

## THE DAY-AGE THEORY

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### The Concordist Approach

Many Bible expositors have felt that the geological ages were so firmly established by scientists that it would be folly to question the adopted system. Therefore, some means of accommodating Genesis to geology must be devised.

The most obvious way of attempting this is to interpret the Genesis account of creation in such a way that the ages of geology correspond to the history of creation. Since the latter is given in terms of six "days" of creative work by God, the creation week must somehow be expanded to incorporate all of earth history from its primeval beginning up to and including man's arrival. Hence the "days" must correspond more or less to the geological "ages."

In fact, some writers have even built what they feel is a strong case for the divine origin of the Genesis account on the basis of an assumed "concordance" between the order of creation in Genesis One and the order of the development of the earth and its various forms of life as represented by the geological ages. That is, in both Genesis and geology, first comes the inorganic universe, then simple forms of life, then more complex forms of life, and finally man.

However, such a proposed concordance can hardly be pressed successfully for more details than that. Theories about the early history of the earth and the universe are still quite varied and indefinite. The very general order noted above is only what must be postulated for *either* creation or evolution and therefore proves nothing at all. That is, if the evolutionary ages really occurred, the necessary order must be from simple to complex.

Similarly if God employed a six-literal-day week of special creation, as the Bible indicates, again the order must logically be from simple to complex, with the inorganic world first prepared for plant growth, which was then created for animal life, which was then created to serve man, who was finally created in God's image. Since the same order is clearly to be expected in both cases, the fact that it thus occurs in both cases has no apologetic value whatever.

The day-age theory is normally accompanied by either the theory of theistic evolution, or the theory of progressive creation. Acceptance of the geological ages would seem to require one or the other. It can be shown, however, that neither theistic evolution, nor progressive creation, is

tenable Biblically or theologically, and thus the day-age theory must likewise be rejected. In this paper, nevertheless, we wish to consider specifically the day-age theory as such, showing that it is quite unacceptable on both exegetical and scientific grounds.

### The Meaning of "Day"

The main argument for the day-age theory, other than the desire to obtain a framework corresponding to geologic theory, is the fact that the Hebrew word *yom* does not have to mean a literal day, but could possibly be interpreted as a very long time. Such usage would parallel usage in the English language also, such as when one speaks of Napoleon's day, or of Germany's "day in the sun." Specific Biblical warrant for such an interpretation is presumably found in II Peter 3:8 ". . . one day is with the Lord as a thousand years."

There is no doubt that the Hebrew word can be used to express time in a general sense. In fact it is actually translated by "time," 65 times in the King James translation. On the other hand, it is translated by "day" almost 1200 times. In addition, in the plural, *yamim*, it is translated by "days" approximately 700 times.

It is obvious therefore that the normal meanings of *yom* and *yamim* are "day" and "days," respectively. If a parabolic or metaphorical meaning is intended, it is made obvious in the context. In approximately 95% of its occurrences, the literal meaning is clearly indicated.

Furthermore, in those cases where a general meaning is permitted in the context, it is always indefinite as to duration. That is, it means "time" in a general way, such as the "time of adversity" or the "day of prosperity," never to a specific duration of time. It could as well refer to a very brief time, less than a day, as to a very long time.

In fact it would actually be very difficult to find even a single occurrence of *yom* which could not possibly be interpreted to mean simply a literal solar day, or which would have to mean a long period of time. Whenever the writer really intended to convey the idea of a very long duration of time, he normally used such a word as *olam* (meaning "age" or "long time") or else attached to *yom* an adjective such as *rab*, meaning "long," so that the two words together, *yom rab*, then meant "a long time." But *yom* by itself can apparently never be proved, in one single case, to *require* the meaning of a long period of time, certainly nothing in any way commensurate with a geologic age.

Now someone still might contend that even though *yom* never *requires* the meaning of a

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long age, it still might possibly *permit it*. However, the writer of the first chapter of Genesis has very carefully guarded against such a notion, both by modifying the noun by a numerical adjective—"first day," "second day," etc., and by indicating the boundaries of the time period in each case as "evening and morning." Either one of these devices would suffice to limit the meaning of *yom* to that of a solar day, and when both are used, there could be no better or surer way possible for the writer to convey the intended meaning of a literal solar day!

To prove this, we need only note that whenever a limiting numeral or ordinal is attached to "day" in the Old Testament (and there are over 200 such instances), the meaning is always that of a literal day. Similarly the words "evening" and "morning," each occurring more than a hundred times in the Hebrew, never are used to mean anything but a literal evening and a literal morning, ending and beginning a literal day.

As if that were not enough, the word is clearly defined the first time it is used. God defines His terms! "And God called the light Day, and the darkness He called Night. And the evening and the morning were the first day" (Genesis 1:5). The *yom* is here defined as the light period in the regular succession of light and darkness which has been continuing ever since as the earth rotates on its axis. This definition absolutely precludes any possible interpretation as a geologic age.

#### **Objection with Respect to Sun**

The objection is sometimes raised that the first three days were not days as we know them since the sun was not created until day four. One could of course turn this objection against those who raise it. The longer the first three days, the more catastrophic it would be for the sun not to be on hand during those days, if indeed the sun is the only possible source of light for the earth. The vegetation created on the third day might endure for a few hours without sunlight, but hardly for a geologic age!

Obviously, therefore, regardless of the precise length of the first three days, there was some source of light available to separate light and darkness, evening and morning. It was apparently not the sun as we now know it, but of course, God is not limited to the sun as a source of light. Whatever it may have been, the earth was evidently rotating on its axis, since evenings and mornings were occurring regularly for those three days. The placing of the two great "light-bearers" in the heavens need have no great effect on the rate of this rotation, so that the duration of days four and following was most probably the same as that of days one through three.

It is interesting to note that Genesis 1:14-19 further clarifies the meaning of "day" and "days"—"Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven to divide the day from the night: and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and years . . . the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night. . . . And the evening and the morning were the fourth day." It would certainly seem that there could be no possible doubt as to the meaning of *day* after at least this fourth day.

In view of all the above consideration, it seems quite impossible to accept the day-age theory, regardless of the number of eminent scientists and theologians who have advanced it. The writer of Genesis One clearly intended to describe a creation accomplished in six literal days. He could not possibly have expressed such a meaning any more clearly and emphatically than in the words and sentences which are actually used. No judgment seems possible other than to pronounce the day-age type of exegesis as either careless or dishonest, nothing else than a "wresting of Scripture" (II Peter 3: 16).

But, not only is a six-literal day creation taught in Genesis, but also in Exodus, this time in the Ten Commandments, written on a tablet of stone by the very hand of God Himself (Exodus 31:18). The fourth commandment says:

Remember the sabbath day to keep it holy. Six *days* shalt thou labor, and do all thy work; But the seventh *day* is the sabbath of the Lord thy God, --- for in six *days* the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh *day*, and hallowed it. (Exodus 20:9-11)

Nothing would be more clear than that the six work days of God are identical in duration with the six days of man's work week. The basis for this very precise commandment is trivial and vacuous otherwise.

Furthermore the plural *yamim* is used here for six work "days" of God. This word is used over 700 times in the Old Testament and never, when used thus in the plural form, can be shown to mean anything other than literal days.

#### **Length of "Day" Per Secondary Arguments**

Two or three secondary arguments related to the word "day" need to be mentioned. It is frequently urged that since it is used in other than a strict literal sense in Gen. 2:4, it is proper also to interpret it that way in Genesis 1. This verse says, "These are the generations of the heavens and of the earth when they were created, in the *day* that the Lord God made the earth and the heavens."

At the most, of course, this verse could be rendered "in the time that the Lord God . . .", and we have already recognized this to be a

proper use of *yom* when the context so justifies. The context does *not* so justify in Genesis 1, as we have seen. On the other hand, this verse may itself primarily refer to the first day of creation when, as stated in Genesis 1:1, "God created the heavens and the earth."

Another argument has been that since God is still "resting" from His work of creation, the seventh day is still continuing. Then, if the seventh day has a duration of at least six thousand years, the other six days also may have been long periods. The so-called Jehovah's Witnesses, in fact, teach on this basis that, since the seventh day is 7000 years in length (including the coming millennium), each of the days is 7000 years, so that God's work week was 42,000 years long! Theistic evolutionists or progressive creationists would on the same basis have to say that God's rest day has been at least a million years long since the appearance of man on earth.

Such exegesis is strained, to say the least. The verse does not say, "God is resting on the seventh day" but rather, "God *rested* on the seventh day." In Exodus 31:17, it even says ". . . in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day He rested, and *was refreshed*." It is recorded that God "blessed" and "sanctified" the seventh day (Genesis 2:3), but such a beatitude can hardly apply to this present evil age.

God's rest was soon to be interrupted by the "entrance of sin into the world, and death by sin" (Romans 5:12), so that He must set about the work of redeeming and restoring His groaning creation. As Jesus said, "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work" (John 5:17). Were it not for the weekly rest-day, recalling God's all-too-brief rest after creation, and now also commemorating His victory over death and the grave, "all the works that are done under the sun . . . are vanity and vexation of spirit" (Ecclesiastes 1:14).

Similarly the familiar verse in II Peter 3:8, "one day is with the Lord as a thousand years" has been badly misapplied when used to teach the day-age theory. In the context, it teaches exactly the opposite, and one should remember that "a text without a context is a pretext." Peter is dealing with the conflict between uniformitarianism and creationism prophesied in the last days. Thus, he is saying that, despite man's naturalistic scoffings, God can do in one day what, on uniformitarian premises, might seem to require a thousand years.

God does not require aeons of time to accomplish His work of creating and redeeming all things. It is even interesting that on the above equation—one day for a thousand years, or 365,200 days, the actual duration of God's work with the earth and man—say about 7000 years—

becomes about two and a half billion years, which is at least of the order of magnitude of the "apparent age" of the world as calculated by uniformitarianism!

### Scientific Contradictions

Even if it were possible to understand "day" in Genesis as referring to something like a geological age (and it is not hermeneutically possible, as just seen), it still would not help any in regard to the concordist motivation. The very *vague* general concordance between the order of creation in Genesis and the order of evolutionary development in geology (and as noted earlier such a *vague* concordance is necessarily to be expected in the nature of the case and thus proves nothing at all) becomes a veritable morass of contradictions when we descend to an examination of details.

At least 25 such contradictions between Uniformitarianism and the Bible exist. Just a few will be noted:

1. Matter existed in the beginning, versus matter created by God in the beginning.
2. Sun and stars before the earth, versus earth before the sun and stars.
3. Land before the oceans, versus oceans before the land.
4. Sun the earth's first light, versus light before the sun.
5. Contiguous atmosphere and hydrosphere, versus atmosphere between two hydrospheres.
6. Marine organisms first forms of life, versus land plants first life forms created.
7. Fishes before fruit trees, versus fruit trees before fishes.
8. Insects before birds, versus birds before insects ("creeping things").
9. Sun before land plants, versus land vegetation before the sun.
10. Reptiles before whales, versus whales before reptiles.
11. Reptiles before birds, versus birds before reptiles ("creeping things").
12. Woman before man (by genetics), versus man before woman (by creation).
13. Rain before man, versus man before rain.
14. "Creative" processes still continuing, versus creation completed.
15. Struggle and death necessary antecedents of man, versus man the cause of sin and death.

The above very sketchy itemization shows conclusively that it is impossible to speak convincingly of a concordance between the supposed geological ages and Genesis. Entirely apart from the question of evolution or creation, the Genesis record is stubbornly intransigent and simply will not be accommodated to the standard system of geological ages. One must decide for one or the other—he cannot have both!

### Theological Problems

The most serious fallacy in the day-age theory is that it impugns the character of God. It, of course, provides the basic exegetical framework for either so-called Biblical evolutionism or progressive creationism. The God described in the Bible (personal, omnipotent, omniscient, purposeful, gracious, orderly, loving) simply could not use such a process of creation as envisaged by our leading evolutionists, with all its randomness, wastefulness, and cruelty.

But Christians need to realize that the geological ages are to all intents and purposes, *synonymous with evolution*. When they accept the geological ages they are implicitly (though many do not realize it and would even deny it) accepting the evolutionary system.

The geological ages obviously provide the necessary framework of time for evolution. If the universe began only several thousand years ago, then evolution is impossible. It requires billions of years to have even a semblance of plausibility.

But, conversely, the only real assurance we have of the geological ages is the assumption of evolution. That is, since we assume evolution must be true (the only alternative is creation, and this is not a scientific concept!), therefore, we know that life and the earth and the universe must be extremely old.

The various geologic systems and epochs are identified, and even named (e.g., Paleozoic, Mesozoic, Eocene, etc.) on the basis of the fossils found in the rocks, interpreted and dated on the basis of the supposed "stage-of-evolution" of the corresponding faunas. Whenever any other identification or dating technique (lithology, radiometry, etc.) conflicts with this approach (as is quite often the case), these paleontologic criteria always govern.

Thus evolution is the basis for interpreting the fossil record. The fossil record is the basis for establishing and identifying the geologic ages. The geologic ages with their supposed fossil sequences provides the basic framework and the only "evidence" of any consequence for evolution. Here is one of the most classic and explicit examples of circular reasoning in all the sad history of metaphysical opposition to Biblical creationism. The Bible-honoring Christian somehow must realize that the geologic ages are merely one component in the whole evolutionary package. If he wants to have the framework geologic time), he must also accept the glue which keeps it together (evolution).

Again, however, even if one deliberately rejects or ignores the evolutionary implications of the geological ages, he must still face the massive problem of why God chose to use five billion years of chance variations, natural selection, geo-

logic upheavals, storm, disease, extinctions, struggle, suffering, and death as an inscrutable prelude to His creation of man right at the very tail-end of geologic time. "God is not the author of confusion." Yet, He is said to have surveyed the whole monstrous spectacle and pronounced it all "Very good!" (Genesis 1:31).

The Bible is quite explicit in teaching that there was no suffering and no death of sentient life in the world before man brought sin into the world (Genesis 3:14-19; Romans 5:12, 3:20-23; I Corinthians 15:21,22; Revelations 21:4,5; etc.). But if the rocks of the earth's crust were already filled with fossilized remains of billions of animals, and even of hominid forms that looked like men, then God Himself is directly responsible for creating suffering and death, not in judgment upon rebellion and sin, but as an integral factor of His work of creation and sovereign rule. And this is theological chaos!

### Variants of the Day-Age Theory

Some expositors, acknowledging that exegetical honesty compels recognition of the "days" of Genesis as literal days, have tried two other devices for harmonizing the geological ages with literal days. One method is to suggest that the literal creative days were each separated by vast spans of geological time. The other is that the six days were six days of *revelation*, rather than *creation*.

As to the first theory, it should be noted that the six widely-separated days of creation included creation of the earth, heaven, the stars, sun and moon, oceans, lands, plants, fishes, birds, reptiles, mammals (all of them), and man. Seems like nothing much is left for the vast spans of time between the days, so why are they needed?

As for the revelatory-day theory, there is not a single word in the entire record that suggests such a thing. "Visions and revelations of the Lord" are frequently encountered in Scripture, but the writer always says so, when it is so. In refuting such a presumptuous idea, God Himself, in His own direct handwriting, said (Exodus 20:11), "In six days, the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day." (Why would He wish to rest on the seventh day, if all His actual work on each of the previous days consisted of about one minute of speaking to some unidentified vision-recipient?)

Now, in addition, all the previously mentioned scientific contradictions and theological fallacies apply in exactly the same way to the isolated-day and revelatory-day theories as they do to the standard day-age theory. We conclude therefore, that the day-age theory in any form is unacceptable Biblically, scientifically and theologically. It should be unequivocally rejected, and discarded by serious Christians.