

# Did Death Occur Before the Fall? A Further Critique of the Progressive Creationism of Hugh Ross

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## Abstract

**D**r. Hugh Ross is presently a key advocate of what is called “progressive creationism.” In a previous paper (Henry, 2006) I challenged nine claims of the progressive creationists (PCists) by which they have attempted to establish (1) that cosmic and biological development have occurred by means of evolution, with or without Divine intervention, and (2) that the universe and earth are very old. PCists make additional claims that further imply evolution occurring over vast ages. I focus here on their belief that Genesis chapter 1 is poetic, not historical. They also maintain that death occurred before the Fall of man (Gen. 3). PCists try to buttress their claim of pre-Fall death with several corollary claims that will also be discussed.

## Introduction

If Genesis 1 is not actual history, then perhaps the real history of origins is evolutionary. An evolutionary history requires eons of death and extinction. An absence of pre-Fall death disallows this possibility, so progressive creationists (PCists) must have death occurring before the Fall in order to defend their long age theory of origins.

The “death before the Fall” position of PCists implies a number of corollaries, which include the following: (1) that the pre-Fall world was harsh and cruel; (2) that digestion of plants and bacterial decay are processes involving “death”; (3) that carnivorousness occurred before the Fall; and (4) that a death-free

pre-Fall world would quickly overpopulate, a scenario requiring death for its prevention.

## PCists Relegate Genesis 1 to Figurative, Allegorical, and Poetic Status

Liberal Bible scholars have long maintained that “Genesis is essentially a folk literature” and that Genesis 1–11 consists of “imaginative stories” that must be understood as “parables” (Gibson, 1981, pp. 2, 11). Though “these chapters have always been in the centre of controversy about the Bible ... [t]he old bitter controversy between science and religion is ... hopefully on the way to becoming a

thing of the past” (Gibson, 1981, pp. 2, 10). Gibson (1981) expressed the belief that the controversy is waning because

There must be very few who would today seriously contend that the world came into being in six days ... We are admitting that science is the proper source to turn to for factual knowledge about the physical origin and nature of the universe ... Genesis 1–11 (and a number of other passages dealing with the same subject of creation) [are not] based on things that actually happened” (pp. 9, 11, 13).

Aware that the controversy is *not* in fact waning, Dr. Ross has fueled it by using loaded words describing the debate as a “hurricane” that is “currently raging,” causing “division and hostility” (Ross, 2004, pp. 15, 67, 71). He acknowledged Gallup polls that since 1982 have consistently revealed

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that about half the American public believed in “a 10,000-year-old creation date” (Ross, 2004, pp. 34–35). Ross asserted that “for six days (the fossil record eras) God created new life forms” and that “the theological underpinnings of a young-earth creation scenario are untenable” (Ross, 2004, pp. 82, 119). He has expressed regret that there are churches and schools that allow “only one position on the creation-day controversy” (Ross, 2004, p. 68). Ross describes himself as being in the “conservative evangelical” camp and has expressed the desire to see the controversy “graciously quelled” with a “peaceful resolution” (Ross, 2004, pp. 135, 239, 247). He stated, however, that such resolution would involve an acceptance of evolutionary interpretations of scientific data (Ross, 2004, pp. 49, 213) as enunciated by “evangelical theologians” who are “esteemed” and “distinguished” scholars (Ross, 2004, pp. 242, 243, 244). Such a “resolution” would position the Bible in a place of non-authority (Ross, 2004, pp. 57, 62, 88). Ross’s publisher, NavPress (NavPress 1995, p. 2), has called for a similar “resolution” by appealing to Christians to heed the “many evangelicals on the faculties of institutions in the Christian College Coalition and among the membership of the American Scientific Affiliation.” The difficulty with this appeal is not with the character or qualifications of any of the men and women in these organizations, but with the total absence of any reference to what the Bible has to say.

By failing to acknowledge the Bible’s authority over human interpretations of scientific data, Ross arrived at the liberals’ position of forcing Genesis 1 into a straitjacket of human reasoning. He has allegorized the Creation days and rendered Genesis 1 as little more than poetry that deals “most strongly [with] the who of creation” (Ross, 2004, p. 18). Ross has echoed the position of framework theorist B.K. Waltke (1988), and the liberal position that Genesis chapter

1 did not “actually” happen as it was written (Gibson, 1981, p. 13). Ross (1994) claimed that he is not taking Genesis 1 to be “figurative” (p. 60), but this claim is obviously hollow. He presented God as speaking in the language of appearances, “anthropomorphically,” to an ancient people ignorant of the teachings of modern science (Ross, 2004, p. 159). But genuine anthropomorphisms involve a body motion or body part picturing God’s senses or actions, and “never take the form of anything like a weekday” (Kulikovsky, 2002, p. 40; see also Young, 1964, p. 58).

Even if Genesis 1 were poetry, “in the ancient world, devoid of printing, without paper for note-taking or on which to type lectures, the trained memory was of vital importance” (Yates, 1966, p. 4). A poetic syntax was an aid to memorizing concrete content. Archeologist W. F. Albright (1957) emphasized that “the verse form is much better adapted for oral transmission than is any kind of prose. The ease with which children learn poetry is well known; lists and recipes were formerly put into verse for mnemotechnic purposes” (p. 66). A poetic syntax in Genesis 1 would still mean that it conveyed the factual information intended by the context of its words.

But Genesis 1 is not actually poetry at all. The first poetic passage in Scripture is Genesis 4:23, sometimes called “The Song of the Sword” (Pfeiffer, 1958, p. 27; and Sarfati, 2004, p. 95). Echoing Aalders, an early opponent of the framework hypothesis, Surburg (1959) asks, “Would the account of Gen. 1 lead the ordinary reader to suspect that the order of created events recorded were [sic] not historical?” (p. 64). Also echoing Aalders, Young (1964), answered that in Genesis 1, “there is not a single allusion to suggest that the days are to be regarded as a form or mere manner of representation” (p. 47). Neither does the inclusion of repetitive phrases in Genesis 1 make it poetry. In the KJV, the phrases “the evening and the morn-

ing” and “God saw that it was good” each appear five times, “but repetition is not a necessary component of Hebrew poetry. Repetition is actually more of a characteristic of Biblical Hebrew prose” (Shackleford et al., p. 303), but is sometimes confused with parallelism. Instead, “if Genesis were truly poetic, it would use parallelisms throughout,” but it does not (Sarfati, 2004, p. 95). Thus Genesis 1 is written in a prose or narrative style that presents “a positive record of things as they actually transpired” (Leupold, 1949, p. 25; see also Kulikovsky, 2001, p. 242). Other Scriptures, including the words of Jesus Himself, cite Genesis 1 as history (e.g., Exod. 20:9–11; 31:17; Ps. 8; 104; Matt. 19:4–6, Luke 3:38, Heb. 4:4; 2 Peter 3:5).

If the only purpose of Genesis 1 had been to teach *who* created, then the first verse would be sufficient (Davis, 1975, pp. 74–75). Summing up, Kaiser (1980) said, “It is often wrongly stated that Genesis 1 tells us *who* created the universe but not *how* it was done—an obvious slighting of the phrase repeated ten times, ‘and God said’ “ (p. 147). Genesis 1 is historical and is not anthropomorphic, allegorical, figurative, or poetic. It tells us the time period God used to create.

### **PCists Claim That There Was Death Before the Fall**

Ross (2004) expressed the belief that the “3.8 billion years of plant and animal death and extinction that preceded humanity” require that death preceded the Fall (p. 103). He recognized that “God could have done things differently” by creating a death-free pre-Fall world (Ross, 1994, pp. 63–64), but concludes that the fossil record negates this possibility. Among creationists, Anderson (1992) also noted the linkage between the long ages of evolution and the requirement of pre-Fall death. Nevertheless, Ross’s publisher, NavPress, has insisted that Ross’s views do not “support ... the theory

of evolution” (NavPress, 1995, p. 1). But Davidheiser (1993) has observed that “progressive creationists accept the time [scale] of the evolutionists,” (p. 14) and it has long been observed that a long time scale is the crucial requirement for evolution (e.g., Oparin, 1938). In sum, even if the PCist position is described as non-evolutionary, the fact remains that the requirement of pre-Fall death is an evolutionary requirement.

The ghastly aspect of slaughterhouses and the somber atmosphere of funerals have demonstrated through the ages the terror of the sin that brought death into the physical creation. Martyn Lloyd-Jones (1966) once observed,

Many people seem to think that the sole theme of the Bible is that of man’s personal relationship to God. Of course that is one of the central themes [but not] the only theme. ... Ultimately the main message of the Bible concerns the condition of the entire world and its destiny; you and I as individuals are part of that larger whole. (p. 9.)

Ross (2004) ignored this logic by insisting that the entrance of physical death into the creation at the Fall is unrelated to the need for redemption. The physical suffering of Christ on the cross, however, shows that there is a relation. The shedding of His blood was necessary for the remission of sins (Heb. 9:22), but He also allowed Himself to be abused and tortured, thus showing that the Fall was physical as well as spiritual.

### Death Is Evil and Did Not Exist Before the Fall

Paul calls death “the last enemy” in 1 Corinthians 15:26. Death before the Fall would mean that “the ‘last enemy’ was part of God’s ‘very good’ creation,” which would be a logical absurdity (Sarfati, 2004, p. 201). Revelation 21:4 says that the new creation will have no more death, because there is “no more curse” (Rev. 22:3). This shows that

death entered the world with the curse pronounced in Genesis 3:17–19. When “Jesus wept” at the death of Lazarus (John 11:35), He responded to death as an evil, not as a good thing.

Since Ross faced a need for billions of years of death and extinction to accommodate the conventional interpretation of the fossil record, he claimed that the words “good” (Hebrew *toy*) and “very good” (*toy me’od*) in Genesis 1 do not signify a death-free pre-Fall world unlike the present one (Ross, 2004, p. 104). In passages after Genesis 1 (e.g., Gen. 24:16; Num. 14:7; Judg. 18:9; 2 Sam. 11:2; 1 Kings 1:6; Jer. 24:2–3), *me’od toy* signifies superlative beauty or wonder, but not absolute perfection. It is an “unwarranted expansion of an expanded semantic field” (Carson, 1996, p. 60), however, to insist on this meaning of nonabsolute perfection for *me’od toy* in Genesis 1. The fivefold description of God’s creation as “good,” and after the sixth day as “very good,” shows that there was yet no evil in the world. “By the application of the term ‘good’ to everything that God made, and the repetition of the word with the emphasis ‘very’ at the close of the whole creation, the existence of anything evil in the creation of God is absolutely denied” (Keil and Delitzsch, 1949, p. 67). Physical death did not exist before the Fall.

PCists try to justify the nonperfection interpretation of *me’od toy* in Genesis 1 by pointing to uses of the Hebrew word *tamim* elsewhere in the Bible. *Tamim*, translated “perfect” or “without blemish,” is used in Genesis 6:9 to describe the “completeness and moral integrity, not sinless perfection,” of Noah, a fallen man. The related Hebrew word *tam* is used of Job, also a fallen man (Sarfati, 2004, p. 196). Thus in Genesis 1 *me’od toy* must not imply absolute perfection either, according to PCists. But neither *ta’am* nor *tam* is suitable in Genesis 1, which describes a world into which evil had not yet entered. Thus the lack of these words in Genesis 1, and their

nonabsolute meaning elsewhere in the Bible, is irrelevant to the meaning of *toy* and *toy me’od* in Genesis 1.

The curse itself (Gen. 3:19) brought physical consequences (“sweat,” implying arduous physical labor) and physical death (“to dust you shall return”), not just spiritual death. After Adam’s sin, access to the Tree of Life, which prevented physical death, was banned (Gen. 3:22).

Ross argues that New Testament verses linking death and the Fall refer only to human spiritual death, thereby allowing billions of years of physical death and extinction in the putative pre-Adamic world. This would have included the death of “pre-human primate species” such as Neanderthal man (Ross, 2004, p. 225). According to Ross (1994), “Death through sin’ is not equivalent to physical death” (p. 60). Echoing Ross, Fischer (2003) claimed that “the Bible tells us ... who or what is affected by Adam’s sin—humans, not animals” (p. 225). To strengthen this case, Ross links Romans 5:12 with 1 Corinthians 15:21, maintaining that these verses “also must refer to spiritual death rather than to physical death” (Ross, 1994, p. 61). Sarfati (2004) comments, “This is amazing, since the whole of 1 Corinthians 15 is about the bodily (*physical*) resurrection of Christ, who was *physically* dead” (p. 202).

Ross also argues that the phrase “the whole creation” (Greek *pasahē ktisis*) in Romans 8:22 means only humans (Ross, 1994, p. 65); thus only mankind was affected by the Curse. Arndt and Gingrich (1957), however, state that *ktisis* also signifies “the whole creation below the human level ... animate and inanimate,” (p. 457) with which Hodge (1864, pp. 269–270), who believed in a vast earth age, concurred. To Foerster (1965), *ktisis* is “the whole of creation” (p. 1031). Thus all the creation was cursed, along with man who was cursed spiritually and physically. There was no evil in the world until Eve and Adam’s

sin, so physical death, which is evil, did not exist before the Fall, and entered the world because of the Fall.

### PCists Claim That the Pre-Fall World Was Harsh and Cruel

Ross (2004) states, “In Genesis 3:16, God says to Eve, ‘I will greatly increase ... your pains in childbearing.’ He does not say ‘introduce’; He says ‘increase’ or ‘multiply,’ implying that pain already existed” (p. 108). Thus, he argues that since physical pain existed in the pre-Fall world, the Curse did not introduce pain, and by implication, physical death was not introduced then either. According to Ross, the only change the Curse brought about was human spiritual death.

Even in the initial sinless state of the creation, some pain would have been good. Pain prevents a person’s losing fingers by fire or by handling searing hot objects. Lepers lose body parts because they lack the normal sense of pain (Brand and Yancey, 1980). A sense of pain can save a person from death. After President McKinley was shot in 1901, he developed internal gangrene, but the absence of pain deluded physicians into believing he was healing almost up to the day of his death (Olcott, 1916, pp. 322–323). Thus the existence of some protective pain in the pre-Fall world is consistent with the absence of physical death at that same time. The presence of pre-Fall pain was like the presence of the Tree of Life (Gen. 2:9; 3:22), “needed even before men fell” (Akers, 1993, p. 62) to prevent ageing. Furthermore, it is entirely possible that pain sensation may not have been as unpleasant before the Fall as after.

Ross (2004) asserts that there was hard physical labor before the Fall, again implying that the Fall introduced only human spiritual death: “Likewise, to Adam, God explains that henceforth he will work *harder* (Genesis 2:15; 3:17–19)” (p. 108). Genesis 3:19 did in

fact introduce a harshness to labor not existing before the Fall, but Ross also erroneously references Genesis 2:15 as indicating man would work harder after the Fall. This verse is about pre-Fall life and says nothing at all about the intensity of his work—hard or easy:

And the Lord God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and keep it.

Finally, Genesis 1:28 also has been used as supposed evidence that the pre-Fall world was physically harsh and cruel, leaving the Curse without effect except spiritually in mankind. This argument centers on the words “subdue” (Hebrew *kabash*) and “dominion” (*radah*). Whether *kabash* signifies constructive or destructive control depends on context. In Micah 7:19, God “subdues” our sins, a compassionate control. This meaning is consistent with the use of *kabash* in Genesis 1:28, even though evil had not entered the world as yet:

And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.

Likewise, *radah* can have a positive or negative connotation. Leviticus 25:43–46 condemns harsh, cruel dominion, but 1 Kings 4:24–25 says that Solomon’s dominion brought peace and safety, a positive connotation consistent with the sinless context of Genesis 1:28. Ironically, those who use Genesis 1:28 to minimize the effects of the Curse by saying that Adam’s dominion over nature before the Fall was cruel and harsh, have unintentionally joined ideological forces with radical environmentalists who blame the “Christian” West for the earth’s environmental woes (Lewis, 1992, p. 244).

Evidently some pain existed in the pre-Fall world, but there was no evil, and so we cannot infer the presence of physical death back then. Genesis 1:28

and 2:15 do not imply a harsh, cruel pre-Fall world with physical death. The Fall and Curse “introduced ... the inevitability of disease and death” (Schrugin, 2004, p. 186).

### PCists Equate Digestion of Plants and Bacterial Decay with Death

Ross (2004) claims that before the Fall, “plants or plant parts” and plankton died as other creatures ate them, and that insects and other small invertebrates as well as various one-cell organisms died as they were “stepped on and crushed” by larger creatures or killed by “Snow, hail, rain, heat, wind, and waves” (pp. 98–99). According to Ross (1994), “the mere digestion of food by animals requires death of at least plants or plant parts” (p. 61).

Ross echoed earlier attempts to insert physical death, and therefore geological ages, into Genesis 1. Gap theorist Arthur Custance (1971) wrote:

One might ask ... whether herbivorous animals ate anything during the days or hours of Adam’s innocence: and if they did, whether they were careful not to eat any microbes ... that happened to be on the leaves. Or did they not perhaps tread on some and kill them—ants for instance? ... Is it possible indeed for vegetable matter to be sought and eaten at all without the death of some life? Does not the digested leaf die? (pp. 135–136.)

Biblical Hebrew classifies plants apart from animals and humans. Each human and each animal is a *nephesh chayyah*, a “living creature” (Gen. 1:20, 24; 2:7). These were the only creatures God brought to Noah for protection on the Ark (Gen. 6:18–20; 7:7–9, 14–15). Other creatures experience merely a permanent cessation of activity, not death in the sense of animals and humans, and are not said to have died in the Flood (Gen. 7:21–23).

Similarly, individual cells and microorganisms are not “living creatures.” Thus neither programmed “cell death” (apoptosis) nor cell destruction by pathology or decay (necrosis) signifies pre-Fall physical death of animals or humans. Today’s pathogens have harmless variants. The cholera microbe, *Vibrio cholerae*, has a variant causing no illness (Merrell et al., 2002), and harmless flu variants exist (Freemantle, 2005). Viruses, possibly benign initially, become more virulent as they lose information (Wood, 2001). Virulent microbes appear to have resulted from natural selection or by loss of information as conditions on earth changed after the Curse and after the Flood. These processes are not evolutionary because neither generates new information.

Ross (2004) presents examples of biblical passages saying in English that animals are dead or have died (Exod. 17:18–21; 8:13; 10:17; Ps. 105:29; Isa. 50:2), but the Hebrew words for “die,” “died” and “death” in these verses are *mut* and *mawet*, signifying a cessation of activity, not death of a *nephesh chayyah*. Furthermore, these passages refer to the post-Fall world and thus do not signify a pre-Fall presence of physical death.

Ross (2004) claims that plants when harvested or eaten “experience bleeding, bruising, scarring, and death” (p. 102). The implication is that plants also must have experienced physical death before the Fall. But this claim is baseless, for plants “have [no] brain to interpret tissue damage as pain” (Sarfati, 2004, p. 210).

Plants and other organisms outside the biblical “living creatures” group do not die in the sense that animals and people do (Klotz, 1980, p. 203; Van Bebber and Taylor, 1994, pp. 44–45; Berndt, 2003, pp. 85–89). Thus pre-Fall digestion or decay of such does not restrict the Fall to effecting spiritual human death only. Some microbes beneficial in the pre-Fall world evidently became virulent as a result of post-Fall

natural selection and information loss, neither of which is an evolutionary process.

### PCists Claim That Carnivores Existed Before the Fall

Pre-Fall carnivorous predation would mean that physical death was inflicted on vertebrates and humans before the Curse of Genesis 3. Accordingly, Ross (2004) has claimed that carnivores existed from “creation day six” because “carnivorous behavior results from the laws of thermodynamics, not from sin” (pp. 100, 101). Although thermodynamic laws probably existed in their present form when the creation was “finished” (Gen. 2:1), there is no thermodynamic requirement even today that certain animals be carnivores. The “laws of nature” are nothing more than the pattern by which the Creator ordains the universe normally to operate; before the Fall these patterns may have been somewhat different than afterward. It is possible “that God withdrew some of His sustaining power at the Fall. He still sustains the universe (Col. 1:17) [but most] of the time He doesn’t sustain it in the way that ... prevented the Israelites’ shoes and clothes from wearing out during the 40 years in the wilderness (Deut. 29:5). But this special case may have been the rule rather than the exception” before the Fall (Sarfati, 2004, pp. 213–214). The burning bush (Exod. 3:2) may have been an additional window into the workings of the pre-Fall world in which fire burned but did not consume.

God created certain animals with the potential for predation on days 5 and 6, but not predation itself (Vorpahl, 1997; Schragin, 2005). The physiological and anatomical changes, if any, involved in the appearance of carnivorous appetites are unclear (Peterson, 1998; Klevberg, 1998). Nevertheless, many animals remain truly herbivorous today, but few

are totally carnivorous and are actually omnivores. Predatory behavior appears to have been superimposed on a more fundamental appetite for herbivorous foods. Wonderly (1977) observes, “Many carnivores even now eat large amounts of such foods. For example, cats eat grasshoppers; bears often eat fruit and honey; and raccoons eat corn, nuts, and other fruits, and even leaves and grasses” (pp. 239–240). Likewise, Rendle-Short (1984) notes, “Many so-called carnivores can easily live on a purely vegetarian diet—the domestic dog or cat for example. Teeth apparently designed to tear prey can also be used to tear tough vegetable fibre” (p. 147).

Genesis 1:29–30 states that the pre-Fall diet included “every green plant,” but no meat was mentioned. This vegetarian diet was supplied by plants “upon the face of all the earth,” so the pre-Fall absence of carnivorous behavior was worldwide, not just in Eden. These points are so obvious that even Ross (2004) admits to a “prohibition on meat consumption” for humans until after the Flood (p. 101). Old-earthier Dan Wonderly (1977) states,

The seemingly ruthless capturing of other mammals, and even of human beings by carnivores appears to be—and perhaps is—contrary to what we believe concerning God’s original creation. So we are quite willing to say that the carnivorous mammals may have begun their ruthless hunting of other animals only after the fall of man. (p. 239.)

Even after the Fall, the permitted diet for man continued to be vegetarian, as in the “bread” that Adam would eat (Gen. 3:17–19). After the Flood meat eating was permitted: “Every moving thing that liveth [*nephesh chayyah*] shall be meat for you” (Genesis 9:3). This verse would be meaningless if man had been allowed to eat meat before the Flood. Before the Flood, however, the earth was “filled with violence” (Gen. 6:13), perhaps signifying that between

the Fall and Flood some animals had become carnivores, and that rebellious humans may have been meat-eaters.

In the present, God allows predation as His provision for some animals and man. Verses such as Psalm 104:21; Job 38:39–41; and Job 39:27–30 reflect only this present provision and yield no insight on pre-Fall conditions. Allegorically, predation is portrayed negatively in Scripture, for example, as judgment on Israel (Hos. 13:8) or as rapacious world powers in Belshazzar's dream in Daniel 7:1–7 (Whitcomb, 1985, pp. 91–93).

In the future the creation will be restored in many ways to its pre-Fall state. If the pre-Fall state were one of predation and death, how would such a "restoration" differ from the present world? But the restored creation will be very different from the present, with no bloodshed in the animal kingdom (Isa. 11:6–9; 65:25), reflecting the lack of predation and carnivorous behavior before the Fall. This is obvious enough that old-earth Norman Geisler stated:

God originally created animals and human beings to be herbivorous. ... God did not appoint animals to be eaten in paradise, and animals weren't eating each other. ... What changed things was the Fall. When God was told, in effect, to shove off, he partially did. ... Ultimately [the damage to paradise] will be remedied (Strobel, 2000, pp. 125–126).

In short, carnivores and predation were nonexistent in the Pre-Fall world, and did not cause physical death back then.

### **Would a Death-Free, Pre-Fall World Become Hopelessly Overpopulated?**

The concerns reflected in this question originate partly from the misconception that the earth today is in the throes of a population explosion. How much more severe would this problem be,

the reasoning runs, in a world without death? But the earth is far from being overpopulated. It could support up to some 50 billion people: "A diet based on 4,000 to 4,500 kilocalories of edible plant material [per day] could be provided for between 38 and 48 billion people" (Revelle, 1974, p. 168), which is about 7 times the current population (Easterbrook, 1999). Most people need far less than 4,500 kilocalories per day, so the earth's ability to support human life has not been pushed near the limit.

There is no population explosion either: "44 percent of the world's people live in countries where the fertility rate has already fallen below the replacement rate, and fertility is falling fast almost everywhere else" (Singer, 1999, p. 24). Population growth rates are falling so fast that the U.N. predicts global population to peak at some 8 to 9 billion in 2050. After that, a precipitous decline will occur, with the result that "unless people's values change greatly, several centuries from now there could be fewer people living in the entire world than live in the United States today" (Singer, 1999, p. 22).

In the present post-Fall world, animal populations are controlled by phenomena commonly involving death, such as predation, infant mortality, cannibalism, and self-destructive mass migrations (Williams et al., 1992). Thus the tendency is to view human population control as an impersonal phenomenon that may also be deadly eventually for increasing numbers of people, especially if man is viewed as an animal in the evolutionary sense. But, man is created in the image of God and so is able to respond to external environmental changes by long-term planning in a way that animals cannot. The Industrial Revolution resulted in plunging infant mortality. Early death from communicable diseases became rare in many parts of the world. This meant that children had a greater chance of living to adulthood, and humanity accordingly planned smaller families. This

has happened in all countries benefiting from modern nutritional, hygienic, and medical advances. Simon (1996) has summarized this trend:

Constant geometric growth does not characterize human population history. Rather, at each stage a major improvement of economic and health conditions has produced a sudden increase in population, which gradually moderated as the major productive advances and concomitant health improvements were assimilated. Then, after the initial surge, the rate of growth slowed down. (p. 315.)

Nevertheless, in a death-free, pre-Fall world, animal and human population would eventually mount. John Calvin (1847) suggested that in such a world people would be translated much like Enoch (Gen. 5:24) was in the post-Fall world:

Truly the first man would have passed to a better life, had he remained upright; but there would have been no separation of the soul from the body, no corruption, no kind of destruction, and, in short, no violent change. (p. 180.)

Had the world remained sinless, God would have foreknown the needs involved in growing population, as surely as He foreknew life's needs in the sinful world. Genesis 3:16 records that after the Fall God told Eve, "I will greatly multiply ... thy conception," signifying that in a sinless world, God may have rendered impossible any overpopulation scenario simply by controlling the conception rate. Even in our post-Fall world, animal growth studies with planaria indicate that nonlethal adjustments in fertility rates occur in the animal kingdom as needed because of environmental conditions (Smith, 1985). Smith (1985) concludes that "animals were designed with the ability to avoid over-exploitation of their habitat without the need for disease, predation, or starvation" (p. 20.)

## PCists Believe Science Trumps the Bible

Ross left no doubt about his high regard for science relative to the Bible. This faulty priority is the core difficulty in all PCist claims made to rationalize evolutionary processes. As mentioned earlier, he acknowledged that a recent-creation belief is common, noting, “Nearly half the adults in the United States believe that God created the universe within the last 10,000 years” (Ross, 1994, p. 7; Ross, 2004, pp. 34–35). Without supporting documentation, Ross (1994) then continued as follows: “What reason do they give? ‘The Bible says so.’” (p. 7). Before the modern era, this reason would have been sufficient to settle the age issue in the minds of believers, but not according to Ross. He asserted:

The abundant and consistent evidence [of earth’s great age] from astronomy, physics, geology, and paleontology must be taken seriously. ... Hundreds of reliable scientific tools demonstrate that the creation (all but modern man) is *old*. (Ross, 1994, pp. 54, 91; italics in the original).

Having concluded that “science” contradicts the obvious meaning of Scripture, Ross attempts to justify his high opinion of “science” by designating the “word of science” as equal to the Word of God: “God’s revelation is not limited exclusively to the Bible’s words. The facts of nature may be likened to a sixty-seventh book of the Bible. ... One revelation of God’s truth cannot be held as inferior or superior to another” (Ross, 1994, p. 57).

He even considers “science” to be another inspired or “God-breathed” book of the Bible in the same sense that Mormons believe the *Book of Mormon* to be another inspired book equal to the Bible (Ross, 1994):

The Bible more than once says God speaks through the creation [he cites Psalm 19:1–4; Psalm 85:11; and Job 12:7–8] ... It would follow from these and other verses that, in

addition to the words of the Bible being ‘God-breathed’ ... useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness’ (2 Timothy 3:16), so also are the words of God spoken through the work of His hands. (p. 57.)

More recently Ross (2004) continued this claim, citing Psalm 19 as showing that, in the context of the natural sciences, “the facts of nature constitute a reliable source of information,” so that we must look to “science” to know such details as “a particular planet’s age” (Ross, 2004, p. 37). Ross confuses general revelation through the creation with inspiration of the Bible’s words (Taylor and Van Bebber, 1994, p. 2). Ross’ position is erroneous and not biblical. The scriptural position is that general revelation is inferior to the revelation of Christ in Scripture (Strong, 1907; Thiessen, 1949).

In his desire to buttress evolutionary concepts under color of “creation,” Ross has taught the erroneous idea that “science”—really evolutionary interpretations of science—is “God-breathed” and is thereby empowered to overturn the biblical teaching on Creation that was commonly accepted until the rise of modern rationalism.

### Summary

Despite PCist claims, Genesis 1 is a historical account of supernatural Creation. It is not poetic, allegorical, or figurative. There was no death before the Fall. Continuation of the PCist claim that God used evolution, with its eons of death and destruction, to bring the world into existence is therefore untenable.

PCists also claim that Genesis 1 and 2 are separate Creation accounts, and PCists support a series of false arguments as follows: that Genesis 1 cannot be dated; that radiometric dating is reliable; that the big bang was God’s method of creation; that the big bang implies a beginning for the universe;

that believers originated the big bang theory but atheists oppose it; that on “day” 4 sun, moon, and stars “appeared” after having evolved earlier; that day 6 of creation had too much activity to be a literal day; that the seven-day week is not a pattern of a literal Creation week; that the long life spans of Genesis are to be reinterpreted as shorter; that the Flood was local; that the ark could not have accommodated all the animals said to board it; that literal six-day Creation detracts from the power and glory of God; that recent-Creation teaching is an offense to the gospel; and that teaching an old-universe leads people to Christ. Future papers are planned to address these and other PC claims.

It has been said that, “evangelicals will fight to the death for the inerrancy of the Scriptures ... *until* they get to Genesis 1–11, and then a double standard takes over, one in which criteria outside the Bible are used to interpret, and worse, to *modify* the Biblical data” (Niessen, 1984, cover). These words apply to PCist claims that exploit extrabiblical concepts, or authorities citing such concepts, to harmonize biblical doctrine with secular origins theories.

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