

On the Renewed Battle to Bring Evolution into the Church (An Historical Summary)

The *bottom-line*, and the contention: Romans 5:8 – **12** –

But God showed his great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners. And since by his blood he did all this for us as sinners, how much more will he do for us now that he has declared us not guilty? Now he will save us from all of God's wrath to come. And since, when we were his enemies, we were brought back to God by the death of his Son, what blessings he must have for us now that we are his friends, and he is living within us!

Now we rejoice in our wonderful new relationship with God—all because of what our Lord Jesus Christ has done in dying for our sins—making us friends of God.

When Adam sinned, sin entered the entire human race. His sin spread death throughout all the world, so everything began to grow old and die, for all sinned.

Therefore, WHY CHRIST?; and WHO IS CHRIST?

From “Tacking Jesus Onto a Belief System” (my paper on Francis Collins / *BioLogos*, pp.6-7, 2006; paper online: www.genesisforumacademy.org/documents/TackingJesusontoBeliefSystem-Collins.pdf):

As can be discerned by reading these works of Collins – designed to encourage Bible-believing Christians that they can trust Jesus, while at the same time hold to Darwinian Evolution as an explanation of natural things – we will be hearing more from him in the future. There are hardcore individuals who have dedicated themselves to convincing us that Jesus Christ was a “Super Star,” and not the Creator of the Universe; the very One who providentially – moment-by-moment – sustains us all. Collins, by virtue of his professional standing, is becoming one of the key leaders in this movement. He rejects biblical history, despises Intelligent Design as a “scientific dead end,” (p.187), and considers Creationists to be “effectively committing intellectual suicide,” (p.178) while at the same time identifying himself as a part of the evangelical Christian community (and citing B. B. Warfield as his authority! – pp.178-179).

Consider B.B. Warfield (American theologian, Princeton Seminary, 1911):

The Uniformitarian and Evolution ideas of Charles Lyell and later Charles Darwin in the 1800's were, and became, a direct attack on the Bible's record of things as they happened, and subsequently a number of theologians felt obliged to enter the battle and defend God and His Word. In retrospect, this was a serious mistake since by the time Darwin published his treatise (1859) most Bible teachers — especially those in academia — had been compromised in their own faith concerning the veracity of Scripture. History shows that some highly regarded Bible scholars entered the fray with a dull Sword, a Shield of clay, and a Belt enamored of idealistic speculation (cf., Ephesians 6).

Of the contemporary American theologians most influenced by this trend were Princeton's Charles Hodge and B. B. Warfield (circa 1820 - 1920). Ironically, these two defenders of biblical inerrancy did arguably more than any others to compromise the historicity of the Bible, accomplishing this largely through dubious attacks on the Scriptural record of the genealogy of Jesus. The teachings of Hodge and Warfield, in turn, generated further scholarship that attempted to show how one could believe in the Messiah (Christ) and His Word devoid of a firm historical context. In this manner, it was felt that one could be a Bible-believing Christian, and at the same time retain intellectual standing in the academic community.

Indeed, holding to the view that the biblical genealogies/chronologies are relatively insignificant, one could even be a fundamentalist/evangelical Christian without succumbing to charges of being ignorant, old fashioned, intolerant, and worst of all, *unscientific!* For by the early twentieth century Uniformitarian Naturalism (i.e., Evolution) had captured and claimed science as its own. Here Warfield forcefully attacks the linear *chrono*-genealogical record of the Old Testament directly, and in the process lays a foundation for subsequent theistic evolution models:

[N]othing can be clearer than that it is precarious in the highest degree to draw chronological inferences from genealogical tables.... But for the whole space of time before Abraham, we are dependent entirely on inferences drawn from the genealogies recorded in the fifth and eleventh chapters of Genesis. *And if the Scriptural genealogies supply no solid basis for chronological inferences*, it is clear that we are left without Scriptural data for forming an estimate of the duration of these ages. *For aught we know they may have been an immense length...* In particular, it is clear that the genealogical purposes for which the genealogies were given, *did not require a complete record* of all the generations through which the descent of the persons to whom they are assigned runs; but only an adequate indication of the particular line through which the descent in question comes. Accordingly it is found on examination that *the genealogies of Scripture are freely compressed for all sorts of purposes*; and that it can seldom be confidently affirmed that they contain a complete record of the whole series of generations, while it is often obvious that *a very large number are omitted*. There is no reason inherent in the nature of the Scriptural genealogies why a genealogy of *ten*

recorded links, as each of those in Genesis v. and xi. is, may not represent an actual descent of a hundred or a thousand or ten thousand links. (Biblical and Theological Studies, pp.240-241, 1911, emphasis added)

From Halley (1927) –

Henry H. Halley in his *Halley's Bible Handbook* (copyrighted 1927; I have the Twenty-Third Edition, 1962, Second Printing, 1963) has the *beginning* occurring in the Middle East: “The Euphrates-Tigris Valley is the place where the earth’s earliest civilizations lived, and where the Bible story begins.” (p46). This is a highly spurious assumption, and in the context of modernity, very dangerous. Due to the cataclysmic nature of the Flood, we have no way of knowing the location of the pre-Flood world. No doubt he felt emboldened to make such a claim based on Uniformitarian geological assumptions, and local flood notions in his theology.

When Halley discussed “Chapter 1:1. Creation of the Universe,” he says that “‘In the Beginning’ GOD Created the Universe. What follows, in the ‘Seven days’, describes the Forming of substance already created, in preparation of the Earth’s Surface for the Creation and Abode of Man. The creation of Man, according to Biblical chronology, was about 4000 B.C. *But the creation of the Universe may have been countless ages earlier.*” (p63, *emphasis added*)

Here Halley lays the groundwork for the compromising of the Bible with secular (Uniformitarian) geology, allowing for millions and billions of years of time—indeed, *countless* ages—to have elapsed before the appearance of human civilization. It is clear that Warfield helped Halley along this path with his false notion of thousands of generations missing from the biblical chronology. Essentially we have Halley setting down two chronologies: One for the physical world and universe, and another for the age of mankind. The Bible in its literal reading gives no credence to this premise!

Since Halley has compromised the literal text of the Bible in this context, he is then unsure of the actual length of the “Days” as recorded in chapter 1: “Whether they were days of 24 hours, or long successive periods, we do not know.” (p64) This established, there then is no biblical way to establish a chronology for the age of the universe, the earth, humankind, and the history of the Messiah (the *chrono-genealogical* record of Genesis 5, 10 and 11).

Halley next is befuddled over the creation of the Sun, Moon, and Stars, finding them mentioned first in verse 16, but feeling rather more comfortable with placing them “[o]n the ‘first day’ [where] their light must have penetrated the earth’s mists, 1:3, while they themselves were not visible.” (p65) The farther from a literal reading of the text one gets, the harder it is to understand what it is really telling us!

When it comes to the Great Flood of Genesis, Halley offers a weak view of a global-covering event, even less of a *cataclysmic* hydro-tectonic upheaval of unimaginable proportions. He repeatedly identifies archeological discoveries in the Middle East as being those of Ante-Diluvian cities and civilizations, failing to fully realize that the tremendously inconceivable destruction of the Flood would have totally obliterated such works at the tectonic level. It was not a placid, simply messy and inconvenient flood. The intent of *the Flood* was to literally destroy the world! (cf. pp75-)

Halley equivocates badly when he tries to describe the “Extent of the Flood” on page 77. He begins by focusing on the Euphrates Valley as the scene of the action. Though he acknowledges with the Scripture that “All the high mountains that were under the whole heavens were covered....” he then goes on to be concerned about geography: “This [description] doubtless is the very language in which Shem related, or wrote, the story of the Flood to his children and grandchildren. He told it as he saw it. Are we to interpret his language according to his own geography? or present day geography? The whole race, except Noah and his family, were destroyed. *To destroy the race it was necessary for the Flood to cover only so much of the earth as was inhabited.* Accepting the Bible account as it is, there had been only TEN generations from Adam, the first man. *How could ONE family, in TEN generations, with primitive modes of travel, populate the whole earth? Most likely the race had not spread far outside the Euphrates basin.*” (p77, *emphasis added*)

What Halley fails to account for in his logical development of this account is that those TEN generations covered a span of more than 1,500 years. Over that period of time two people (“ONE family”) could easily produce progeny in the billions, especially when tradition has it that Adam had 33 sons and 27 daughters (Halley cites this as well, p73). Over the course of 1,500 years, overpopulation (Genesis 6 notes a “population explosion” occurred just prior to the Flood) and migration patterns would have pushed the earth’s masses over the entire surface of the globe. Consider how easily populations have moved over and around the present globe even with its vast oceans which apparently did not exist prior to the Flood. From the 15th Century onward, it took but weeks or months for folks to hop from one continent to another spreading out rapidly all over the earth.

Essentially, Halley has established the “Local Flood” theme that compromised the Bible with secular geology and its subsequent vast timeframe of earth’s history. This compromising element has vexed the Church since that time!

Halley subscribes to at least three bad and faulty assumptions. The first is that the pre-Flood and post-Flood topography were / are essentially the same (this is Uniformitarianism, which does not hold to a *cataclysmic* Flood). Secondly, he feels the pre-Flood earth was only populated (totally) within the Euphrates Valley. Finally, he asserts that it was the rain and the overflowing of the seas that filled the Valley and killed all air-breathing life “on the earth,” failing to account for the breakup of the foundations of the deep. These three assumptions are completely unrealistic within the context of the *cataclysmic* event as described in Genesis 6-9.

This compromise with the secular geology model (and geological STORY) opens the door to other, more serious problems with an understanding of Scripture – Why Christ?; Who is Christ?

The Fall of Man and his subsequent redemption is the issue here. When Adam sinned, did his sin bring death to the world, or simply the human race? Did this sin bring physical death or simply spiritual death? Was physical death a part of the Creation (in Judeo-Christian theology), and/or a part of Nature (in Naturalistic/Uniformitarian/Evolutionary philosophy) from the beginning? Evolution demands such a thing (“Survival of the fittest;” “Red in tooth and claw”), for death is what brings about progress to a higher order in the Evolutionary chain. But according to the Bible, when God finished his Creation, He pronounced it to be “very good.”

If death (physical/material) was here from the beginning then Christ’s death need only be spiritual since it is simply the Spirit of Man (and Christ) that has any (eternal) value. Indeed, the Gnostics of old taught this very thing, and they were roundly denounced by the Apostle Paul in his writings. To the Gnostics, matter was inherently evil, and the Spirit was eternally good. The true Christ could not have died physically; indeed, could not have really had a physical existence at all, or else He would be evil! He could not have died, and certainly not have risen from a death He never experienced.

So then, Why Christ? Well, he certainly was a good teacher – the Best, no doubt. What he did and said have gone a long way in improving our lives if we but follow his teachings. To many Jesus was super; in fact to them He is “Jesus Christ Super Star.” There is just something about him that gives us good feelings. That was and is His purpose (and message) to this troubled world.

Romans 5:12 teaches a different message. Although Halley acknowledges the “Effect of Sin on Nature” (p70), that Genesis 3 provides a “... primeval explanation of Nature as it is today” he loses this thought when he provides “Select Bible Verses” (p770) dealing with “Death” where Romans 5:12 is ignored entirely. Halley cites the verse on page 71, but only in this context: “One man’s sin brought Death, One Man’s Death brought Redemption.”

That classic evangelistic phrase may sound good, however it lacks the force of Romans 5:12 itself: “Adam’s sin spread death throughout the whole world, so everything began to grow old and die.” Moreover, the phrase (“One man’s sin brought Death, One Man’s Death brought Redemption”) conveniently leaves open the notion that *physical* death actually existed from the beginning, thereby allowing for the Evolutionary notion of death as inherent in Nature! In other words, according to Romans 5:12, there was no death on the earth (spiritual or physical) prior to Adam’s sin.

Sailhamer continues this logic (1996) –

One of John Sailhamer’s classic statements (which he gave to his children when they would ask him where the dinosaurs fit into the biblical account of creation) is that *the dinosaurs were there at the Beginning, they lived in the Beginning, and they died in the Beginning.*” (p105) This is a profound and fundamental piece of theology which he provides in his book *Genesis Unbound: A Provocative New Look at the Creation Account*, Multnomah Books, 1996. To be more precise, Sailhamer writes:

The many biological eras would also fit within “the beginning” of Genesis 1:1, including the long ages during which the dinosaurs roamed the earth. By the time human beings were created on the sixth day of the week, the dinosaurs already could have flourished and become extinct – all during the “beginning” recorded in Genesis 1:1.

In an equivocal and compromising expression of his view of the timeline of the Bible (he calls it *Historical Creationism*), Sailhamer says that “Given what appears to be true about the age of the earth, it is likely that millions or billions of years transpired during this time of ‘the beginning.’” Why he feels the need to compromise the chronology provided in the Scripture with the bizarre (but scientifically orthodox) notion of historical time of the secular worldview is not stated. I often wonder in this regard just what is it that makes the earth “appear” to be billions of years old, when to me it looks to be on the order of thousands!

Doctrine: What Christians Should Believe (2010) –

Mars Hill Church Seattle is an emerging mega-church whose senior pastor, Mark Driscoll, recently (2009) delivered a series of sermons on Christian doctrine, including the third message on Creation (chapter 3 in the book of the same title, *Doctrine: What Christians Should Believe*, 2010). Since John Sailhamer (was professor at Western Seminary in Portland) and Mars Hill Seattle are in the Northwest, a somewhat variant view of the Creation account has now emerged in that area of the world, hoping to gain a foothold in modern Christian theology.

Driscoll (and co-author Gary Breshears) have essentially adopted Sailhamer’s accommodation of secular time into the biblical text, but go on to point out that this particular doctrine (Creation and Genesis) need not be taken dogmatically (called “*open-handed*” in their theological lexicon), that one could believe the Creation to be billions of years old or thousands. It really doesn’t make any difference to these authors, so long as we all agree to disagree and move on to the other doctrines (which are to be considered in a “*closed-handed*” fashion).

It really makes one wonder why Driscoll and Breshears felt the need to include this discussion in their teaching on church doctrines at all, if it is not to be handled in a doctrinaire fashion. It is true that they would rather one think in terms of *eons* when it comes to timelines, but they’d rather not debate the issue. They apparently feel that in this day and culture, worldview timelines are simply too hot to handle, especially within an intellectual and academic context.

But even at the high intellectual level, the matter of death has an ugly habit of emerging, and here Driscoll and Breshears show a special knack for theologizing! To these authors the whole notion of sin and death becomes an intellectualized theological jumble and eventual quagmire: Sin is "... nefarious, complex, and far-reaching." (p148) It disrupts, and it resists God (p149). It misses the mark (p151). It is a privation and a corruption (p154).

In the "constellation of images" that the Bible uses to explain sin, *death* is found fifth in a list of twenty-one fruits (wages): "... everything from rebellion to folly, self-abuse, madness, treason, *death*, hatred, spiritual adultery, missing the mark, wandering from the path, idolatry, insanity, irrationality, pride, selfishness, blindness, deafness, a hard heart, a stiff neck, delusion, unreasonableness, and self-worship.... [indeed, there are] ... eight aspects of sin[:]. A "relational breach," "a social matter," "a conventional rebellion against God," "a legal transgression," "a ritual uncleanness," "emotional pain... shame... disgrace," "an accumulating burden..." and finally, "... the finality of death... ends only in death." (pp149-150)

Driscoll and Breshears have largely avoided DEATH like the plague! They have a confused understanding of DEATH. In essence, they have sadly marginalized DEATH. Except for one brief mention where God warned Eve that sin "... was deadly," (p147) there is scant mention of the most severe aspect and result of sin: DEATH! Nowhere to be found is "... thou shalt surely die"—"The wages of sin is death"—"The Valley of the Shadow of death?" "Adam lived another 800 years, producing sons and daughters, and DIED at the age of 930."

Why do these authors find it so difficult to thrash out the fact that disease, suffering, and death came with the Fall—the sin of Man? I submit this is so because they have chosen to subscribe to a false doctrine, indeed, the very "Historic Creationism" they so willingly espouse, which asserts that God created the heaven and the earth in the first verse of Genesis; a creation which "... existed for an undefined period of time (which could be anywhere from a moment to billions of years) before God began the work of preparing the uninhabitable land for the habitation of mankind." (p89, following Sailhamer) "This view leaves open the possibility of an old earth, six literal days of creation, and a young humanity on the old earth." (pp89-90)

We know now on experience that there is a standard sequence where such logic eventually leads. Within the billions of years there is disease, pain, suffering, and death, from the beginning. We know this as the fossil "record" which indexes nicely the geological record scheme, which provides for us a his-*STORY* comprising billions of years of *pre-history*. There are actually many well-meaning, Bible-proclaiming, self-confessing (evangelical, and often quite conservative) Christians who hold to this view (and many of them desperately so!).

It is this very notion of *death before sin* that bears witness—ye, shouts from the rooftops—that billions of years and eons of time is so much non-science. To merely entertain the false and all too ubiquitous idea of a *pre-history* is what causes biblical compromise, false teaching, and division in the church.

To proclaim that all nature suffers because of the Fall of Adam as Scripture so clearly teaches (Romans 5:12) puts an end to all the foolishness over theistic-evolution, Gap Theory, Progressive Creationism, Framework Hypothesis, Day-Age, Gap Genealogies (of the Messiah), Historic Creationism, and any number of theological attempts felt necessary to harmonize the Bible with the ever-present pseudo-science which gives us Naturalism, geological gradualism (Uniformitarianism), Evolution, Big Bang cosmology, Godless humanism, and ultimately, complete atheism. To compromise Genesis 1 and have death before Man (the dinosaurs, animals, *hominids*!, plants!, etc.) undermines first the authority of Scripture, and finally its relevance. Following this perverted logic ultimately makes of our Messiah not the Second Adam—the God-Man; but a Super-Man, in essence!

It is biblical compromise and the nefarious attempts to accommodate Genesis 1 to scientific orthodoxy that has largely brought the Church to the lukewarm stature we see today. Without a Bible that is complete, correct, consistent, and compelling, the very Word of God becomes muted to the believer, and certainly to the world. Without a Bible that we can trust, eventually we lose all hope of a manual to guide us in instruction, reproof, correction, and doctrine.

We do well to heed the words of Jesus: "Beware of these experts in religion." As men, we must guide the Church to, and through, the full Gospel. We must learn (and teach) to examine carefully (Acts 17:11) what our teachers—both past and present—proffer regarding Genesis 1-11: the Creation account, the Fall, the Flood, and the genealogies of the Messiah. These are central and foundational doctrines, not to be challenged and handled as "open-handed," less weighty, and as lower doctrines in some hierarchy of doctrinal truths!

We are to stand firm, no matter what (1st Thessalonians 3:8; Ephesians 6:13). We are to put on the *whole* armor of God. We must go into battle with a sharp, two-edged sword. After all, just how effective is the soldier who goes to war with a broken weapon?

In conclusion –

G. Campbell Morgan had something to say about this bent towards accommodating the logic of men to the *Logos* of God:

There is a toleration which is treachery. There is a peace which issues in paralysis. There are times when the church **must say NO to those who should ask communion with her**, in the doing of her work, upon the basis of compromise. Such standing aloof may produce ostracism and persecution; but it will maintain power and influence. If the Church of God in the cities of today were aloof from the maxims of the age, separated from the materialistic philosophies of the schools, bearing her witness alone to the all-sufficiency of Christ, and the perfection of His salvation, even though persecuted and ostracized and bruised, **it would be to her that men would look in the hour of their heartbreak and sorrow and national need. The reason why men do not look to the church today is that she has destroyed her own influence by compromise.**

It must never be forgotten that the two greatest events in the history of the cosmos were, first of all, its supernatural creation and, secondly, the resurrection of its Creator from the dead. The evidence for each is overwhelming. The Bible shows us emphatically that both are vitally true, vitally important, and vitally related.

Furthermore, the Creation and the Resurrection are necessary to each other. As Morris notes: “The creation, invaded and permeated by decay and death, heading down toward ultimate chaos, can only be saved and renewed if death is defeated and life is restored by its Creator. The resurrection, conversely triumphing over death and promising ultimate restoration of the perfect creation, can only be accomplished by the Creator Himself. The creation requires the resurrection and the resurrection requires the Creator.”

We really have two choices when it comes to a historical worldview: A secular view of history, based on Uniformitarian (and Evolutionary) timeline notions of billions of years, or a *HisStorical* view as given to us in the *chrono*-genealogical timelines of the Bible. The secular world has a Story they desperately want us to believe; a Story that is fundamentally Naturalistic, largely Atheistic, and powerfully Evolutionistic in its presentation. Fundamentally, according to this worldview, death is the generating force for new and more advanced (better) life forms; in fact, death is the ultimate hope, and the absolute end.

The Bible has an entirely different Story to tell. The Bible is God’s autobiography: It is *HisStory*! It alone reveals a God of LOVE, revealed in His Written WORD; with its GOSPEL message of a Crucified SAVIOR and Risen LORD – and a Blessed HOPE for a Dying World.

Bruce Schweigerdt, MA
August 2010