



THE

GENESIS

FACTOR



Myths and Realities



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COMPILATION EDITOR

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## CHAPTER I

# THE HISTORY OF BIBLICAL/ SCIENTIFIC CREATIONISM IN THE CHURCH

*Christopher Cone*

**I**t was not until Darwin's generation that the idea of biblical creationism became a minority view. Moreover, while some critics of biblical creationism purport that the six-day creation view is a recent development, history tells us otherwise. It must be admitted that the terms *creationism* and *creationist* are fairly recent terms — dating back to Darwin's day, and initially referring to “the doctrine that God creates a new soul whenever a human being begins to live. . .”<sup>1</sup> (in contrast to the traducian view), but Darwin himself used the term to describe opponents of his evolutionary theory.<sup>2</sup> As the theological and scientific significance of this issue has become more and more evident, the terms find a more prominent place at the center of the debate. Nevertheless, while the terms may be recent, the historically evidenced view of biblical creationism certainly is not; rather, there has been

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1. *The Practical Standard Dictionary of the English Language* (New York: Funk & Wagnalls Company, 1943), 1:282.

2. F. Darwin, *The Life and Letters of Charles Darwin* (New York: D. Appleton, 1889), 2:28.

held historically a diversity of views with prominent early representation for the literal six-day creation account.

Although not the first proponent (in the human sense) of biblical creationism (there are numerous Old Testament acknowledgments of the literal Genesis account, i.e., Gen. 1–2; Deut. 4:32; Ps. 148:5; Isa. 40:26; 41:20; 42:5; 45:12, 18; 54:16; Mal. 2:10; etc.), Jesus Christ was very clear regarding His hermeneutically literal approach to the Genesis record (Mark 13:19; Luke 24:27; John 5:46–47). Note His confirmation in Matthew 19:4–6 and Mark 10:6, of both creation accounts (Gen. 1 and 2). He was both Creator (John 1:3; Col. 1:16) and witness to His own creative work. It is on His authority (in Old and New Testament revelation) that the church found its basis for the literal understanding of the Genesis account of creation.

### **Apostolic Era (A.D. 40–95)**

**James**, the half brother of Jesus<sup>3</sup> and apostle (Gal. 1:19), in A.D. 48 confirmed creation *ex nihilo* by the Word of God (James 1:17–18) and acknowledged man as originating directly from God and in His image (James 3:9).

**Paul the apostle**, throughout his ministry (roughly A.D. 32 to A.D. 68), demonstrated a literal understanding of the creation account. He testified to the men of Athens that God was the lifegiver, and that all mankind originated from Adam (Acts 17:22–31). He presented to the Roman church that man existed from creation (Rom. 1:18–25), that Adam’s sin was the cause of human death (Rom. 5:12–19), and that creation (all that is created) groans from sin and yet God is sovereign over it (Rom. 8:19–23). He identified to the Corinthian church the order of the creation of man and woman, based on the Genesis account (1 Cor. 11:8–12), traced death to Adam (1 Cor. 15:20–21), differentiated types of flesh, again based on Genesis (1 Cor. 15:37–41), and identified God as the Creator of light (2 Cor. 4:3–6). He affirmed to the Colossian church Christ as Creator and Sovereign (Col. 1:15–20) and Lifegiver (Col. 3:9–10).

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3. C. Cone, *The Promises of God, A Bible Survey* (Arlington, TX: Exegetica Publishing, 2005), p. 231.

The **author of Hebrews** (possibly Apollos<sup>4</sup>), around A.D. 64–67, made reference to creation as a divine act through Jesus Christ (Col. 1:2–3), to God as Creator of all things (Col. 3:4), and to the creative work being completed in six literal days (Col. 4:3–4, 10–11).

The **apostle Peter** (A.D. 66–67) was very detailed in his recounting of creation, identifying uniformitarianism as the message of mockers (2 Pet. 3:3–4), affirming the methodology of creation as *by the word of God* (2 Pet. 3:5), and reiterating specific elements contained in the Genesis account (2 Pet. 3:5–6).

The beloved disciple (John 21:7, 20) **John**, in his Gospel (A.D. 65–69) presented Jesus as the Creator of all (John 1:1–3), and later in his Apocalypse (A.D. 85–95) he recorded the testimony of the 24 elders who affirmed the same fact (Rev. 4:11).

It is upon this framework that the church historically built its understanding of the creation doctrine. Inherent in this framework were two major issues necessary for the biblical creationism/young-earth conclusion: (1) the idea that God created all things *ex nihilo* (out of nothing) — which would make the creation of Genesis 1:1 the beginning of all matter and time — and, (2) the literal understanding of the days of creation, which would therefore submit the earth to the dating of the Old Testament chronologies, beginning with Adam, and thus provide biblical evidence for a young earth. While it must be admitted that there was some diversity on these views even among the church fathers in the post-Apostolic church, it is evident that the majority did indeed hold to biblical creationism and the young-earth conclusion.

### **Ante-Nicene Era (A.D. 95–325)**

**Hermas** (90–150) held to creation *ex nihilo*. He stated, “First of all, believe that there is one God who created and finished all things, and made all things out of nothing.”<sup>5</sup>

4. *Ibid.*, p. 262–266.

5. “The Shepherd of Hermas (Book II, Commandment 1)” [online] (New Advent, 2004, accessed September 19, 2005) available from <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0201201.htm>.

**Clement of Alexandria** (150–215), in his chronology defending the antiquity of Moses over the Greek philosophies, traced 6,148 years from Adam to the death of the Roman Emperor Commodus in A.D. 192, thus dating creation as being newer than 6,000 years. In yet another strand of his chronology, he quoted Eupolemus (seemingly as authoritative) who dated Adam as late as 5438.<sup>6</sup> His conclusions support a literal understanding of the days of creation and a young-age earth.

**Theophilus of Antioch** (115–188), in his letter to Autoly-cus (2:11–12), recognized the magnificence of creation and its six-day scope: “Of this six days’ work no man can give a worthy explanation and description of all its parts. Not though he had ten thousand tongues and ten thousand mouths; nay, though he were to live ten thousand years, sojourning in this life, not even so could he utter anything worthy of these things, on account of the exceeding greatness and riches of the wisdom of God which were in the six days’ work above narrated.”<sup>7</sup> Theophilus’s emphasis on the amazing work accomplished in such a short time illustrates the profundity of the doctrine (of six-day creationism) and his respect for the One who orchestrated it.

**Irenaeus** (115–202) understood creation to be *ex nihilo*: “For, to attribute the substance of created things to the power and will of Him who is God of all, is worthy both of credit and acceptance. . . . He Himself called into being the substance of His creation, when previously it had no existence.”<sup>8</sup> Additionally, he believed the creation days to be literal, developing his eschatology, as was commonly done, on the day-age principle:

For in as many days as this world was made, in so many thousand years shall it be concluded. And for this reason the Scripture says: “Thus the heaven and the earth

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6. A. Roberts and J. Donaldson, eds., *The Ante-Nicene Fathers* (1886; reprint, Grand Rapids, MI, Eerdmans, 1989), 2:332.

7. *Ibid.*, 2:99.

8. St. Irenaeus of Lyons, “Adversus Haereses (Book II, Chapter 10)” [online] (New Advent, 2004, accessed September 19, 2005) available from <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0103210.htm>.

were finished, and all their adornment. And God brought to a conclusion upon the sixth day the works that He had made; and God rested upon the seventh day from all His works.” This is an account of the things formerly created, as also it is a prophecy of what is to come. For the day of the Lord is as a thousand years; and in six days created things were completed: it is evident, therefore, that they will come to an end at the sixth thousand year.<sup>9</sup>

**Tertullian** (160–225) reasoned for *ex nihilo* throughout his argument *Against Hermogones*.

**Hippolytus of Rome** (170–236), in his commentary on Daniel (2:4) — written in context of the coming of Messiah — acknowledged a creation date of 5,500 years before the appearance of Christ<sup>10</sup> and seemed to understand the creation days to be literal, although he did reference the day-age idea of 6,000 years as typified by the creation days,<sup>11</sup> but this does not seem to impact his literal interpretation of the creation days themselves.

**Julius Africanus** (160–240) — like Hippolytus — specifically reckoned the creation date as 5,500 years before the incarnation of Christ. He regarded the chronology seriously, saying, “For the Jews . . . together with the truth by the spirit of Moses, have handed down to us, by their extant Hebrew histories, the number of 5,500 years as the period up to the advent of the Word of salvation, that was announced to the world in the time of the sway of the Caesars.”<sup>12</sup> His statement indicates an inarguably literal approach.

**Theophilus of Antioch** (180) remarked: “But the power of God is manifested in this, that out of things that are not He makes whatever He pleases; just as the bestowal of life and motion is the prerogative of no other than God alone. For even man makes indeed an image, but reason and breath, or feeling, he

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9. *Against Heresies* 5:28:3 — <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0103528.htm>.

10. Roberts and Donaldson, *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 5:179.

11. *Ibid.*

12. *Ibid.*, 6:131.

cannot give to what he has made. But God has this property in excess of what man can do, in that He makes a work, endowed with reason, life, sensation. As, therefore, in all these respects God is more powerful than man, so also in this; that out of things that are not He creates and has created things that are, and whatever He pleases, as He pleases.”<sup>13</sup>

**Origen** (185–253) stated, “The Mosaic account of the creation . . . teaches that the world is not yet ten thousand years old, but very much under that.”<sup>14</sup> Moreover, while disagreeing with Celsus’s sources, he agreed with Celsus’ conclusion that the earth is less than 10,000 years old (*Against Celsus* 1.20).<sup>15</sup> Although he was a notorious allegorist, Origen’s acknowledgment here requires a literal interpretation of the creation account. Origen did alter the discussion slightly; however, as he (as did Philo and others) understood that creation took place in a moment, and tried to reconcile momentary creation with the six-day work. Nonetheless, he recognized a young earth.

**Lactantius** (240–320), in his *Divine Institutes* (1.3), identified God as authority over all by virtue of His creative work *ex nihilo*, stating that He “created all things and governs them with the same energy by which He created them.”<sup>16</sup>

**Eusebius of Caesarea** (263–339), in his *Chronicle*, reckoned the year of creation to be 5228 B.C., stating, “And from Adam to the flood, is 2,242 years. So the overall total, from Adam until the second year of Dareius and the second building of [the temple in] Jerusalem, is 4,680 years. And from the second year of Dareius which was the first year of the 65th Olympiad [520 B.C.] [until the ministry of Christ], is 137 Olympiads and 548 years.”<sup>17</sup>

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13. Theophilus of Antioch, “To Autolycus (Book 2)” [online] (New Advent, 2004, accessed September 20, 2005) available from <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/02042.htm>.

14. Roberts and Donaldson, *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 4:404.

15. *Ibid.*

16. *Ibid.*, 7:11.

17. “Eusebius: Chronicle” [online] (Attalus, February 3, 2005, accessed September 20, 2005) available from <http://www.attalus.org/translate/eusebius1.html>.

**Methodius** (311), in his *Banquet of the Ten Virgins* (or *Concerning Chastity*), identified man as being created at once by the Almighty, who “alone breathes into man the undying and undecaying part, as also it is He alone who is Creator of the invisible and indestructible.”<sup>18</sup> His statement reflects a clear supposition of creation *ex nihilo* in addition to an acknowledgment of the divine origin certainly of human life. Methodias acknowledged man’s formation from clay,<sup>19</sup> evidencing his literal view of the substance of the creation account — that God created man from the dirt. He also held to a literal meaning of day in the creation account.<sup>20</sup>

**Victorinus of Pettau** (304) presented a literal understanding of the creation days: “In the beginning God made the light, and divided it in the exact measure of twelve hours by day and by night, for this reason, doubtless, that day might bring over the night as an occasion of rest for men’s labours; that, again, day might overcome, and thus that labour might be refreshed with this alternate change of rest, and that repose again might be tempered by the exercise of day. ‘On the fourth day He made two lights in the heaven, the greater and the lesser, that the one might rule over the day, the other over the night,’ — the lights of the sun and moon and He placed the rest of the stars in heaven, that they might shine upon the earth, and by their positions distinguish the seasons, and years, and months, and days, and hours.”<sup>21</sup>

Even the **Creed of Nicea** (325) reads, “We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all things visible and invisible.” Creation *ex nihilo* is expressly communicated here as the majority view of the young church.

### Post-Nicene Era (A.D. 325–590)

**Ephrem the Syrian** (306–373), in his *Commentary on Genesis* (1.1), held that the earth was created in six 24-hour days, saying

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18. Roberts and Donaldson, *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 6:316.

19. *Ibid.*, 6:317.

20. *Ibid.*, 6:333.

21. Victorinus, “On the Creation of the World” [online] (New Advent, 2004, accessed September 21, 2005) available from <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0711.htm>.

adamantly, “So let no one think that there is anything allegorical in the works of the six days. No one can rightly say that the things that pertain to these days were symbolic . . .”<sup>22</sup>, and again he said, “Because everything that was created was created in those six days. . . .”<sup>23</sup> He was emphatic about both *ex nihilo* and the literalness of the days, going even to the lengths of reducing the days in terms of hours: “The light remained a length of twelve hours so that each day might also obtain its own hours just as the darkness had obtained a measured length of time . . . the day and the night of the first day were each completed in twelve hours.”<sup>24</sup>

Basil (329–379) argued that creation was “not spontaneous, as some have imagined, but drew its origin from God.”<sup>25</sup> He supposed further that *In the beginning God created* was “to teach us that at the will of God the world arose in less than an instant, and it is to convey this meaning more clearly that other interpreters have said: ‘God made summarily’ that is to say all at once and in a moment.”<sup>26</sup> He also held to a literal understanding of the creation day, saying in that regard, “Scripture means the space of a day and a night.”<sup>27</sup> He clarified his position with further detail, as he explained why Genesis 1:5 refers to *one day* rather than *the first day*: “. . . it is from a wish to determine the measure of day and night, and to combine the time that they contain. Now twenty-four hours fill up the space of one day — we mean of a day and a night.”<sup>28</sup> Basil’s work in the Hexaemeron (the six-day work) stands as a significant and lasting defense of the historicity of the young church’s prominently literal understanding of the creation account.

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22. T. Halton, ed., *The Fathers of the Church: St. Ephrem the Syrian*, trans. E.G. Matthews and J.P. Amar (Washington DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1994), p. 74.

23. *Ibid.*, p. 77.

24. *Ibid.*, p. 80.

25. P. Schaff and H. Wace, *The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers* (1886-1889; reprint, Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1989), 8:52.

26. *Ibid.*, 8:55.

27. *Ibid.*, 8:64.

28. *Ibid.*

**Jerome** (340–420), the earliest church father with fluency in all the biblical languages, broke with the tradition of utilizing only the Latin text and relied on the Hebrew Old Testament, with Augustine (*City of God* 15.13) agreeing that on conflicting passages, Hebrew is final authority. It is because of his attention to the Hebrew grammar of the creation account, he came to the *ex nihilo* conclusion. He called a truism the statement, “God has been, is, and will be the maker of men, and that there is nothing either in heaven or on earth which does not owe its existence wholly to Him.”<sup>29</sup>

**Cyril of Jerusalem** (387) recognized creation as a six-day process,<sup>30</sup> and understood the breadth of its scope: “. . . if of the wild beasts we know not even the mere names, how shall we comprehend the Maker of them? God’s command was but one, which said, Let the earth bring forth wild beasts, and cattle, and creeping things, after their kinds: and from one earth, by one command, have sprung diverse natures. . . .”<sup>31</sup>

**Ambrose of Milan** (339–397) recognized creation *ex nihilo*, stating that God “commanded the world to come into being out of no matter and no substance,”<sup>32</sup> and upon this truth built his argument for the sensibility of the doctrine of resurrection, saying, “But if God made all these things out of nothing (for ‘He spake and they were made, He commanded and they were created’), why should we wonder that that which has been should be brought to life again, since we see produced that which had not been?”<sup>33</sup>

**Augustine of Hippo** (354–430), demonstrating his agreement with Eusebius’s chronology, and referring to those who believed in an old earth, said, “They are deceived, too, by those highly mendacious documents which profess to give the history of many thousand years, though reckoning by the sacred writings we find that

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29. *Ibid.*, 6:284.

30. *Ibid.*, 7:73.

31. *Ibid.*, 7:54.

32. *Ibid.*, 10:184.

33. *Ibid.*

not 6,000 years have yet passed.”<sup>34</sup> It is notable that the Egyptian and Greek chronologies also dated the world in terms of thousands of years (not millions), yet Augustine saw indisputable biblical evidence for their correction.

Augustine went further than simply suggesting a young earth, as he argued that “in the beginning” referenced not only the beginning of God’s creative work, but also the beginning of time.

I do not see how He can be said to have created the world after spaces of time had elapsed, unless it be said that prior to the world there was some creature by whose movement time could pass. And if the sacred and infallible Scriptures say that in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth, in order that it may be understood that He had made nothing previously . . . then assuredly the world was made, not in time, but simultaneously with time.<sup>35</sup>

Augustine left no consideration, in these two statements, for anything other than a literal six-day creation resulting in a young earth. Furthermore, in his *Against the Manichees* (Book 1), although he admitted a generally allegorical approach to Genesis,<sup>36</sup> he dealt literally with the creation days.<sup>37</sup> He also had a clear understanding of *ex nihilo*, stating, “Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God — Almighty, didst in the beginning, which is of Thee, in Thy Wisdom, which was born of Thy Substance, create something, and that out of nothing.”<sup>38</sup>

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34. *Ibid.*, 2:232.

35. *Ibid.*, 2:208.

36. T. Halton, ed., *The Fathers of the Church: St. Augustine On Genesis*, trans. R. Teske (Washington DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1991), p. 42.

37. *Ibid.*, p. 63–64.

38. St. Augustine of Hippo, “Confessions (Book XII)” [online] (New Advent, 2004, accessed September 20, 2005) available from <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/110112.htm>.

**John Chrysostom** (347–419) supported *ex nihilo* in his *Homily on Genesis*. He regarded as literal the order of creation,<sup>39</sup> and spoke of literal days from darkness and light: “Then, when he had assigned to each its own name, he linked the two together in the words ‘Evening came, and morning came: one day.’ He made a point of speaking of the end of the day and the end of the night as one, so as to grasp a certain order and sequence. . . .”<sup>40</sup> He later referred to the teaching of the Holy Spirit as “narrating to us detail by detail all the items of creation and going through the works of the six days. . . .”<sup>41</sup>

### Medieval Era and the Middle Ages (A.D. 590–1517)

**Isidore of Seville** (560–636) identified a literal view of the creation day: “Wherefore, beginning with the day, whose creation appears first in the order of visible things. . . .”<sup>42</sup> He also showed a fascination with number symbolism that betrayed his views of God’s creative work as numbering 22,<sup>43</sup> which he paralleled with the number of generations between Adam and Jacob. Nevertheless, this shows his agreement with the traditionally held Hebrew chronology. He held to creation *ex nihilo*, saying that God “created all things out of nothing.”<sup>44</sup> The literal six-day creation was the prevalent view of his day.<sup>45</sup>

The **Venerable Bede** (672–735) developed a history of the world from biblical chronology, relying on six literal days of creation; he estimated 3952 B.C. as the creation year.<sup>46</sup>

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39. T. Halton, ed., *The Fathers of the Church: St. John Chrysostom Homilies on Genesis*, trans. R. Hill (Washington DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1985), p. 35.

40. *Ibid.*, p. 44.

41. *Ibid.*, p. 157–158.

42. E. Brehaut, *An Encyclopedist of the Dark Ages: Isidor of Seville* (New York: Columbia University, 1912), p. 15.

43. *Ibid.*, p. 37.

44. *Ibid.*, p. 39.

45. *Ibid.*, p. 46.

46. B. Ward, *The Venerable Bede* (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1998), p. 33.

**John of Damascus** (676–749) recognized creation *ex nihilo*, saying, “He brings all things from nothing into being and creates them, both visible and invisible. . . . By thinking He creates.”<sup>47</sup> Although he did not deal with the creation days of Genesis, he went to great lengths to explain the anatomy of a day as being quite literal,<sup>48</sup> and he regarded the elements of the creation account literally.<sup>49</sup>

**Thomas Aquinas** (1225–1274) adopted the geocentric cosmology of Aristotle and Ptolemy apart from a literal interpretation of Scripture, yet he held to creation *ex nihilo*, stating “creation — our name for the issuing of all existence — must proceed from what is not existent at all, from nothing.”<sup>50</sup> He also acknowledged the six-day work of creation in a literal sense, recognizing the distinguishing between night and day of the creation days,<sup>51</sup> and the order of creation as stated in Genesis: “Just as days one, two, and three saw the distinction and forming of the heavens, the waters and the earth, so days four, five, and six saw the adornment of the heavens with the lamps of sun, moon, and stars, of the waters and air with fish and birds, and of the earth with animals and men.”<sup>52</sup> He also understood, “Adam’s body was formed by God immediately, there being no preceding human body that could generate a body of like species to itself.”<sup>53</sup>

The **Fourth Lateran Council** (1215) proclaimed *de nihil condidit*: “God created all that is from nothing.”

**Bishop Ettiene Tempier of Paris** (1277) issued a list of heresies that included the belief that the world is eternal, reemphasizing the fact that the world is finite and created from nothing.

**Copernicus** (1473–1543) developed the great heliocentric postulation that the earth and other planets revolved around the

47. R. J. Deferrari, ed., *The Fathers of the Church: Saint John of Damascus*, trans. F. H. Chase Jr. (New York: Fathers of the Church, Inc., 1958), p. 205.

48. *Ibid.*, p. 212.

49. *Ibid.*, p. 213.

50. T. Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, ed. T. McDermott (Allen, TX: Christian Classics, 1991), p. 85.

51. *Ibid.*, p. 103.

52. *Ibid.*, p. 103–104.

53. *Ibid.*, p. 142.

sun, and set the tone for correcting the church's hermeneutical error of submitting the scriptural text to the science of the day, despite criticisms from Luther (based on Luther's own hermeneutical mistake in approaching Joshua 10:12 — a mistake that Kepler later corrected).

### Reformation (A.D. 1517–1605)

**Martin Luther** (1483–1546) was particularly critical of Augustine's soft approach (sometimes allegorical, sometimes literal . . .). He held firmly to the literal interpretation of the creation account and the six creation days, leaving no consideration for anything other than biblical/scientific creationism. His literal understanding extended throughout the first 11 chapters of Genesis.<sup>54</sup> He championed the young-earth view, saying, "We know from Moses that the world was not in existence before 6,000 years ago."<sup>55</sup>

**Philip Melancthon** (1497–1560) understood creation to have taken place both instantaneously and in six days. He calculated the creation of man at 3963 B.C.

**John Calvin** (1509–1564), in his commentary on Genesis, saw the antithesis of literal six-day creation not as the day age or forms of gap theory, but rather as the idea that God created all things in a moment (an idea perpetuated by Philo, Origen, and others):

Here the error of those is manifestly refuted, who maintain that the world was made in a moment. For it is too violent a cavil to contend that Moses distributes the work which God perfected at once into six days, for the mere purpose of conveying instruction. Let us rather conclude that God himself took the space of six days, for the purpose of accommodating his works to the capacity of men.<sup>56</sup>

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54. M. Luther, *Luther's Works*, ed. J. Pelikan (St. Louis, MO: Concordia, 1958), 1:122–123.

55. *Ibid.*, 1:3.

56. J. Calvin, *Genesis* (1554; reprint, Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1984), p. 78.

Consequently (despite Warfield's assessment<sup>57</sup>), Calvin communicated a literal understanding of the creation time frame, as he also characterized the *days* of Genesis 1 with two descriptives: artificial (referring to the time of day in which there is daylight) and natural (which would include the night).<sup>58</sup>

**Pope Gregory XIII** (1502–1585) declared that the creation of man occurred 5,199 years before Christ.

### Modern Era (A.D. 1606–present)

**Joseph Justus Scaliger** (1540–1609), in emphasizing Jewish (Old Testament) chronologies, estimated 3949 B.C. as the creation year.

**Francis Bacon** (1561–1626) believed “the book of nature” answered things temporal and the Scriptures answered the eternal. He believed the student of both should proceed with caution in an attempt to intermingle the two; yet, he did understand a complementary relationship between the two, and his conclusions led him to maintain a literal understanding of the six-day creation.

It is so then, that in the work of the creation we see a double emanation of virtue from God; the one referring more properly to power, the other to wisdom; the one expressed in making the subsistence of the matter, and the other in disposing the beauty of the form. This being supposed, it is to be observed that for anything which appeareth in the history of the creation, the confused mass and matter of heaven and earth was made in a moment; and the order and disposition of that chaos or mass was the work of six days. . . . So in the distribution of days we see the day wherein God did rest and contemplated his own works, was blessed above all the days wherein he did effect and accomplish them [*Advancement of Learning* 1.6.16].<sup>59</sup>

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57. Warfield was criticized by some for his seemingly baseless interpretation of Calvin as a sort of theistic evolutionist.

58. Calvin, *Genesis*, 83.

59. F. Bacon, *Advancement of Learning* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1906), p. 40–41.

**Johannes Kepler** (1571–1630) was a devoted Christian who approached biblical chronology with the same scientific approach as he did his astronomy. He dated creation at 3993 B.C.

**Galileo** (1564–1642) supported Copernicus’s heliocentric theory with some scientific evidence, and suggested that his view was consistent with Scripture, not opposed to it — contradicting the generally held Ptolemaic cosmology, which was geocentric. The “Galileo Affair” further provided a warning to the church against the scientific hermeneutic of submitting Scripture to the so-called scientific opinions of the day. This development would bolster the plain-sense hermeneutic in the church and give further credence to the literal six-day approach to the creation account. He believed science could be a useful tool in the exposition of Scripture: “nothing physical which sense-experience sets before our eyes, or which necessary demonstrations prove to us, ought to be called in question (much less condemned) upon the testimony of biblical passages which may have some different meaning beneath their words. . . . On the contrary, having arrived at any certainties in physics, we ought to utilize these as the most appropriate aids in the true exposition of the Bible.”<sup>60</sup> He adhered generally to the literal interpretation of Scripture, saying that only in the instance of a demonstrated scientific truth opposing the literal interpretation should there be consideration for any other approach.<sup>61</sup>

**James Ussher** (1581–1656), a professor of theology at Trinity College, Dublin, and archbishop of Armagh, in 1650 published *Annals of the Ancient and New Testaments*, in which he concluded through his study of Scripture alone that the biblical chronology suggested a specific creation date of 4004 B.C. Ussher’s chronology was readily accepted, and unity of thought regarding the

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60. G. Galilei, *Letter to the Grand Duchess Christina* (1615), translated and reprinted in S. Drake, *Discoveries and Opinions of Galileo* (New York: Doubleday, 1957), p. 182–183, reprinted in D. C. Goodman, ed., *Science and Religious Belief 1600–1900: A Selection of Primary Sources* (Berkshire: The Open University Press, 1973), p. 32–33.

61. C. Hummel, *The Galileo Connection* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1986), p. 107.

young earth was evident. In spite of this, opposition to Ussher's approach to Hebrew chronology began to arise, and with it, new challenges to the young-earth conclusion. These challenges were somewhat quelled by men such as Dr. John Lightfoot, vice chancellor of Cambridge and noted rabbinical scholar, who, by way of his expertise in Hebrew language and culture declared, "Heaven and earth, center and circumference, were created all together, in the same instant, and clouds full of water," and again he said, "this work took place and man was created by the Trinity on October 23, 4004 B.C., at nine o'clock in the morning."

The **Westminster Confession of Faith** (1646) evidenced the majority view holding to Ussher's conclusions, as the Confession proclaimed, "It pleased God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, for the manifestation of the glory of his eternal power, wisdom, and goodness, in the beginning, to create or make of nothing the world, and all things therein, whether visible or invisible, in the space of six days, and all very good."

**John Lightfoot** (1602–1675), Vice-Chancellor of Cambridge, in 1642–1644 published a chronology based on Ussher's work, and therefore, like Ussher, arrived at a young-earth conclusion, dating creation at 3923 B.C.

**John Ray** (1627–1705), known as the father of English natural history, wrote the *Wisdom of God Manifested in the Works of the Creation*, in which he strongly opposed theistic evolution. He held to *ex nihilo*, saying that God's creative works were "the works created by God at first, and by Him conserved to this day in the same state and condition in which they were first made."<sup>62</sup>

**Isaac Newton** (1642–1727), seeing a strong unity between God and nature, by virtue of His sovereignty over nature, refused to speculate on origins (to the chagrin of some of his followers<sup>63</sup>). His comments on origin are limited, as in his *Principia*, he only mentioned God once, saying, "Thus God

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62. H. Morris, *Men of Science, Men of God* (Green Forest, AR: Master Books, 1984), p. 40.

63. W. Kaiser, *Creation and the History of Science* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1991), p. 190.

arranged the planets at different distances from the sun.”<sup>64</sup> Newton, a few years earlier, “offered by way of conjecture a view on how the planets might have been arranged by God in an initial act of creation and their motion steadily accelerated until the desired tempo for their coordinated movements had been reached. . . .”<sup>65</sup> He seemed to give approval, as patron, of William Whiston’s postulation, “The Mosaick creation is not a nice and philosophical account of the origin of all things, but an historical and true representation of the formation of our single earth out of a confused chaos, and of the successive and visible changes thereof each day, till it became the habitation of mankind.”<sup>66</sup> Note the acknowledgment both of God as the origin of that which is created (*ex nihilo*) and the seemingly literal understanding of the creation day.

**Thomas Burnet** (1635–1715), a clergyman and geologist in England, took a literal approach to the creation account, and utilizing the Genesis account of the flood, developed a basic approach toward interpreting the earth’s history.<sup>67</sup>

**William Whiston** (1667–1752), a protégé and successor to Newton at Cambridge, took a literal approach to the Genesis account (see quote under Isaac Newton), and believed there to be a very tangible harmony between the creation and flood accounts of Genesis and scientific data.

To this point, it had been most commonly held in the church that “God created the world in six twenty-four hour days,”<sup>68</sup> yet the century of Darwin was nearly devoid of adherents to biblical creationism, as many theologians deferred to Darwin’s thought, either seeking a compromise with evolution or ignoring it altogether: “To find a creationist who insisted on the recent appearance of all living things in six literal days, who doubted the evidence of progression in the fossil record, and who attributed

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64. F. Manuel, *The Religion of Isaac Newton* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974), p. 31.

65. *Ibid.*, p. 37.

66. *Ibid.*

67. Morris, *Men of Science, Men of God*, p. 47.

68. Hummel, *Galileo Connection*, p. 212.

geological significance to the biblical deluge, one has to look far beyond the mainstream of scientific thought.”<sup>69</sup>

Due in large part to the supposition of theology as an empirical science (and therefore the submission of theology to empirical science), generations of theologians and thinkers (i.e., B.B. Warfield, C.I. Scofield, etc.), began to accept the concept of theistic evolution and other non-literal approaches to the creation account, as their presuppositions and approach to world view could not negate the seemingly overpowering arguments of Darwinian (so-called) science. This tendency signaled a humanism-influenced departure from the long-held authority of Scripture, and thus weakened both the position of and the perceived need for biblical creationism. With a proper epistemological and hermeneutical approach to both theology and science, the young-age creationist approach could have otherwise been more widely esteemed, but this tragic departure would later result in even greater theological abandonments.

While there was much criticism of Darwin’s evolutionary theory during this time among theologians,<sup>70</sup> it primarily came against the idea that man was not a special creation of God. However, there was a grave failure to hold to the literal interpretation of the creation account, which resulted in growing popularity of day age and gap theory positions.

**Charles Hodge** (1797–1878) recognized the importance of rightly understanding Scripture separate from a scientific hermeneutic; yet regarding the six days of creation, he seemingly abandoned the literal hermeneutic in favor of the interval theory (the French view that the six days are not literal days, but rather symbolic of creative eras of indefinite time),<sup>71</sup> and thereby, regarding the Bible and science, undermined the very thing he sought to defend — the authority of the biblical record over science. Hodge

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69. R.L. Numbers, *The Creationists* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1992), p. 11.

70. For example, Guyot, Dawson, Burr, Armstrong, Hodge, Hitchcock, Morris, Hastings, Townsend, Patterson, Dabney, et al.

71. J. Wells, *Charles Hodge’s Critique of Darwinism* (New York: Edwin Mellen Press, 1988), p. 53.

was not alone in his error, as even men such as Moody and Spurgeon seemed to ignore the issue entirely.<sup>72</sup>

**Dr. Adam Clarke** (1760–1832) avoided the allegorical problem, and played an important role in the debate as he steadfastly maintained the divine inspiration of the Old Testament record, saying, “To preclude the possibility of a mistake, the unerring Spirit of God directed Moses in the selection of his facts and the ascertaining of his dates.”<sup>73</sup>

**Eleazar Lord** (1788–1871), in his *Epoch of Creation* (1851), written eight years previous to the publishing of Darwin’s *Origin of Species*, and his brother **David Lord** (1792–1880), in *Geognasy* (1855) seem to be the last and loudest voices of their generation to defend biblical creationism and the six-day creation of all things.

Under “creation” in his analytical concordance, **Robert Young** quoted Dr. William Hales regarding a young earth: “Dr Hales, in his work entitled, ‘A New Analysis of Chronology and Geography, History and Prophecy,’ (Vol. 1, p. 210 [published in 1830]), remarks: ‘In every system of chronology, sacred and profane, the two grand eras — of the *Creation of the World*, and of the *Nativity of Christ* — have been usually adopted as standards, by reference to which all subordinate epochs, eras and periods have been adjusted.’ He gives a list of 120 dates, commencing BC 6984, and terminating BC 3616, to which this event has been assigned by different authorities, and he admits that it might be swelled to 300. He places it at BC 5411. The date commonly adopted is BC 4004; being that of Ussher, Spanheim, Calmet, Blair, etc., and the one used in the English Bible [KJV].”<sup>74</sup>

**Philip Henry Gosse** (1810–1888) proposed the *Omphalos* (from the Greek word for *navel*, as the theory addressed Adam’s need for a bellybutton) theory, suggesting that the earth was

72. H. Morris, *The Long War Against God* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1989), p. 97.

73. A. Clarke, *Clarke’s Commentary on the Old Testament* [CD-ROM] (Albany: Sage Software, 1996), 1:7.

74. R. Young, *Analytical Concordance to the Bible* (Peabody, MA: Henrickson Publishers, n.d.), p. 210.

young, in agreement with Ussher's chronology, yet created with the appearance of age.

During the 19th century, a plurality of **scriptural geologists** began to bring biblical creationist considerations to the forefront, recognizing that the scientific data was indeed compatible with a literal rendering of the Genesis account of creation and the flood. Such men as George Young, George Fairholme, John Murray, and William Rhind (addressed by Dr. Terry Mortenson in the subsequent chapter) gave biblical in addition to geological evidence opposing the recently formulated old-earth conclusions.

During the early 20th century, the strongest defenders of biblical creationism were Seventh Day Adventists, such as **George McCready Price** (1870–1963), who emphasized the young earth, and appealed to scientific data: “Unlike virtually all other non-Adventist creationists at the time, who accepted the antiquity of the earth and attached little or no geological significance to Noah's flood, Price insisted on the recent appearance of life on earth and assigned most of the fossil-bearing rocks to the work of the deluge.”<sup>75</sup>

Biblical creationism began its modern return to prominence through the published work *The Genesis Flood* by Drs. John C. Whitcomb and Henry M. Morris in 1961. The work of these men helped influence the spawning of think tanks such as the Creation Research Society (1963) and the Institute for Creation Research (1972), of which Henry Morris served as president, and provided great momentum for the return to the literal interpretation of the creation account.

Today, countless scientists are realizing that God's truth is all truth, and that true science will indeed be compatible with the Word of God. Furthermore, as they hunger to know the Creator more intimately, they continue to search the wonders of creation, returning to the church's roots of biblical, scientific creationism, to the church's edification and gratitude.

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75. R.L. Numbers, ed., *Selected Works of George McCready Price* (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc, 1995), p. ix–x.



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