victorinus of Pettau, Methodius of Olympus, Eusebius, and Ambrose, and concluded that all were either neutral or in favor of long creation days and possibly long ages (Ross, 1994, 2004).

The claim that early believers held to long days of creation is false. Even DATist Davis Young emphasized repeatedly that:

Until the end of the eighteenth century, Christians were virtually unanimous in the belief that the Earth was about six thousand years old according to the teaching of Scripture... In general, the church fathers regarded the days of creation as ordinary days corresponding to our existing sun-measured, solar days. ... We find absolutely no one arguing that the world is tens

of thousands of years old on the grounds that the six days are used figuratively for indefinite periods of time. ... Many of the church fathers plainly regarded the six days as ordinary days. Basil explicitly spoke of the day as a twenty-four-hour period. ... It cannot be denied, in spite of frequent interpretations of Genesis 1 that departed from the rigidly literal, that the almost universal view of the Christian world until the eighteenth century was that the Earth was only a few thousand years old (Young, 1982, pp. 13, 20, 22, 25).

Van Bebbler and Taylor (1994) discussed the views of these early church leaders extensively and proved that they did not support long ages (see p. 73–100).

PCists Claim That “Recent Creation” Is Poor Scholarship

In 1642 John Lightfoot published a chronology putting creation at 3928 BC. James Ussher followed in 1650 with a chronology having 4004 BC for the date of creation (Ussher, 1658). Ussher’s creation date was widely accepted for the next two centuries. The claim that Lightfoot and Ussher practiced poor scholarship has been debunked extensively in Van Bebbler and Taylor (1994).

Besides Ross’s (1994, 2004) challenge to the scholarship of Lightfoot and Ussher, Ross charged that the genealogies in Genesis 5 and 11 are “not as tight as it may appear at first glance,” that there is “at least one gap,” and that “others might exist” (Ross, 2004, p. 223). Ross (2004, pp. 22, 224) concluded that the possibility of genealogical gaps shows that Adam and Eve were created “sometime between 10,000 and 60,000 years ago.” However, the existence of genealogical gaps is “inconsequential” because at most, the years added to chronology by genealogical gaps would be “only about

0.0001 percent [of] the range of dates affirmed by science [i.e., evolution]" (Ross, 2004, p. 22). Though correct in claiming the gaps inconsequential relative to conventional chronology, Ross contradicted himself because in both his books (Ross, 1994, 2004) he calls the Lightfoot/Ussher chronologies into question before beginning his other arguments for the PC position, a position that involves a giga-year cosmic chronology.

Arthur Custance was one of the strongest modern proponents of the gap theory, sometimes called the "ruin-reconstruction theory." The gap theory claims that an indefinite gap of time existed between Genesis 1:1 and Genesis 1:2. Custance would appear to have been open to finding gaps in the Genesis genealogies, but he could not:

We are told again and again that some of these genealogies contain gaps: but what is never pointed out by those who lay the emphasis on these gaps is that they only know of the existence of these gaps because the Bible elsewhere fills them in. How otherwise could one know of them? But if they are filled in, they are not gaps at all! Thus, in the final analysis the argument is completely without foundation (Custance, 1967, p. 3).

Further, "even if there were gaps in the genealogies, there would not necessarily be gaps in the chronologies therein recorded. The issue of chronology is not the same as that of genealogy" (Thompson, 2000, p. 249). Jordan elaborated:

Gaps in genealogies, however, do not prove gaps in chronologies. The known gaps all occur in non-chronological genealogies. Moreover, even if there were gaps in the genealogies of Gen. 5 and 11, this would not affect the chronological information therein recorded, for even if Enosh

were the great-grandson of Seth, it would still be the case that Seth was 105 years old when Enosh was born, according to a simple reading of the text. Thus, genealogy and chronology are distinct problems with distinct characteristics. They ought not to be confused (Jordan, 1979, p. 12).

Ross claimed that:

Lightfoot [had] made an adjustment to Ussher's date ... [concluding] that all creation took place during the week of October 18–24, 4004 BC, with the creation of Adam occurring on October 23 at 9:00 a.m., forty-fifth meridian time (Ross, 1994, p. 26; Ross, 2004, p. 22).

Ross (1994) correctly points out, "This extraordinarily precise conclusion has provoked some mirth among both Bible scholars and critics" (p. 26). The precise timing of creation, however, was a fabrication invented by anti-creationist Andrew D. White, first president of Cornell University, in order to ridicule the Ussher chronology (Klotz, 1987, pp. 173–174). Following up on the fabricated Lightfoot story, Ross attempted to assert that the modern age debate is the product of the foolish dogmatism of Ussher and Lightfoot. In doing so, he traced the scenario of the rise of secularism, which, unintentionally, shows how the debate really came about as a battle between belief and unbelief (Ross, 1994).

Ross would seem overconfident of his claim that "science" has disproved Ussher. Some secular scientists give credence to the Ussher chronology that Ross rejects. Solar expert John Eddy, for example, stated:

I suspect that the Sun is 4.5-billion years old. However, given some new and unexpected results to the contrary, and some time for frantic recalculation and theoretical readjustment, I suspect that we could live with Bishop Ussher's value for

the age of the Earth and the Sun. I don't think we have much in the way of observational evidence in astronomy to contradict that (as quoted by Kazmann, 1978, p. 18).

As mentioned, Ussher put the date of creation at 4004 BC. According to Eddy, nothing in solar data contradicts this. The only real conflict is between recent creation and evolutionary beliefs, not scientific data. Indeed, there is really no scientific reason that the entire universe could not be viewed as young. Evolutionary cosmologist George Ellis wrote that:

A modern cosmologist who was also a theologian with strict fundamentalist views could construct a universe model which began 6000 years ago in time and whose edge was at a distance of 6000 light years from the solar system. A benevolent God could easily arrange the creation of the universe.... It would be impossible for any other scientist on the Earth to refute this world picture experimentally or observationally; all that he could do would be to disagree with the author's cosmological premises (Ellis, 1975, p. 246).

Proof of an old universe is lacking and its true age could be 6000 years. Indeed, self-professed atheist astronomer Duncan Steele (2000) noted: "Many disparate civilizations have ... assumed beginnings of time occurring a few thousand years B.C." (pp. 111, 135), and he added specifically, "... within a few centuries of 4000 B.C." (p. 40). Ussher-like dates are therefore biblically warranted and consistent with science. The conflict between biblical chronology and "science" is really a conflict with evolutionary interpretations of scientific data.

PCists Claim That the Age of Creation Is a Trivial Issue
Ross made this assertion repeat-

edly saying, “The battle line has been drawn over a peripheral point—the age of the universe and of the earth” (Ross, 1994, p. 8; Ross, 2004, p. 15). Yet in 1994 and 2004, Ross wrote two books entirely devoted to the question of age, showing that he really believes that the age question is very important. Ross elsewhere said:

But misidentifying the timing of God’s works in the cosmos has little bearing on [one’s relationship with Christ]. Nor does it bear upon the Bible’s authority. It appears ill-advised, then, to make an issue out of such a trivial doctrinal point. ... For creationists to make an issue of such a relatively trivial doctrinal point seems both impolitic and unnecessary (Ross, 1994, p. 11).

History reveals that the change from a recent creation view to a long-age creation was not a trivial point. In Western culture, Charles Lyell in the 1830s was the first to convince a large public that the old ages of geology were plausible and real. However, Lyell’s private agenda, never revealed publicly during his lifetime, was to overthrow the authority of biblical chronology (Henry, 2003), an agenda that was possibly motivated in part by political issues of the day (Grinnell, 1976).

Much could be written about the influence that a mistaken timing of creation might have on one’s relationship with Christ. One such story concerns Harvard entomologist Edward O. Wilson:

As were many persons from Alabama, I was a born-again Christian. When I was fifteen, I entered the Southern Baptist Church with great fervor and interest in the fundamentalist religion; I left at seventeen when I got to the University of Alabama and heard about evolutionary theory (Wilson, 1982, p. 40).

Philosopher Huston Smith com-

mented in the liberal *Christian Century* that “Martin Ling is probably right in saying that ‘more cases of loss of religious faith are to be traced to the theory of evolution ... than to anything else’” (Smith, 1982, p. 755). While Ross’s view is labeled “creationism,” it involves long periods of time and major amounts of evolution, which both played a role in Wilson’s loss of faith. In later years, Wilson was a major spokesman for the Wildlands Project, a little-publicized agenda calling “for nothing less than resetting the entire [North American] continent” (Mann and Plummer, 1993, p. 1868).

The Wildlands Project ... calls for a network of wilderness reserves, human buffer zones, and wildlife corridors stretching across huge tracts of land—hundreds of millions of acres, as much as half of the continent. ... On the Oregon coast, for example ... the Wildlands approach calls for 23.4% of the land to be returned to wilderness, and another 26.2% to be severely restricted in terms of human use. Most roads would be closed; some would be ripped out of the landscape. ... Similar alterations are called for in Vermont, Florida, the mid-Atlantic region, and the rest of the country (Mann and Plummer, 1993, p. 1868).

Whether or not the Wildlands Project is implemented as described, project planners have been explicit about the project’s neopagan motivation, which “includes a moral and spiritual dimension in addition to a geographic one” (Mann and Plummer, 1993, p. 1870). Considering Wilson’s influence, it is legitimate to wonder if the Wildlands Project with its implicit paganism would even exist today if evolution and long-age theories had not turned Wilson away from God half a century ago. History has revealed that the age of creation

is not a trivial issue, but is important spiritually and culturally.

PCists Claim That Teaching Long Ages Is Not Harmful to Christian Faith

Ross claimed that, “Interpreting the Genesis creation days as tens of millions or even hundreds of millions of Earth years in no way lends support to evolutionism” of a nontheistic variety (Ross, 1994, p. 80). This claim is revealed as false by the case of Charles Lyell, who advocated long ages precisely to undercut the Bible and support evolution (Henry, 2003b).

Ross further devised a motivation, which he has claimed to be the reason why recent-creationists oppose long ages. This motivation is fear: “The fear expressed by many devout Christians that long creation days greases a slide into the tenets of naturalistic evolution ... or theistic evolution ... has no scientific foundation” (Ross, 1994, p. 80). In other words, according to Ross, this fear is irrational. But history reveals there is danger.

For example, in his seminal work *Studies in Genesis One*, scholar E. J. Young (1964, p. 105) defended the historicity of the first chapter of the Bible. Young, however, had long been enamored with the idea that the creation might be old. In E. J. Young’s otherwise excellent book, *Thy Word Is Truth* (1957, pp. 169–170), he said, “The long ages of geology may indeed have occurred . . . We incline toward the view that the days [of creation] were periods of time longer than twenty-four hours. We do this ... upon exegetical grounds.” Yet E. J. Young nowhere said what these “exegetical grounds” might have been.

E. J. Young’s son, Davis Young, has authored books (e.g., Young, 1982) advocating the non-historicity of Genesis 1 and calling for conformity with modern uniformitarian geology. It is certainly possible that the doubts

of the father became rooted in the mind of the son and contributed to his abandonment of a historical Genesis 1. More generally, evolution's own advocates have acknowledged that the rise of modern evolution since the 1800s contributed to the following trends:

- The decline in Christianity in the West (Denton, 1985, p. 66);
- The rise of higher criticism (Powicke, 1955, p. 228);
- The rise of ecumenism (Wendte, 1911, pp. 33–34, 162, 404);
- The appearance of neopaganism (Barrows, 1893, pp. 78, 87, 96, 192–193, 331, 456–457);
- The rise of Communism (Zirkle, 1959, p. 85; Kramer, 1999, pp. x, xix);
- The appearance of Nazism (Kramer, 1999, pp. xi, xix);
- Modern racism (Hsu, 1987, p. 377);
- Global war (Keith, 1947, pp. 28, 230);
- Twentieth-century genocide (Kramer, 1999, p. x).
- A cultural climate favorable to the global rise in abortion and euthanasia (Burke, 1984, p. 29).

One must also remember that long-age theories helped to popularize naturalistic evolutionism.

Naturally, this legacy of evolution is not pleasant material and therefore is not often discussed. Too close a look at the legacy of evolution can tarnish the image of our heroes. Winston Churchill, for example,

... was profoundly impressed by Darwinism. He lost whatever religious faith he may have had—through reading Gibbon, he said—and took a particular dislike, for some reason, to the Catholic Church, as well as Christian missions. He became, in his own words, 'a materialist—to the tips of

my fingers,' and he fervently upheld the worldview that human life is a struggle for existence, with the outcome the survival of the fittest (Raico, 2001, p. 325–326).

Perhaps this explains why "there was one constant in his life: the love of war" (Raico, 2001, p. 325). It is an illusion to believe that the teaching of long evolutionary ages as fact is harmless; it opens the door to evolutionary beliefs, eventually resulting in spiritual and physical harm personally and culturally.

Summary

PCist arguments for long evolutionary "days" of creation and an old creation are not tenable biblically. It is shown here that: (1) the days of creation were literal; (2) Psalm 90:4 and 2 Peter 3:8 do not imply figurative days of creation; (3) the concept of literal creation days is an old teaching, not a new one originating just a couple of centuries ago, as asserted in Ross (2004); (4) early church fathers such as Augustine did not consistently allegorize the days of creation and often taught that they were literal; (5) there are no gaps in biblical genealogies, so the insertion of extra time into the chronology is invalid; (6) the super-precise Ussher/Lightfoot timing of the earth's creation at 9:00 am, October 23, 4004 BC, was a fabrication; and (7) Ussher-like dates for creation are biblically and scientifically warranted.

The Bible is God-breathed and deserves our full attention on every detail, including its remarks about creation. Its clear statements on these issues are more authoritative than scientific theories that replace supernatural, fiat creation with naturalistic origins processes.

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