

Tanner Revisited

I would like to point out that William F. Tanner's ("How many trees did Noah take on the ark?" vol. 47, December 1995) own assumptions refute his hypothesis. Given (1) his interpretation of Gen. 7:20 that only the lowlands and high hills in Noah's region were covered with water, (2) that trees cannot survive for long under water, and (3) that olive trees do not grow in high altitudes, he should have concluded that the Bible is in error. The dove could not have brought back an olive leaf, since all the places in that area where olive trees could grow would have been covered over.

Yet his hypothesis can still be made consistent with his interpretation of Gen. 7:20 if the reasonable assumption is made that olive tree seeds survived the flood, and sprouted quickly in the rich post-deluge mud. Yet again, if this latter assumption is made, then there is no reason that the same thing could not have happened after a world-wide mountain-covering flood, as per the traditional interpretation of the verse.

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An Answer to Touryan

In answer to Touryan's question whether anyone has considered Schroeder's resolution of the 6 day/15 billion year time difference (*PSCF*, 47:289, December 1995), at least one ASAer has. See my review of Schroeder's book (*PSCF*, 45:66f, March 1993), specifically the second paragraph. But apparently the problem I noted needs to be explicated more precisely.

The relativistic factor, $[1-(v/c)^2]^{1/2}$, applies to length, time and mass, that is, to the physical universe. Specifically, on the view underlying Schroeder's argument, space and time are inseparable, as are mass and energy, all four being united in the well-known $E=mc^2$. Since Einstein's universe is finite and unbounded, all space and time are within it. Therefore, if God's time is to be slowed by a factor of about 150 billion, he must be part of the universe, necessarily within it.

This cannot be equated to the immanence of God in Christian theology, which holds (1) that God is infinite and transcendent, (2) that he is eternal and timeless, and (3) that his immanence springs from his being the external source, i.e., the Creator, of the universe, making all space and time directly and timelessly open to him. In contrast, Schroeder's approach at most could posit God as the whole universe, or at least its space-time framework if mass-energy can somehow be considered a distinct and separable entity. However, for the divine 6 day-material 15 billion year ratio to work, the deity must be moving about $1-10^{-26}$ times the velocity of light relative to a universe "at rest." Since it seems impossible for the whole to move relative

to itself, though parts may obviously move relative to the whole, this speeding deity will necessarily be only a part of the universe. Hence this theory not only denies theism but rejects the normal core of pantheism, for his deity is not even immanent.

In addition, an anonymous reviewer, besides helpful analyses and suggestions, has noted that both Schroeder's view and my response are based on special relativity, whereas general relativity is the proper approach.

In sum, Schroeder's "solution" fails as soon as one asks what the collateral consequences are. It "solves" one problem only by producing a number of more serious ones.

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Whimsy

Re: The inseparability of good and evil in Randy Isaac's "Chronology of The Fall" — which is, of course, after Summer and before Winter (p. 41, March 1996).

Perhaps there is no such thing as evil. We experience dark and cold as conditions, yet they are not real in the same sense as light and heat. Dark and cold are not "things," they are the absence of things.

If there is no evil "thing," then there is no need to postulate an evil force. It also suggests that the only avenue to eliminating evil is to overcome it with good. It makes the phrases "Light of the World" and "Prince of Darkness" more interesting to me.

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A Proposal

There is an urgent need for evangelical scientists and theologians to respond to the war of words in the Christian community over creation and the age of the earth. Since about 1980, I have closely followed the debate within the lay Christian community regarding creation and origins. I have been concerned about the divisiveness among evangelical Christians on this issue. Although there has been a healthy debate among evangelical scientists and theologians on the issue of creation and science,¹ many popular books on this subject have equated a particular exegetical viewpoint with orthodoxy. This is especially true in Christian educational resources. For example, we home school our children, and I have had difficulty finding elementary education materials that present a balanced biblical view

of science and creation.² In spite of the range of exegetical viewpoints in many conservative commentaries, the majority of popular books on science and creation are from the "young earth" viewpoint. Many evangelical theologians do not hold to a strict "24 hour" day, and the majority of evangelical scientists are probably not "young earth" creationists. I am concerned that the views of most evangelicals are shaped by organizations like the Institute for Creation Research, and that the rhetoric against other perspectives seems to be getting worse. I commend this organization for its critique of secular evolution, but most lay evangelicals believe this viewpoint is the only orthodox position. A "young earth" interpretation of Genesis is perceived by much of the evangelical populace as a tenet of biblical faith, even though many Christian scientists and theologians feel that it presents problems intellectually and apologetically.

The ASA has provided a resource and forum for discussion of other approaches to questions of origins, and many valuable books have been written by ASA members that present alternatives to the young earth position. However, this information often does not reach our churches,³ and most of the secular and religious world equates "creationist" with a young earth position. Some estimate that 50% of Christians believe that the earth is less than 10,000 years old, but that only 1% of Christian scientists hold that position.

Several recent publications poignantly illustrate the need for a cooperative response from the evangelical academic community to this widely held position. In his book *Creation and Time*, ASA member Hugh Ross discusses that issue of the age of the earth and calls for a "lasting peace" among evangelicals.⁴ However, this appeal for cooperation has been met with opposition and criticism from young earth creationists.⁵ This issue has implications for all Christians, not just those who are interested in science. It is one of the central themes of Mark Noll's powerful indictment of evangelical Christianity.⁶ *Christianity Today* recently published an excellent review on this subject that alludes to the broad implications of this issue for evangelicalism.⁷ The participants expressed concern about the failure to adequately address questions of science and faith, but did not offer a specific solution.

Evangelical leaders in both the scientific and theological community need to collectively address this issue in a public format.⁸ The wisdom from evangelical commentaries needs to be integrated into the content of our popular publications. Evangelical positions on general and special revelation need to be clarified. We need to emphasize that a dogmatic "24 hour day" exegesis of Genesis 1 is not the consensus view among theologians, and discuss the diversity of views among evangelical scientists. We need to support Hugh Ross and others who have attempted to find areas of consensus among all creationists,⁹ regardless of how old we consider the earth. We need to collectively affirm the central truths of creation and exhort all evangelicals to practice tolerance within the parameters of orthodoxy. We need to agree to disagree, and focus more on responding to secular evolutionism and naturalism.¹⁰

The idea of an Evangelical Creation Network (ECN), similar to the Evangelical Environmental Network (EEN), has recently been proposed as a possible way to begin this effort.¹¹ This could be an umbrella organization for all organizations that agree about the inerrancy of Genesis One, and provide a forum for all theologians and scientists who believe in creation. A statement that affirms the essential truths of Creation, but recognizes the diversity of opinions among evangelicals on specifics, could be developed. This would provide a valuable resource for both the secular and Christian community on issues of science and faith.

I believe that there is a "scandal of the evangelical mind"¹² on this issue, and that we need to collectively pursue a more balanced perspective and more "loving" discussion of our differences.

Notes

¹For example, the March 1996 issue of *Perspectives on Science and Christian Faith* has several articles and an interesting editorial (J. W. Haas, "Is Anyone Reading This Journal?") that reflect how much attention has been paid to this issue among ASA members.

²The high school biology textbook, *Of Pandas and People*, is a notable exception but it is not aimed at elementary students.

³See discussion, "ASAers Want Outreach to Churches," *ASA Newsletter* 37, no. 6 (Nov/Dec 1995).

⁴H. Ross, *Creation and Time* (Colorado Springs, CO: Navpress, 1994).

⁵Van Beeber and Taylor, *A Report on the Progressive Creationists Book By Hugh Ross*, Eden Communications.

⁶Mark A. Noll, *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing, 1994).

⁷"The Scandal of The Evangelical Mind," *Christianity Today*, Aug. 14, 1995.

⁸Dr. Robert C. Newman is the new Chairman of the ASA Creation Commission. His long-standing leadership in both the theological and Christian scientific communities may provide the opportunity to bring both disciplines together.

⁹R. C. Newman, "Scientific and Religious Aspects of the Origins Debate," *PSCF* 47:3 (Sept. 1995), 164-175.

¹⁰Dr. Phillip Johnson has led the way in critiquing the scientific establishment for treating Darwinism as fact rather than theory, and discussing the pervasiveness of naturalism as "the established religious philosophy of America." His two books on these issues, *Darwin on Trial* and *Reason in the Balance*, are published by InterVarsity Press.

¹¹D. W. Munro, "The Executive Director's Corner," *ASA Newsletter* 38, no.1 (Jan/Feb 1996).

¹²Noll, *Ibid*.

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Response to Kline

In regard to Meredith Kline's article, "Space and Time in the Genesis Cosmogony" (*PSCF* 48:1, March 1996, 2-15), I have several comments. This article raises many methodological questions, not just for biblical exegetes but also for all those who seek a way of relating their faith and