

**Battle for the Beginning Book Review**  
**By Greg Neyman**  
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The Battle for the Beginning: Creation, Evolution, and the Bible, by John MacArthur, was published in 2001. The edition being reviewed is soft cover, ISBN number 0-7852-7159-7.

For those of you who do not know of John MacArthur, he is widely known from his radio program, Grace to You, which is heard on hundreds of radio stations each weekday. He is a very popular speaker, and very effectively teaches from the Word. I have listened to numerous broadcasts, and usually find edification in the listening. He is also a popular author, and I have read some of his books.

As is true with many bible scholars, forays into fields of research other than theology produces less than satisfactory work. Such is the case here. To his credit, MacArthur does not claim to be a scientist. However, that does not stop him from including scientific facts as arguments, many of which are erroneous.

To date, this is the most emotional young earth book I have read. This book practically drips with emotions, and contains very few scientific facts to prove a young earth.

Books from Answers in Genesis and the Institute for Creation Research try to present scientific facts to back up their story, but this book, from someone not associated with scientific research, contains very little beyond its highly-charged words. It will undoubtedly provide edification to the young earth reader, but if anyone is willing to look underneath the emotional rhetoric, they will notice the lack of evidence.

## **Introduction**

MacArthur starts his battle for creation by launching a tirade against naturalism and Carl Sagan. While naturalism is something that should be combated by the church, arguing against it has no real impact upon old earth creationist beliefs. Naturalism may have its most visible roots in Sagan; however, the roots actually go deeper...into young earth creationism as well.

Naturalism is the belief that the world we live in evolved, free of any intelligence guiding its development. The theory of evolution is a large part of the naturalist beliefs. Although naturalists have been around since the introduction of evolution, it has really exploded in the latter half of the twentieth century, thanks in large part to the efforts of young earth creationists. Beginning in 1960, with the publication of The Genesis Flood, by Institute for Creation Research (ICR) founder Henry Morris, the church has been fed false information...namely that the earth is only 6,000 years old. In order to reach this conclusion, you have to deny science, and the truths we see through scientific observations and experiments. To one who is presented with this information, they have had to make a choice...to accept the teachings of the church, and thus reject science, or accept the cold hard facts of science, and reject the church. Unfortunately, many have

chosen the latter. Many have been driven from the church, when faced with this "either/or" decision.

As time passed, the young earth movement gained momentum, and numerous organizations cropped up supporting a young earth. In many cases, they even have PhD scientists supporting their cause. In most cases, these PhD's were trained by their parents that the earth was young, thus they approach the subject of creationism with a closed mind.

There is a startling parallel here. The same time we see an increase in young earth creationism, is the same time we see an increase in naturalism. In essence, people are being forced to one side or the other, and we are losing the "middle ground," the place where science and the Bible can agree.

While I agree that Carl Sagan is responsible in part for the rise of naturalism, young earth creationist organizations are equally to blame, as they eagerly drove thinking people from the church, right into the path of Sagan. How different would it have been, if instead we had an old earth creationist movement with the same energy? Perhaps millions would have been saved, instead of being lost to naturalism.

Next (page 13), MacArthur turns his attention to Darwin. For too long, Darwin has been made the scapegoat of evolution. Christians blame him for damaging Christianity, for causing millions to fall away from the faith. I cannot jump on the Darwin-hating bandwagon. Darwin was a scientist, who was reporting on his findings, and postulating theories for what he observed. It is not Darwin who is to blame. We in the church, in our reaction to his works, are the true culprits. Suppose the church embraced evolution when Darwin proposed it? Church fathers could have formulated the belief of "theistic evolution" and in the process they could have kept millions from falling away from the faith. It is the "either/or" approach of our response to evolution that has caused so much grief, and not evolution itself.

As an old earth believer, and a progressive creationist, I do not believe in evolution. Science has come a long way since Darwin, and many problems have been identified with the theory of evolution. However, am I 100% certain that evolution is false? No, I'm not. For all the arguments creationists propose against evolution, a simple check of the internet reveals that evolutionists have answers for them. Who is right? It really doesn't matter, since you can be a Christian and hold either position on evolution.

On page 17, he makes the statement, "Many in the church are too intimidated or too embarrassed to affirm the literal truth of the biblical account of creation." This statement rings true for many people. However, it need not be so. He is referring to the fact that since people don't want to be seen as religious zealots, and ridiculed for believing in a young earth, they don't speak up to defend their position as they should. This is only a problem for young earth creationists, however. Old earth creationists have no problem affirming the literal truth of creation, within an old earth framework. We can identify with the naturalists, who also believe the universe is billions of years old, and reach them for Christ.

In the next paragraph, MacArthur launches an attack against theistic evolutionists. In short, he says they claim to be bible-believing Christians, but in reality they have to reinterpret Genesis in order to make evolution fit into the Bible. Does the Christian have to reinterpret Genesis? What is reinterpreted? On the next page, he says, "...old earth

creationists end up explaining away rather than honestly exegeting the biblical account of creation." Is this true?

Let's take a quick look at what is reinterpreted, and what is explained away. Our list of reinterpreted items is rather short...only one. The meaning of the word "day" is interpreted as a long period of time. The word "yom" is used in many ways in the Old Testament, representing a time of period anywhere from 12 hours to eternity.

You may be saying, "But what about the order of creation, or the lack of rainfall prior to the Flood, or especially death before sin." All these are a result of how you interpret the word Yom. For instance, nowhere in the Bible is the issue of animal death before sin taught. It is a necessary addition to the Bible, however, if you believe in a young earth. This teaching did not arise from the Bible, but from young earth creationists. The same thing can be said of rain. And concerning the creation order, young earth creationists say the order of the fossil record does not match the order of creation in Genesis. However, it does, if one examines it closely (see [www.answersincreation.org/genesis1.htm](http://www.answersincreation.org/genesis1.htm)).

What about the claim we explain away creation? I believe in an inerrant Bible, and that you can literally accept the creation account in Genesis. I haven't "explained away" a single word in Genesis! What have I really "explained away?" I've explained away the false teaching of young earth creationism. I've explained away MacArthur's belief in a young earth. I still believe in an inerrant, literal Bible. No matter how loudly the young earth community protests, I've done nothing wrong Biblically.

"The main thrust of the passage (Genesis 1-3) simply cannot be reconciled with the notion that creation occurred via natural evolutionary processes over long periods of time." Yes, it can, and I know many people who have done it. What he really means is that he cannot reconcile it with his preconceived idea of a young earth. From a young age, he has probably been taught that the earth is young. Despite writing this book, he has never seriously considered the point of view of the scientific community, nor does he intend to. He has, and will continue to be, influenced by Morton's Demon (for more, see [www.answersincreation.org/mortond.htm](http://www.answersincreation.org/mortond.htm)).

Consider this...the church is divided on this issue, some believing in a young earth, and some in an old earth. The secular community is not divided. Do you know any non-Christians, free of any prior knowledge of religion, who actually believe in a young earth? There are none! NOBODY has examined the earth, come to the conclusion it is young, and then went and found Christianity and believed. NOBODY! Instead, those who are pre-disposed to believe in a young earth were all taught that in their youth, or prior to being exposed to unbiased science, fell under the influence of another young earth creationist. Thus, there are no young earth creationists who "came by it honestly."

On page 19, MacArthur takes direct aim at old earth creationists who are literalists. He claims that it involves a hermeneutical shift at Genesis 1:26-27, and in Genesis 2:7, and that our belief in a historical Adam is inconsistent with our exegesis of the rest of the creation account. What he is referring to, I believe, is theistic evolution. If Adam was descended from prior non-soulful, animal-like hominids, then how could he be in the image of God? And, if so, why does the Bible say he was formed from the dust of the ground, when he clearly had a mother and father, who did not have eternal souls? In either case, this presents no problem for the theistic evolutionist. In God's image refers to an eternal soul, and not physical looks (God is spirit, so how could we be in God's physical image?). The only issue in Genesis 2:7 is time. God made man out of

dust...whether he did it instantly, or he took billions of years, is of no consequence to the truthfulness of the Scripture...either way, man came from dust.

On page 20, he writes, "Evangelicals who accept an old-earth interpretation of Genesis have embraced a hermeneutic that is hostile to a high view of Scripture." This is not the case. How can believing in an inerrant, literal Bible be construed as being "hostile to a high view of Scripture?" It is only hostile to a young earth interpretation of Scripture. He goes on to call it "anti-evangelical." Such vitreous words are unfounded, and should not be directed at fellow believers.

Next, he launches an attack on the "framework hypothesis." Although the framework hypothesis is treated differently by most people, the basics of it are the same as Progressive Creation, or the Analogical Days interpretation. In each, the days of creation are long periods of time. Framework believers see the creation week as a whole, broken into days for man's benefit of understanding. They lean more toward a non-literal view than the Progressive Creationist...but the end results are the same. On page 22, he makes the statement "Those who embrace such a view have in effect made science an authority over Scripture." This statement equally applies to all old-earth believers, not just "frameworkers." However, it is patently false.

Science is a set of observations and experiments, that gives us data points, and then we interpret them. From these, we get "scientific truth." For Christians, the Bible is truth. Since God created our universe, what we see in science must be true. When you compare these two truths (science and Bible), it's not an issue of which is right...both are. Two truths, when examined, will not disagree with each other. Thus, I see science, which proclaims a billions of years old universe, as correct, and I view the Bible as correct. The real issue is how to merge the two truths. It's not a matter of elevating science over the Bible...both are truths that must be dealt with. (On the other hand, young earth creationists choose to ignore the scientific truth, and reinterpret it to fit their own needs. No such reinterpreting is necessary.)

He goes on to state "Modern scientific opinion is not a valid hermeneutic for interpreting Genesis." Why not? If I were in a court of law, that would be like a judge not admitting all the evidence for consideration by the jury. Science is a tool to be used, not ignored. Unfortunately, young earth creationists choose the route of ignorance as displayed here by Dr. MacArthur. It is like hitting someone over the head with a 2x4 and knocking them to the ground, and then the person who got hit denying the existence of the 2x4.

It isn't a matter of modern scientists being more authoritative than the Bible...it is a matter of examining all the evidence before reaching a conclusion.

At the bottom of page 24, he writes, "Evolution was devised to explain away the God of the Bible..." Evolution is a scientific theory, and has no agenda. Nor did Charles Darwin have an agenda to rid the world of the Bible. This type of unfounded, undocumented rhetoric is reminiscent of the words of young earth creationist Kent Hovind, who claims evolution was invented by the devil long before Darwin came along! Even if Dr. MacArthur remains a young earth creationist, he would do well to steer clear of Hovind, as other young earth creationists do (see [answersingenesis.org/docs2002/1011hovind.asp](http://answersingenesis.org/docs2002/1011hovind.asp)). The source that Dr. MacArthur uses, a book by Marvin Lubenow, is even worse in its denouncement of evolution. Again,

nothing to support this idea except vitreous words which fuel emotions in the young earth creationist, but which have no basis in fact.

At this point, MacArthur charges headlong into evolution, and then into theistic evolutionists. The tone of this section, and the emptiness of his claims, make it almost laughable. He is apparently writing on pure emotion, devoid of any consideration for scientific facts or reason. Young earth creationism is fueled by this emotion. It reminds me of the Pixar movie, *Monsters Inc.* If it were not for emotions, young earth creationism would cease to exist.

For the remainder of this section, he explains his approach in writing this book. My overall impressions of this Introduction is that MacArthur is fueled by emotions on the subject of creation. He is so vitreous against evolution and long ages that he cannot objectively look at creation and reach a proper conclusion. His own presuppositions (having been raised and taught for years that the earth is young) is too much for him to overcome to give the study of creation a fair examination, and one would do wise not to trust him in his conclusions in this matter. Overall, this section is all emotion and no substance.

## **Chapter 1**

### **Creation: Believe it or Not**

MacArthur starts this chapter with a listing of questions for the naturalist about the beginnings. His intent is to show the foolishness of believing in the big bang and evolution, due to its numerous unanswered questions. The opening statements have no impact upon the old earth creationist. They are addressed to show that there are too many questions if you take God out of the beginning. They have no relevance with old earth creation, because we recognize God's part in creation.

#### **Evolution is Degrading to Humanity (Page 32)**

MacArthur starts by listing society's problems, such as crime, drug abuse, sexual perversion, suicide, and abortion, and then he makes the claim "These trends are directly traceable to the ascent of evolutionary theory." In the following pages, he fails to back it up with any statistics. He merely uses examples to emotionally charge the reader.

True, abortion is mostly a product of our generation, but the others...crime, drug abuse, sexual sin, suicide, have all been with humanity for thousands of years. Since the theory of evolution was only developed in the 1800s, it cannot be responsible for these sins. All MacArthur is left with is empty emotional rhetoric with no facts to substantiate his claims.

To back up his "degrading claim, he next uses People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA). He lists some of their statements, to show how radical they are. In reality, he is playing on the emotions of the reader by using an extremist position that is not held by most people. PETA does not reflect the attitudes of society as a whole, therefore they cannot be characterized as showing that humanity as a whole, through belief in evolution, is leading to a degrading of humanity.

To PETA he adds material from Wild Earth magazine, and then the Church of Euthanasia, which is just as wild and does not represent society as a whole. Then he says

"That sort of lunacy is rooted in the belief that humanity is simply the product of evolution." All throughout history, mankind has been plagued by lunatics professing many unusual ideas...they are not unique to our day, and they are not the result of evolution. Just as PETA worships animals (idol worship), the Bible itself is full of examples of idol worship. MacArthur gives no data to support this claim, other than emotional words.

### **Evolution is Hostile to Reason (Page 35)**

He begins this section talking about the probability of life starting by itself. Evolution could not just happen by chance...there had to be a catalyst to start each part of the process. While this reasoning applies to atheistic evolution, it has no bearing on theistic evolution...God started the process of life, including the Big Bang, and guided the process.

He carries this a step further, stating that since evolution is a theory based on mere chance, and since chance cannot be accounted for scientifically, then scientists who study evolution have "left the realm of reason, they have left the domain of science." He goes on to say "evolution does not deserve to be deemed true science; it is nothing more than an irrational religion--the religion of those who want to sin without guilt." While I agree that evolution by chance is impossible, that does not make it non-scientific. De-valuing evolution by claiming it is a religion is a long-standing claim by young earth creationists, one which serves its purpose (to energize the masses), but which is empty rhetoric. Also, claiming that it is the religion of those who want to sin without guilt...if that were true, then all scientists who are evolutionists must be murderers, thieves, etc. This is similar to Answers in Genesis claim a few months ago about evolution and sin (see [www.answersincreation.org/evo\\_sin.htm](http://www.answersincreation.org/evo_sin.htm)).

He then states "...the absurdity of naturalism goes largely unchallenged today in universities and colleges." On this, we can agree. However, the young earth community is unable to mount a challenge to naturalism. As long as they attach the absurdity of a young earth to their message of hope in Jesus Christ, they will continue to be scoffed at by the academic community, and rightly so. Yes, Jesus is the answer, but in promoting Jesus with a young earth, they are combining truth and fiction, thus they will never be taken seriously.

### **Evolution is Antithetical to the Truth God Has Revealed (Page 40)**

This section mainly addresses the statement "either you believe Genesis 1-2 or you don't." It has little if any impact upon old earth belief, because most of what he says is applicable to old earth and young earth believers. Only a few minor comments are in order.

"...the text of Genesis 1-2 stands for all practical purposes unchallenged as the only divinely revealed description of creation." True, it is the only written description, however the creation itself was divinely created, and God's creation is itself a "divinely revealed description" of creation.

"After all, the notion that the universe is billions of years old is based on naturalistic presuppositions that (if held consistently) would rule out all miracles." In reality, the

billions of years old universe is not based on naturalistic presuppositions, but upon God's own creation, which testifies to its own age. There is also no evidence to show any relation between the age of the universe and miracles. Using this notion, he uses this final idea to fuel an emotion-filled conclusion to his chapter. It is obviously meant to stir the reader, but it is again nothing but statements that are empty.

## **Summary**

This chapter drips with emotional rhetoric and contains no basis in fact. Unfortunately, most of his audience, the young earth creationist community, will swallow this emotional nonsense without so much as giving a critical thought to its truth. For the old earth creationist, there is nothing to worry about in this chapter. It fails completely to provide any evidence against an old earth.

## **Chapter 2 How Did Creation Happen?**

MacArthur begins this chapter with an argument against evolution involving "fiat" creation. This means God created life forms out of nothing, and not from previously existing life forms. While a decent argument against evolution, it has no bearing on old earth progressive creationists, as we also believe in creation out of nothing. It does, however, require some thinking on the part of the theistic evolutionist. It is still possible, however, to maintain fiat creation with evolution. No mention is made of how long it was from the time God said, "Make it so," and the time the creature appeared. If theistic evolutionists are comfortable with this, then there is no reason to not allow them this interpretation.

### **Was the Earth Shaped by Constancy or by Catastrophe? (Page 50)**

The author uses this section to explain one of the most popular young earth creationist theories...that the rock layers of the earth were all formed via a catastrophic process. This idea provides no threat to old earth creationists, since it is clearly mistaken. Young earth creationists always frame this statement as an either/or scenario...either you believe in catastrophism, or you believe in uniformitarianism. They point to features in the rock record, and examples from modern depositional systems, showing that you can produce rock layers fast. I agree. We see hurricanes and floods depositing feet of sediment in one day. This proves nothing. In fact, this example of catastrophism is an integral part of uniformitarianism.

Uniformitarianism says that the observed systems of today are responsible for the deposition of sediments in the past. Since we observe slow depositions of less than one inch per year, and since we observe these hurricane/flood systems, they are all part of uniformitarianism. Thus, while catastrophism can explain minor events causing several feet of sediment in one day, it cannot account for the other slow processes, such as deposition of carbonate rocks (see Chalk Layers, [www.answersincreation.org/nochalk.htm](http://www.answersincreation.org/nochalk.htm)) or desert sandstones (see Desert Problem,

[www.answersincreation.org/desertproblem.htm](http://www.answersincreation.org/desertproblem.htm)). For more, see Catastrophism ([www.answersincreation.org/catastrophism.htm](http://www.answersincreation.org/catastrophism.htm)).

MacArthur makes the claim "Catastrophism therefore poses a major challenge to the evolutionary timetable." Nothing could be further from the truth. He gives no credible model, and neither does Answers in Genesis or the Institute for Creation Research, for catastrophism to work on a worldwide scale. For an example of how unworkable their model is, read their explanation for the Coconino Sandstone ([www.answersincreation.org/coconino.htm](http://www.answersincreation.org/coconino.htm)).

In the next paragraph, he states, "But a moment's reflection will reveal that the fossil record is impossible to explain by any uniformitarian scheme." This is another outright falsehood. You would say this if you were influenced by years of young earth belief. In reality, catastrophism cannot explain the fossil distribution. He mentions fossilization requires rapid burial...I agree. But with catastrophic forces at work within uniformitarianism, this has happened many times over millions of years. He also mentions fossil graveyards with thousands of fossils, again a product of flood events that occurred millions of years ago, and all within a uniformitarian framework. He throws a quick statement about marine fossils being found on mountaintops, again easily explained through plate tectonics (which he doesn't even address).

Next he erroneously uses II Peter 3:4-6 to support the idea that the Bible denounces uniformitarianism. This passage on the flood does address creation, but not the creative forces behind that creation. It mentions the flood, and destroying the known world, but reading into the passage that it denounces uniformitarianism is an addition to the scripture that is not there. It is a further example of a young earth creationist adding to the words of scripture to support their position. At face value, this passage does nothing for young earth creationism.

Next he claims that some rock features cannot be explained by uniformitarianism. He mentions the Vasquez Rocks, near where he lives, that were formed by catastrophic forces. You see here once again the ignorant approach of young earth creationists. I'll say it again...catastrophic events are a part of uniformitarianism! Although the Vasquez Rocks may have been formed by catastrophe, they are still a part of the uniformitarianist system. A rock formation which formed by catastrophic processes does not provide any evidence of a young earth!

Next he mentions the Grand Canyon, and says the catastrophic formation of it makes more sense than a uniformitarian explanation. This is thoroughly disproved in scientific literature. The foundation work for young earth creationists concerning the Canyon is a book called Grand Canyon: Monument to Catastrophe. This book has been reviewed on this website and has been shown to be nothing more than scientific trash. To read more about the Grand Canyon, check out the Grand Canyon page ([www.answersincreation.org/grandcanyon.htm](http://www.answersincreation.org/grandcanyon.htm)).

MacArthur gives an example of a canyon in Georgia that formed over the last 160 years. This is similar to the Burlingame Canyon argument ([www.answersincreation.org/burlingame.htm](http://www.answersincreation.org/burlingame.htm)), and is like comparing apples and oranges.

Passing mention is made in a quote about Mount Saint Helens. Again, this is a catastrophic event, within a uniformitarian framework, and presents no problems for evolution or old age belief. He closes this section by stating "To imagine that the earth was formed by natural processes over billions and billions of years through slow and

steady evolution is to deny the very essence of what Scripture teaches about the earth's creation. It is to reject the clear account of God Himself that He created the earth and all its life in six days." Catastrophic events, happening in uniformitarianism, is a "natural processes," and offers perfect explanation for what we see in the rock record over a period of billions of years. Despite the ramblings of MacArthur, he has provided no valid arguments for a young earth, but he continues to successfully edify the young earth reader through his emotional appeals.

### **Which Came First - The Chicken or the Egg? (Page 54)**

This section has no bearing on the progressive creationist, as they believe God created out of nothing. The key to this section is the idea of God creating things with the "appearance of age." More on that later. He devotes several paragraphs on the issue of Adam having a bellybutton, and fortunately he reaches a good conclusion, in that this is mere speculation, and not important. He goes on to discuss light created in transit, so that we can see it even though it is billions of light years away. We will discuss this further in Chapter 5.

On the appearance of age issue, there are several things to consider here. First, using fiat, or out of nothing instantaneous creation, one would have to assume that the things being created had an appearance of age. Note I said "assumed." In reality, there is nothing in the Bible account of creation that indicates Adam's age...we are merely told that God made him. Since no claim is made, the apparent problem of fiat creation can be explained by the theistic evolutionists.

According to Big Bang cosmology, it all started from a speck of dust, if you will, and the Big Bang exploded, filling the universe. Thus, going back to the beginning, God did create the universe from apparent nothingness. Thus Adam, who came along billions of years later, if you go all the way back, came out of nothing. This is a stretch, to be sure, but one that many are willing to make.

Now, let's consider the moral implications of "apparent age." Consider supernova explosions, which have been observed by astronomers. The light coming from these explosions have in some cases traveled millions of light years. Thus, if the light was created in transit, when we watch a supernova from millions of light years away, we are observing an event that never occurred. Why would God create evidence of an event that never occurred? In essence, to accept apparent age for the light waves of our universe is the same thing as saying God is a liar, because He created evidence of an event that never occurred. I for one am not willing to call God a liar, but young earth creationists are in many cases eager to do so.

### **Should We Appraise Scripture By Science, or Vice Versa? (Page 57)**

In this section, MacArthur launches an attack upon Dr. Hugh Ross, founder of Reasons to Believe. His progressive creationist views receive the most attention from young earth creationists, indicating their fear of his ideas (I think they realize that he is onto something that is correct, and threatens the young earth dynasty). It is interesting to note, that before MacArthur published his book, Dr. Ross contacted him, requesting an interview to clear up misconceptions that MacArthur had about Ross. MacArthur refused

to meet with Ross. For MacArthur, it would have been the perfect opportunity to confront what he believes is gross errors in interpreting the creation story, but for some reason, MacArthur was afraid to meet him.

Of Ross, MacArthur says "...he makes Scripture subservient to science--and he does so without carefully separating scientific fact from scientific theory." How would MacArthur know, since he is no scientist, what is "fact" and what is "theory?" He gets his scientific information from other young earth creationists, who are themselves unreliable when it comes to scientific data (see Creation Scientists, [www.answersincreation.org/scientist.htm](http://www.answersincreation.org/scientist.htm)). In reality, scientists, and Dr. Ross, are very meticulous in their work, and know quite well the difference between theory and fact.

The problem isn't whether or not some things are theories and some facts...the real issue is if the scientific facts proposed by Ross are unchallenged, they directly contradict young earth creationism, and present a real threat to their dynasty. Young earth creationist organizations want their followers to approach science with the assumption that the earth is young, and then try to interpret the data so that it fits a young earth model...unfortunately for him, this method utterly fails when tested. Ross actually "thinks about creation," rather than blindly accepting the words of others. YEC organizations are fearful that their followers will begin to think for themselves.

On page 58, he launches an attack upon the Big Bang, alluding to the fact that even many astronomers consider it controversial. However, the Big Bang is testable, and it proves itself over and over again (see Putting the Big Bang to the Test ([http://www.reasons.org/resources/apologetics/big\\_bang\\_evidences.shtml](http://www.reasons.org/resources/apologetics/big_bang_evidences.shtml)); also see The Creator and the Cosmos, book by Dr. Ross).

He then goes on to attack the order of creation. MacArthur believes plant creation on day Three, and then insects on Day Six, will not work in Ross' view, since insects are needed to pollinate the plants. This shows MacArthur does not understand Ross' view, and he would do well to study it more closely. Maybe it would have been a good idea for him to have met with Ross before publishing the book! To understand more on the order of creation, see Genesis 1 ([www.answersincreation.org/genesis1.htm](http://www.answersincreation.org/genesis1.htm)).

Finally, MacArthur makes a big deal out of Ross' view of the importance of general revelation. He quotes Ross as saying truth is information that is free of contradiction, and one truth cannot be called superior to another truth. Concerning this, MacArthur says "Ross clearly does believe "that God's revelation through nature is...on an equal footing with His revelation through the words of the Bible."" There is no problem for Ross or anyone else to hold this view. We accept the Scriptures as truth. We also accept scientific facts as truth. Since both are truth, they cannot contradict each other. If there is a problem, then our interpretation of either the science or the Scripture is wrong, and must be evaluated. MacArthur's real problem is that Ross interprets Scripture differently than he does.

Think of it this way. If you are a jurist in a murder trial, would you want to see all of the evidence? You cannot in good conscience convict a person unless you consider all the evidence. Thanks to Morton's Demon ([www.answersincreation.org/mortond.htm](http://www.answersincreation.org/mortond.htm)), most young earth creationists do not examine all the evidence...instead they implicitly trust Answers in Genesis and others, not even investigating the facts. Young earth creationists refuse to even consider evidence that the earth is old...they ignore the truths of science in favor of their narrow-minded young earth view.

Yes, Ross does interpret the Scriptures differently...but the Bible encourages us all to examine the Scriptures, so there is nothing wrong with this. Ross' view of "nature" does not conflict with his interpretation of Scripture...and that is why he is targeted by the young earthers. They rightly recognize his view as valid, and see it as a threat to their dynasty. They are losing this battle in the churches, and they realize this.

### **Is General Revelation Equal to Special Revelation? (Page 60)**

On page 61, MacArthur makes the claim that "Jesus himself expressly debunked the notion that nature and Scripture are equivalent forms of revelation when He said, "Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away"" (referring to Matthew 24:35). Here MacArthur is reading more into Jesus' words than are actually there. Just because heaven and earth pass away, it does not mean that what we see in heaven and earth are not truthful! Jesus is in no way making a statement about the truthfulness of general revelation!

Ross' words still ring true, despite the ramblings of MacArthur. What we see in creation (general revelation) is the work of God's hands, and what we see in the Scriptures is the inspired Word of God. Both come from God, and both represent truth. Two truths cannot contradict one another. It's not a matter of Ross elevating general revelation up to an equal footing with Scripture...it is a matter of two truths which cannot contradict. In essence, MacArthur is right in that we progressive creationists elevate general revelation...but there are no sound reason, especially from the Bible itself, that would prevent this. Since both are truth, they should both be examined with an open mind.

### **Is the Universe Young or Old? (Page 62)**

MacArthur uses the argument of Archbishop Ussher, who calculated that Adam's creation was in 4,004 B.C. He then discusses genealogies, and how there could be no possible way to stretch the genealogies to include thousands of years of missing information. He quotes Henry Morris of the Institute for Creation Research as support.

He gives no valid arguments that would argue against these gaps in the genealogies. Henry Morris, as we all know, is extremely biased, and cannot be trusted to objectively look at the data. We know of demonstratable gaps in the genealogies, therefore there is no reason why they cannot contain large gaps.

Think of it this way. God decided what to put in the Bible. We have excellent stories in the Bible that address many issues. No doubt, there were many God-fearing Jews of the Old Testament that are not mentioned. The fact that millions of missing testimonies from the Old Testament should not concern us; God picked the relevant information that He wanted to include, and left out the rest. For the genealogies that are missing, it was God's decision that it was not significant to be included in His Word. If he had included a detailed listing of all activity prior to Jesus Christ, the Bible would probably be the size of the Library of Congress itself!

We should not concern ourselves with what is missing, but instead should focus on what we have.

MacArthur then talks briefly about the days of creation being long epochs. He says there is nothing in the context of Genesis to suggest they are to be interpreted figuratively. That's good, especially since Ross takes Genesis literally. Then he claims that the order of creation itself rules out the possibility of the days being long ages. Actually, we old earth creationists realize that the order of creation is fully supported by the Genesis account. Perhaps if MacArthur had met with Ross, he would have understood this...instead he speaks from his ignorance of old earth belief. For more, see Genesis 1 ([www.answersincreation.org/genesis1.htm](http://www.answersincreation.org/genesis1.htm)).

At the bottom of page 64, he says "The argument seems to suggest that God could not possibly have created such an intricate universe in only six days' time." This is essentially the "weak God" argument. Saying that God could not create in six days is irrelevant. For that matter, why didn't God take six seconds...six days is too long!

One argument I like to use is...Can you do it? Starting right now, I'll give you 15 billion years. Your task is to create a fully functioning universe, with a planet full of life. No, you cannot do it...only God can. In this scenario, time is irrelevant. The only thing that matters is the ability of the creator. God can do it...you can't. It really doesn't matter how long He took...that's not the issue.

Of long ages, MacArthur says "Only by denying key expressions or interpreting them in a nonliteral sense can the Christian read any degree of evolution or "progressive creation" into the Genesis account." Not true...progressive creationists, and many theistic evolutionists, accept the creation account in a literal sense, without denying any expressions at all!

## **Summary**

The entire chapter could be characterized as an emotional appeal. With much mudslinging, he rallies the young earth believer against old earth creationism, but in all cases it is with false information. MacArthur has a bad understanding of progressive creationism, and his refusal to meet with Dr. Ross speaks volumes about his attitude. The fact of the matter is young earth creationists are losing the battle in America's churches, as more and more people realize the earth is old. Their fear of Ross, and old earth creationism, is driving them to personal attacks upon Ross and others. Like a cornered raccoon, they come out fighting...however, there's no escape for the raccoon. He will soon go away, just like geocentricity.

## **Chapter 3 Light on Day One**

MacArthur begins his discussion on the events of each day of creation. He addresses the use of the word "day, which in Hebrew is "yom." To see a detailed description of the uses of yom, see Word Study: Yom ([www.answersincreation.org/word\\_study\\_yom.htm](http://www.answersincreation.org/word_study_yom.htm)). He goes on to make the statement, "Nothing in Scripture itself permits the view that the days of creation were anything other than literal twenty-four-hour days." Nothing prohibits such an interpretation, however, so there is no hermeneutical reason not to allow long ages for the days of creation.<sup>1</sup> Several other issues are brought up, most of

which have been dealt with in the preceding chapters. Of interest, though, are the references to Augustine. At issue here is whether we should let the beliefs of the church fathers influence our own beliefs. Since the church fathers had no access to the findings of modern science, they were making decisions based on limited information. We are in a much better position than Augustine and others, and thus we should not look to past Christian leaders to form our own opinions. For more, see Church Fathers ([www.answersincreation.org/churchfathers.htm](http://www.answersincreation.org/churchfathers.htm)).

### **MacArthur's Double-Standard**

Next is evidence of a double-standard on MacArthur's part. At the bottom of page 71, he states, "Old earth creationism diminishes the biblical emphasis on creation by divine fiat, setting up a scenario where God tinkers with creation over long epochs until the world is finally ready to be inhabited by humans made in His image. This is quite contrary to what Genesis teaches."

On page 76, in the first full paragraph, MacArthur writes, "The picture it conjures up is reminiscent of a potter wishing to fashion a beautiful vessel and then fill it to be used. He first takes a lump of unformed clay and places it on a wheel to mold and fit it to his purpose." Also, "...he carefully shaped it and formed it into the perfect finished work He had planned from the beginning." He closes the paragraph with "It was mostly a process of perfecting what He had already created in the beginning." In this paragraph, MacArthur sets up a scenario where God is tinkering with His creation. On page 71, it is used negatively to reflect badly on the old earth creationists, but he turns right around and uses the exact same argument in support of a young earth!

Aside from this, the way MacArthur describes earth's creation is contrary to his own beliefs about creation. MacArthur obviously believes in divine fiat, where God speaks, and the object immediately appears, fully created and ready. On page 74, he says Genesis 1:2 might be translated "As to the earth, it was formless and void." He says the Hebrew expression, Tohu, signifies "a wasteland, a desolate place. Also, "The earth was an empty place of utter desolation." If God spoke, and thus created perfect things instantly, why did He first create an utter desolation? This is contrary to MacArthur's belief that God creates fully formed objects...clearly the earth was not fully formed, nor was it perfect.

MacArthur's confusing talk gets even worse. Further down on page 74, he compares Genesis 1:2 to Jeremiah 4. It is the same expression in Hebrew, and here he comments about the meaning of the phrase, saying "It was a wasted, devastated place without any inhabitants. It had lost its former beauty. It didn't have any form. It didn't have any beauty." In this statement, MacArthur gives support to the Gap Theory, as the meaning of the expression clearly supports the "lost its former beauty" claim. Taken at face value, are we to assume that the world of Genesis 1:2 had beauty before Genesis 1:2? That's exactly what MacArthur implies. On the next page, he launches an attack upon the Gap Theory. I don't know if he is aware that he supports the Gap Theory on the previous page.

Despite MacArthur's discussions on the Gap Theory, he presents no credible evidence against it. The arguments he uses, such as the term "very good" in conjunction with creation, the death before sin issue, and the pattern of our work week issue (Exodus

20:11), have been clearly dealt with and present no condemnation of the Gap Theory. Gap theorists are not threatened in the least by MacArthur's work.

This whole section reminded me of Dr. Hugh Ross' statement about comparing God to an artist, as he slowly and lovingly fashioned His creation as He saw fit. MacArthur's use of the same argument, that God used a "process of perfecting what He had already created in the beginning," is no different. He is guilty of the very thing he accuses Dr. Ross of.

### **The Brooding Spirit (Page 77)**

MacArthur explains the brooding spirit over the face of the waters, mentioned in Genesis 2. On page 78, he says "He didn't create a mechanism for evolution and leave the universe to develop to maturity on its own." Here, MacArthur is reading more into the Bible than is there...for it does not say that. Although some believe in evolution, we do not know for certain the intricacies of God's creative work. It does not say that He didn't use evolution...he might have...we just don't know. MacArthur makes the assumption that He didn't based on his young earth indoctrination...and this cannot be taken for truth.

In the next paragraph, he says "He accomplishes it all by His sovereign decree. So powerful is His Word that He speaks, and at once it is done. Only in the case of Adam is a creative process described:..." If the creative process is only described once, (and its a very skimpy explanation), then how can be be sure what process He used? We cannot...but that doesn't stop MacArthur from denouncing everyone else's theories. Is MacArthur really this arrogant? It would appear so. Also, if He spoke once, and the world was created, why was it created as a void, devastated rock...why wasn't it created fully formed with all the mountains, oceans, etc., in one step?

MacArthur makes a key point at the bottom of page 78. "From this point on, the entire creation account is told from the perspective of an observer on earth." This is key to a proper understanding of creation. Dr. Ross has long argued that this was the case. From the perspective of the observer, the astronomical model for planet formation is a perfect fit with the written account in Genesis. Also, from this perspective, the order of creation makes perfect sense within an old earth framework. All young earth arguments that the order of creation in Genesis does not match with the record we see in the rocks disappears with the proper perspective.

### **The Clarifying Light (page 79)**

MacArthur starts out early on with "Science cannot understand light." He then proceeds to tell all about light, giving several pages of scientific explanation! Science understands light quite well...well enough for a theologian to get a working knowledge from the textbooks. This section has little bearing on the creation debate. The reason for the explanation of light is unclear, as it is not relative to the issue of creation.

On page 80, he says "The creation of light also inaugurated the measurement of earth's time by periods of day and night." It did not inaugurate the measurement of time...it merely set the pattern of night and day, without reference to time. Even by MacArthur's

model, day and night were not visible nor apparent until Day Four, thus we cannot have reference to the time of a "night and day" on Day One.

For further discussion on this section, see a physicist's review of this book, at <http://www.dctech.com/physics/features/1002.php>.

## Summary

Overall, MacArthur presents no valid proof against an old earth, and nothing he uses can support his young earth model.

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<sup>1</sup> When dealing with Hebrew, it is important to realize that young earth creationists will claim "you can't do this..." or "you can't do that..." with reference to Hebrew words. Keep in mind that they are following the teaching of Hebrew experts who are themselves young earth creationists. A greater number of Hebrew scholars say the opposite, that you can interpret Yom as long periods. Due to the scholars "young earth bias", young earth statements regarding Hebrew cannot be trusted.

## Chapter 4 When He Marked Out the Foundations of the Earth

In this chapter, MacArthur tackles the issues of Days Two and Three of creation. The introduction to the chapter has nothing of relevance for the age of the earth debate.

### Day Two: The Firmament (Page 88)

This section starts out with an interesting thing...an admission that there was a "primordial soup." Creationists often joke that life could not have started from this soup, yet here MacArthur admits it was there.

MacArthur makes the statement at the bottom of page 90, "There is no need for any scientific or naturalistic explanation of how this might have occurred." No, there is no need, but it does not mean we should not try to explain it through science. It is not a sin to study the creation and theorize about how God did it. It is not a sin to come up with a theory contrary to the young earth interpretation...they are both theories, and have no bearing upon the key doctrines of the Bible, such as Salvation.

He then discusses the Hebrew word "made" vs. the word "created." There are no problems here from an old earth perspective. At the end of this, he says "It also clearly involves the creation of something that never existed before" (referring to fiat creation, or out of nothing). Earlier in Chapter 3, the earth was void and without form. MacArthur claims God then shaped the earth, out of the unmolded clay, if you will. On the one hand, he preaches fiat creation, on the other, God molds and shapes previously existing material.

Next, he presents the water canopy theory, clearly explaining that not all creationists believe this theory. He errs on page 92, however, when he says "Scripture says that before the Flood there was no rain (Genesis 2:5)" Genesis 2:5 says:

<sup>5</sup> *before any plant of the field was in the earth and before any herb of the field had grown. For the Lord God had not caused it to rain on the earth, and there was no man to till the ground;* <sup>6</sup> *but a mist went up from the earth and watered the whole face of the ground.*

It says there was no rain on the earth prior to the plant's growing (Day Three of creation). It says nothing of rain from the time of the end of creation until the Flood. To expand this verse to apply until the start of the Flood is inserting something into the Bible that is not supported by the Scriptures.

### **Day Three: The Sea and Dry Land (Page 93)**

This section starts out with a discussion of the possibility of God doing this enormous amount of creative work within a 24 hour period, and he explains it away by attributing it to the supernatural power of God. There are no problems with his arguments, as they don't impact old earth belief. You still need supernatural powers even in an old earth framework of understanding the creation.

At this point, he tackles the Big Bang. Why he chose this location, in the middle of Day Three, is unknown. With this discussion he jumps back to the beginning of Day One of creation. After some words on the Big Bang, which are not significant, he turns again to the idea of God completing a massive amount of work on Day Three. Nothing of significance here.

Interestingly, he makes the claim that when God created the land, it was dry instantly! Next, he alludes to the land being one giant continent, with the possibility of it breaking up during the Flood.

Next, he moves into Job 38 and Psalm 104, and uses these as proof that it happened instantly. However, a reading of the passages yields no indication of how much time the creative event took. For instance, in Psalm 104, it says

*The waters stood above the mountains. At Your rebuke they fled;*

There is nothing here that indicates a time frame. MacArthur can no more claim that it took place instantly than I can claim that it took 100 million years...we just don't know.

### **The End of Day Three: Plant Life (Page 97)**

Next MacArthur addresses plant creation. Naturally, he says it was a direct result of God's decree...in other words, it did not evolve. However, if God decreed it, and started life via evolution, this is a perfectly acceptable method of creation also. In both instances, God has decreed it.

Don't get me wrong...as a progressive creationist, I agree with MacArthur that the generation of life from that which is inanimate is impossible. However, if God is involved in the evolutionary process, then it is a valid explanation that a believer may hold to, no matter how much the young earth creationists rant and rave against evolution. If God started life out of the inanimate, and then let evolution run its course, then there

are no theological reasons why people cannot believe this, and be brothers and sisters in Christ, right alongside young earth creationists.

MacArthur makes the claim that "God created plants, not merely seeds. He made them mature..." Again, he is reading too much into the text that is not there. From the time that God said, "Let there be..." to the time the plants appear, is open to interpretation. No time frame is specified between the creative words, and the final created product...we simply don't know!

On page 99, he discusses genetics and the fact that all organisms will reproduce after their kind. Then he says that nothing in Scripture "suggests that any living species evolved from another species." Nothing prohibits it either, and with God in the creative process guiding evolution, there is no problem here for the theistic evolutionist.

He goes on to state "In fact, it is fair to say that this crucial phrase, "according to its kind," clearly refutes the very heart of the evolutionary idea." It does no such thing! With no conclusive proof of the amount of time it took from the time God spoke until the organism appeared, it is impossible to condemn evolution.

Think of creation this way...the events of creation are grouped together into days (even MacArthur admits this). When God said, "Let the earth bring forth grass...", God is giving a brief account of the creation of plants, but it is probably not a complete description. For instance, could the events of plant creation be further broken down, i.e. "let there be grass," and "let there be ferns" and let there be seaweed, and let there be a Venus flytrap." Instead, God gives us a generic explanation. There is no need to list everything that God created...Genesis would be larger than the entire Bible if He did!

On page 100, he quotes Henry Morris, and argues that the order of creation is different than the fossil record. Put simply, flowering plants require insects to pollinate them. However, insects were created according to Morris on Day Six, and plants on Day Three. The thought is that this three-day gap would not hurt the plants, as they could live until the insects were created.

However, plants are latecomers to the fossil record, arriving after the creation of many marine animals. This actually presents no problems for old earth belief. Remember, the events of creation are broken into days, each distinctly describing a particular creation event. Plants are in fact the earliest fossils we have. Single-celled algae were the first on the scene in the fossil record. New plants continue to show up in the fossil record, right up to recent times. This means that Day Three represents a specific creation, and not a specific time period. The days of creation overlap one another, without contradicting Scripture, and without the Scriptures contradicting the fossil record. There is still a beginning and ending of each creative event...it's just that the ending of each creative day meets with the final creation of Adam.

This may sound strange to some of you, but this interpretation can be supported while still believing in a literal translation, and an inerrant Bible. I realize not all old earth creationists hold to a literal translation of the Genesis account...but it is possible.

In the quote on page 100, Henry Morris says "The idea of theistic evolution is counter to the biblical record of creation in practically every passage." Nothing could be further from the truth.

MacArthur goes on to claim, "There is nothing here that permits the belief that any new species arose through any evolutionary process. There is nothing here that demands a long era instead of a twenty-four-hour day." There is nothing that prevents such a

belief either! When one looks at science, and sees the great age of the universe and our world, the only possible conclusion is that the earth is old. To twist science, as young earth theorists do, is completely unnecessary and an embarrassment to the church.

## **Chapter 5 Lights in the Heavens**

MacArthur gives no significant arguments in the introductory pages of this paragraph. He continues his theme of "instant creation." As we have seen in previous passages, there is no indication of the length of time between God's proclamations and the final product...we just don't know how long God took to create. Surely some events were instant, others were millions of years. This does not mean that God is weak...think of it this way, can you create a functioning world by yourself in 20 billion years? No you can't. Only God can, and did it. Time is of no matter to God. If He took 6 days or 60 billion years, it doesn't matter.

### **Separation (Page 108)**

MacArthur gives several pages of general information about the sun and moon, none of which has anything to do with their age. On the last page, he gives a very brief discussion on the formation of the moon, which is meant to show that scientists don't have a valid naturalistic model for the formation of the moon. This is known as the "God of the Gaps" Fallacy. If science cannot explain it, then God must have done it. For more on this particular argument concerning the moon, see this review of Battle for the Beginning (<http://www.dctech.com/physics/features/1002.php>).

### **Regulation (Page 112)**

The author gives a discussion on the earth's seasons, none of which bears on the age of the earth. He then proceeds into a small discussion about intelligent design, which also has no bearing upon age.

### **Illumination (Page 115)**

At the beginning of this section, MacArthur says the "and it was so" phrase used by God was a technical term meaning it was made permanent. He claims this is against the idea of progressive creationism. This is the same argument from fiat...God said it, and it was so, but we have no way of knowing how much time elapsed between the declaration by God and the finished product. MacArthur cannot authoritatively say it was instantaneous, just like I cannot authoritatively say it was 1 billion years. No time interval is implied within these statements.

From here, he goes into a discussion of light and its necessity for life. At the end of the first paragraph, he again uses a God of the Gaps fallacy, saying scientists don't fully understand how the sun produces energy. He makes the statement, "It is yet another

example of how scientific theories are in constant flux--in contrast to Scripture, which never changes.

There are two issues here. First, changing scientific theories is a wonderful concept. As new things are discovered, theories are altered or even discarded in favor of new ones. Science, by its very nature, must change. This is a good thing, but MacArthur makes it sound bad...he contrasts it with Scripture, which according to him, never changes...which brings up the second issue.

I agree with MacArthur...Scripture does not change. However, how we interpret the Scriptures is changeable. As new evidences come along in the form of scientific facts, we compare these scientific truths with the Bible. In some cases, we must change our interpretation of the Scriptures. We are not changing the Scriptures, but we are changing our understanding of them. Young earth creationists such as MacArthur think we change Scripture...we don't. We merely interpret it differently.

Next, he continues his assault, proclaiming fiat (instant) creation of the sun, moon, and stars. Consider it this way. The note in a journal from a corporation that produces sprockets contains the following statement;

The boss said, "Let there be a sprocket with 20 teeth," and it was so.

Does that mean the sprocket immediately appeared...no it doesn't. The financial managers analyzed the proposal, calculated its cost, sent it back to the boss for approval, who then sent it to the engineers, who drew up the plans, and they sent it to the fabricators, who built the molds, and then they gave the molds to the production line, and they poured the metal in the molds and made the sprockets. This process may take months in some corporations. In looking at the original statement by the leader of the corporation, it gives no indication of how much time passed between his proclamation and the final product.

On page 118, he brings up the problem of how light from billions of light years away reached earth in only 6,000 years. He claims that "God accelerated the light so that it would reach the earth in an instant." Thus he avoids the argument of "apparent age" for the stars...or so it would seem. By this method, all of the stars in the universe would give the appearance of having been 6,000 years old. By this model, the stars were all created in one 24-hour period, and then their light was accelerated so as to reach earth the same day. The light that is now hitting earth from these stars should all give evidence of stars that are all 6,000 years old. When we look at stars, however, they give varying evidences for their ages...we have stars in varying degrees of development, from new stars to black holes, a whole range of variance is present. Naturally, the young earth believer would say God made stars of all types and ages. This however, denies MacArthur's theory that all things were created mature. Man, and all the animals, trees, insects, etc., were created fully mature...but stars were not.

Overall, nothing in this chapter presents any threat to old earth belief. It is interesting that he uses quotes from C. S. Lewis to support his position and close out this chapter. C. S. Lewis was an old earth creationist...and a theistic evolutionist at that! For more see [Notable Christians Open to an Old Earth Interpretation \(http://www.reasons.org/resources/apologetics/notable\\_leaders/index.shtml\)](http://www.reasons.org/resources/apologetics/notable_leaders/index.shtml).

## Chapter 6

### An Abundance of Living Creatures

This chapter deals with the creation events of Day Five. He starts out with a claim that plants and animals are distinct, i.e. plants are not referred to in Scriptures as "living creatures." He does not develop this line of thought far, however, it is easy to see what he is trying to accomplish. Dr. Hugh Ross, of Reasons to Believe, argues that plants died before the Fall of Man. This argument is in response to young earth creationist claims that there was no death before the fall. MacArthur makes a passing statement concerning plants and animals, and moves on.

This is but a minor point, one which old earth creationists can adopt, or live without. There is ample evidence of death prior to the Fall of Man. I'll discuss this further in Chapter 7.

One caveat up front...this chapter and the next are full of "God of the Gaps" arguments. If something is so wonderful, so complex, then it must have been designed by a Creator. While I agree with this concept, it is a poor argument for convincing non-believers. It is arguing out of ignorance, instead of arguing out of solid known facts. To read an explanation of this type of argument, see [http://wiki.cotch.net/index.php/God\\_of\\_the\\_Gaps#Explanation](http://wiki.cotch.net/index.php/God_of_the_Gaps#Explanation). (The basic root of this type of argument is emotions...to be awed by the created item. We should argue from facts, not emotions.)

#### Creation (Page 125)

Again, he ceaselessly preaches fiat, or instant creation. This poses no problems for the old earth believer. Progressive Creationists, such as Dr. Hugh Ross, accept instant creation. And, as previously stated, there is no implication of how much time passes between the declaration and the finished product, thus it causes no problems for Theistic Evolutionists.

In this section, however, he carries his fiat argument even further. He says, "He spoke them into existence at once, all on the same day--in fact, all at the same moment." If all of the creation events for Day Five occurred instantaneously, then what did God do with the other 23 hours, 59 minutes, and 59 seconds of Day Five? It just doesn't sound right.

At the bottom of page 126, he makes the statement, "In comparison to the biblical account it is fanciful, preposterous, and genetically impossible." He is referring here to evolution. In this chapter and the next, he uses several arguments about genetics, claiming that no new genetic material has ever been produced, no new species are developing, the only genetic mutations are bad ones, etc. As he presents the information, it is apparent that genetic arguments must be the downfall of evolution. However, a quick check of websites shows answers to many of the problems that creationists give against evolution. While it's true that evolution and genetics still have unanswered questions, they are far from being overthrown in the scientific community. To argue against it, using a "God of the Gaps" mentality is improper. To see some Genetics claims and their answers, see <http://www.talkorigins.org/indexcc/list.html#CB100>.

Pages 127 through 132 is all God of the Gaps material. As such, evolutionists will not be impressed with these arguments. It is reminiscent of the young earth ministry Creation Moments (<http://www.creationmoments.com>), which produces a daily email and radio spot. I would venture to say that over 90 percent of their daily spots are God of the Gaps arguments. I have refrained thus far from rebutting them, as I view them as harmless to old earth belief. They are however, not helping as much as they think with this type of argument. They would do better if they included more facts, and less emotion.

### **Procreation (Page 132)**

Don't get me wrong...I agree with MacArthur that all these wondrous creatures glorify God, and could only have come from Him. They do all testify to an Intelligent Designer. However, they can do this, whether they were instantly created, or whether they evolved under God's direction.

Here, he tackles the re-creation of animals "after their kind." In the middle of the page, he says "Scripture is expressly teaching that God completed His creation of all the sea creatures and birds before He gave the order to reproduce. If evolution were true, it would mean that animal reproduction must have already been going on for billions of years before so many species of sea creatures and birds could emerge." Funny, the fossil record shows millions of years of reproducing animals!

Let's break this down further. God gave an order to reproduce. Would the animals have done so if God had not said it? Yes. They were genetically programmed this way. Second, remember the statement that they were all produced at the same moment on Day Five? What about the other 23+ hours that day? We must admit that the Genesis account is brief...there was probably a whole lot more said by God than just these words. We don't have a complete record of the creation of all species...such a list would be too long. Thus, while it is interesting that God verbally told His creation to reproduce, that's all it is...interesting. No conclusions or arguments for or against evolution can be drawn from it.

He then starts the "kind" discussion at the bottom of page 133, but he doesn't develop it. By this, each animal is to reproduce according to its kind. In other words, dogs produce other dogs, and not something new. This is crucial to an understanding of the young earth theory of putting all the animals on the ark, as it is argued that Noah took a pair of each "kind," and not one of each species. To do so, however, introduces evolutionary change to animals after the flood at such a pace as to make even evolutionists turn over in their graves. We will come back to this if MacArthur addresses this issue later. For more, see [www.answersincreation.org/youngevolution.htm](http://www.answersincreation.org/youngevolution.htm).

On page 134, he makes the claim "Science has never observed, and never will observe, the evolution of one species into a new life form." Evolutionists disagree...here is one web page that differs (<http://www.talkorigins.org/indexcc/CB/CB910.html>). It also depends on what is meant by "species." Undoubtedly, no matter how much a species changes, it will never be recognized by young earth creationists, as they will probably find some way to discredit it, whether or not it is truly a new species.

Later on the same page, he starts his Genetics arguments, all of which fall into the category of "God of the Gaps" arguments. If you want to learn more, be sure to go back

to the Genetics link at the top of this page. This type of argument continues for the rest of the chapter. Again, let me state that this has absolutely no impact upon old earth Progressive Creationists or Gap Theorists, as they believe in fiat creation just the same as young earth creationists do. It does not present problems for Theistic Evolutionists either. There are answers to the challenges against evolution.

## **Chapter 7 Beasts and Creeping Things**

MacArthur divides the sixth day of creation into two chapters. This chapter deals with the creation of the animal kingdom, and the next with mankind.

There is not much of interest in the introduction that we have not already dealt with.

### **Cattle (Page 143)**

Again, there is much God of the Gaps arguments in this section. At the bottom of page 143, he describes rumination. The website dctech.com has a small discussion about this passage (<http://www.dctech.com/physics/features/1002.php>). On page 145, MacArthur says "The cow seems to have been especially designed to serve the needs of humanity." I agree...but then again, so can theistic evolutionists. While the cow discussion is interesting, it presents no arguments against evolution or old ages.

In his discussion of sheep, he says they have a lack of instinct and self defense, and are best protected by a shepherd. All animals are best protected by a human protector...when they are in a zoo! He mentions nothing of wild sheep, goats, or others that survive just fine without man. He is referring to domesticated sheep. Yes, there are wild sheep, and then there are domesticated sheep. Sheep have instinct...however, when you domesticate an animal, it loses its fear of humans, and becomes dependent on them.

He closes out this section with a discussion on camels, another "God of the Gaps" discussion.

### **Creeping Things (Page 147)**

He anchors this section with a discussion of the bombardier beetle. This beetle has long been the most used "God of the Gaps" type argument by young earth creationists. Here are the evolutionists' answers to the claims.

The Bombardier Beetle is too complex to have evolved  
<http://www.talkorigins.org/indexcc/CB/CB310.html>

The Bombardier Beetle would explode if the ingredients mixed in the Beetle  
[http://www.talkorigins.org/indexcc/CB/CB310\\_1.html](http://www.talkorigins.org/indexcc/CB/CB310_1.html)

General Bombardier Beetle Article  
<http://www.talkorigins.org/faqs/bombardier.html>

While I agree with MacArthur that the beetle is the product of intelligent design, an emotional God of the Gaps appeal will not suffice to convince people.

The next two and a half pages are devoted to the wonders of the ant. While informing, it does nothing to argue for young earth creationism. He then jumps to reptiles, and continues his emotional appeal for the beauty and complexity of God's creation. I agree that it is wonderful, but an argument from "gaps" is useless when you are trying to convince an evolutionist.

### **Beasts of the Earth (Page 151)**

Now we come to the creation of the beasts of the earth. Included here are the dinosaurs. He specifically mentions Job 40, the description of Leviathan. For more on this, see Job 40-41 ([www.answersincreation.org/job4041a.htm](http://www.answersincreation.org/job4041a.htm)). For more on dinosaurs and proof of their existence long before mankind came along, see our dinosaur section ([www.answersincreation.org/dino.htm](http://www.answersincreation.org/dino.htm)).

He then returns to his standard God of the Gaps arguments, with a discussion of the elephant. At the end of the chapter, he goes into the Death before Sin issue. He claims that "Scripture teaches that there was no such thing as death prior to Adam's fall." For a complete discussion of this fallacy, see Death Before the Fall ([www.answersincreation.org/death.htm](http://www.answersincreation.org/death.htm)). However, if you want instant proof, here it is. Have you ever heard of the Mayfly? It is the shortest-lived insect in the world. The mayfly (*Dolania americana*) female typically lives less than five minutes. During this time they find a mate, reproduce, lay their eggs, and die....all in five minutes (for more, see this article (<http://ufbir.ifas.ufl.edu/chap37.pdf>)).

If God created the mayfly on Day Six of Creation, and it did not die until after Adam's sin, then the Mayfly must have been created at 11:57 P.M., Adam and Eve by 11:59 P.M., and then Adam sinned by 12:02 AM on the seventh day. This is what you must accept if you believe the young earth theory of no death before sin.

In reality, it is true that Adam's sin brought death. However, we are not talking physical death, but spiritual death. Proof of this can be seen in the aforementioned Death Before the Fall article.

He finishes up the chapter with a discussion claiming there were no carnivores before the fall. See the It's All About Teeth article for a refutation of this belief ([www.answersincreation.org/teeth.htm](http://www.answersincreation.org/teeth.htm)).

## **Chapter 8 Man in God's Image**

I was expecting to provide a large rebuttal for this chapter on the creation of mankind, but as it turns out, MacArthur gives little evidence. The introduction speaks of man being in God's image, and forming man out of the dust of the ground. This presents no problems from an old earth perspective. The only thing of interest that I saw was the creation of Eve, using a rib from Adam. While this has no impact upon Progressive Creationists, it may have implications against theistic evolution. How can you maintain a literal reading of this account from an evolutionist view? Eve clearly being made from a

rib of Adam prevents her from being a descendant of a previous, soul-less hominid. I'll leave this one for the theistic evolutionist to answer.

In the next paragraph on page 159, he hammers home the idea that it was all done in a single day. This is no problem, as a single "day" can represent long ages.

The rest of the introduction deals with the concept of the Trinity, which has no impact upon the age of creation.

### **To Bear the Creator's Image (Page 162)**

This section is largely a God of the Gaps section. MacArthur does a good job of describing the phrase "the image of God" as it relates to man's creation, and he does so without any implications about old earth belief. There are only two passing references to evolution. On page 162, he says of man, "It is not a state into which lower creatures can evolve. This is not something that can be gained by a random mutation in the genetic code." For the theistic evolutionist, it is something that can be gained by a planned, directed mutation, with God providing the mutations in the entire evolutionary process.

In the discussion, he mentions our ethical, moral, and spiritual attributes, but I did not see him mentioning one thing...the fact that we have a free will, to choose our own path.

In the last paragraph, he says "Yet the doctrine of evolution would utterly erase this truth from the collective conscience of the human race. That is why the battle against evolutionary theory is one Christians cannot afford to abandon." The "truth" he alludes to is us being in God's image. Yes, there is a threat if one views it as a battle to be fought.

However, if one accepts theistic evolution, it is a moot point. God with evolution works just as well as God outside of evolution.

I've often said that evolution is not the enemy of the church...ignorance is. Young earth creationists are ignorant of proper biblical interpretation...they will only consider their own biased views of Scripture. Once you realize theistic evolution is a valid belief, resistance should cease.

### **To Propagate Life (Page 167)**

MacArthur starts this section with an often used dirty tactic employed too frequently by young earth creationists...blame everything on evolution. He says "The evolutionary lie has brought even this under attack, as society now seeks to justify and legitimize fornication, easy divorce, homosexual relationships, and other perversions..." Evolution is a product of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century. How long have fornication, divorce, homosexuals, and other perversions been with mankind? Ever since Adam sinned. Before evolution, these evils existed. We think they are more prevalent today, but this is a product of mass media...we see it more often due to television, radio, etc. Evolution is not responsible for causing people to sin. Answers in Genesis even tried to claim that murders are the direct result of evolution (see [www.answersincreation.org/evo\\_sin.htm](http://www.answersincreation.org/evo_sin.htm)).

He spends the rest of this section talking about marriage and procreation. There are no problems presented that threaten an old earth. He does mention that after Adam was created, Adam named all the animals, prior to the creation of Eve. Remember the mayfly, with the five minute lifespan from the last chapter. Using a young earth model of no death before sin, Adam had less than five minutes to name every animal!

## To Receive Divine Blessing (Page 170)

In the last paragraph on page 170, he mentions that there would be no carnivores...all the animals were tame and vegetarian. This is a direct requirement of the young earth theory of no physical death before sin. I do believe that these conditions applied in the Garden of Eden, but outside the gates of Eden, it was a different story.

God created a special place, called the Garden of Eden, and placed man there. What was special about this place? MacArthur describes the entire world, and everything in it, as special. If this were true, what is special about Eden? Why didn't God just put Adam down anywhere on the planet...after all, it was all considered a perfect paradise. Here's why...when man sinned, he had to be kicked out of paradise. He had to know what he had, and what he had lost, through his sin. If the entire world were perfect like Eden, then where would God exile man to? Would he have kicked man onto the Moon, or Mars? There had to be a perfect Eden, and then the rest of the world.

What was the rest of the world? It was created perfectly for what it was...a self-renewing ecosystem, capable of renewal through the process of death and decay and the food chain. God had foreknowledge of man's fall, thus He created the world for the conditions after the fall of man. This scenario is a perfect explanation for why God placed Adam in the perfect Garden of Eden.

You may be saying, "But what about Romans 8:20-22?" This passage says the entire creation was affected by the fall. By the model I explain above, only the Garden is affected after the fall. Not so. Man himself is the affliction of creation. Through man's misuse of our earthly resources, through our sinful pursuits and lusts, we damage creation, turning God's perfectly functioning ecosystem into one that is trash-laden with human intervention. Don't get me wrong...I'm not a tree-hugger...but I realize that mankind, afflicted with sin, is the main danger to our planet. If man were not here, the ecosystem would go on existing in perfect balance for millennia.

Moving on, MacArthur on page 171 mentions one of my favorite verses. Here is Genesis 2:17:

*<sup>17</sup>but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die."*

This verse is critical to a proper understanding of the Fall of Man. Young earth creationists say that physical and spiritual death occurred when Adam ate the fruit. I say that only spiritual death occurred. What does the Bible say? The above verse gives the answer.

Young earth creationists always say that a straight-forward reading of the days of creation in Genesis will always be understood as 24-hour days. This is the "grandmother argument." Would an 80-year-old grandmother reading Genesis One conclude anything other than 24-hour days? Probably not...she is not examining all the evidence. Let's take this straight-forward reading rule, and apply it to Genesis 2:17. According to this verse, it says that "*in the day that you eat from it you will surely die.*" Would our 80-year-old grandmother assume that Adam should have died the same day he ate the fruit? Yes! There is no other way to conclude otherwise...Adam would have to physically die the same day he ate the fruit. However, he did not! Adam did not die physically on the day

he ate it. What did change this day? Adam died spiritually...he sinned, and thus separated himself from the love of God through that act of sin. To live in sin is spiritual death. This is the type of death God was saying would happen in Genesis 2:17. Adam lived on for hundreds of years.

You cannot say God meant physical death would eventually come on the human race as a result of this fall. Genesis 2:17 clearly says Adam would have died that day if that were the case. There's no way around this conclusion.

There is one other logical point concerning this topic. Can physical death separate us from God? The answer from Romans 8:39 is no;

*<sup>39</sup>nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

Adam's physical death would not separate him from God...only spiritual death would. If physical death could not separate Adam from God, then the only logical conclusion is that only spiritual death occurred at the moment of the Fall.

### **To Rule Creation (Page 171)**

It is interesting to note that according to MacArthur, there were no weeds in the world (page 172). However, there are no useless weeds. God created each plant with a purpose. A "weed" is an unwanted plant in your garden. Sure, we could all do without poison ivy, but nonetheless it was created by God, and as such its design gives praise to the creator. With that said, maybe there were no "weeds" in the Garden of Eden...but then again, this was a perfect place, separate from the conditions outside of the Garden.

Not much else in the rest of the chapter is important for old earth creationists. He goes on with the death theme, which has been adequately discussed already.

## **Chapter 9 The Rest of Creation**

The opening statements about God's seventh day of rest are generic and have no bearing on the age of the creation.

### **He Finished His Work (Page 180)**

In the second paragraph, he states concerning the seventh day of rest, "This argues powerfully against the evolutionary doctrine, which suggests that creation is a work still in process." The Christian who believes in Theistic Evolution would agree that the process of evolution carries on...but by God entering his rest, He is no longer guiding the evolutionary process.

He goes on trying to prove that the first law of thermodynamics supports the fact that creation is finished. I have no problems with this as it has nothing to do with the age of the earth. He then goes on to the second law of thermodynamics, and as is typical with young earth creationists, he misuses this law. This already appears on another website's

review of the book, so I will not discuss here. To read this brief review, paying attention to the comments about page 181, see <http://www.dctech.com/physics/features/1002.php>.

After the second Law of Thermodynamics discussion, he slips into a God of the Gaps mentality, describing God's creation with emotional words, appealing to them without ever mentioning facts to back up these emotions.

In the middle of 183, he says, "The amazing excellence revealed in the creative work of God is forfeited to a very large degree if we abandon the days of creation in favor of an ages-long evolutionary process." Having friends who are Christians and evolutionists, I can say that they are just as amazed at God's creation as MacArthur is...so to claim that belief in evolution forfeits the wonders of God's creation is patently false and cannot be proven.

He then tries to claim that long ages negate the symbolism of the seven day week that God gave us. Given that modern society, both Christians and non-Christians, are bound by calendars which proclaim the seven day week, there isn't one ounce of merit in this empty claim...just look at your calendar!

MacArthur is probably alluding to the fact that you cannot compare six long creation days, which were millions of years, with one literal 24-hour rest day...the two are like comparing apples and oranges. Of course, this assumes that the seventh day is a literal 24-hour day, which it is not. More on that later.

### **He Rested (Page 184)**

He goes into a laundry-list of items related to the Sabbath, which have no bearing on the age of the earth. On page 187 he comes to the issue of the length of the seventh day, and says that since Scripture is clear that the days of creation are 24 hours (as interpreted by young earth creationists), then the seventh day was also a normal 24-hour day. Let's consider the words of Hebrews 4:4-6;

*<sup>4</sup> For He has thus said somewhere concerning the seventh day, "And God rested on the seventh day from all His works"; <sup>5</sup> And again in this passage, "They shall not enter My rest." <sup>6</sup> Since therefore it remains for some to enter it, and those who formerly had good news preached to them failed to enter because of disobedience,*

This passage clearly talks about God's seventh day of rest, and the author says that some will still enter into this rest. How could God's seventh day of rest have lasted only 24 hours, when Christians are entering into it thousands of years later?

MacArthur makes the claim that God's rest that he commenced on day seven could have continued, had it not been for Adam's sin. But when Adam sinned, did God exit His rest and start creating again? No, he did not, so there is no connection between Adam's sin and the length of God's rest.

### **He Blessed the Day (Page 188)**

He claims that "...if creation was spread over eons of time, there was no seventh day. Thus any view of this passage other than a literal six-day creation totally confounds the

blessing of the seventh day." This argument falls apart when you consider the seventh day itself is not a 24-hour day.

He continues by saying, "On the other hand, if we believe what the Bible says, then every seventh day is a memorial and a reminder that God created the entire universe in one week." I believe the Bible, and I accept the seven day pattern that God gave us, without compromising the literal, inerrant Scriptures. I take exception to this implication that I do not believe the Bible. I interpret the Bible differently from MacArthur, but we both believe it!

He then goes into a discussion of the origin of evil, which has no age implications. In the end, he comes back to his false statement which he has phrased many times in the book in several different ways..."The glory of God's original creative work is diminished by any theory that stretches creation out over long ages of time..." Rest assured, we old earth believers are just as amazed at God's creation as young earth creationists are, and I would dare say, even more so, since we understand and utilize science properly without twisting it to fit our theories as young earth creationists do.

## **Chapter 10 Paradise Lost**

MacArthur begins with a discussion of morality. He errs in the middle of page 196 by saying about evolution, "Instead of teaching that man began at the bottom of the moral ladder and slowly rose higher by social and psychological evolution, Genesis 3 teaches us the opposite." Evolution is void of morals...there is no "moral ladder" of evolution, saying we started with no morals and became more moral as we developed. I may be missing something here...maybe some evolutionists claim they are evolving morally, but I'm not aware of this claim.

He then goes on to claim that sin is all around us, evil is pervasive in the world. I agree...it has been ever since the Fall, as MacArthur points out at the top of page 197. The effects of Adam's sin, passed on to us, has a definite affect upon our world. I agree with this...until he ties it to evolution.

He says "This clearly argues against evolution." He goes on to explain that death and decay are not part of God's original creation. I believe they were. Thus again, we are interpreting the same scriptures differently. No problems here for old earth believers...we know we interpret the Scriptures differently, and are glad to do so.

MacArthur presents the information about the Fall of Man in the following sections. None of this has anything to do with the age of the earth. Christians accept their sinful nature, and what happened during the Fall...both young and old earth creationists alike.

### **The Solicitor (Page 199)**

I agree with his discussion of Satan. The only minor point is that he says Satan's fall must have occurred between the finish of God's creative work, at the end of Day Six, and the events of Genesis Three. Remember our friend, the short-lived mayfly? Now, if you are a young earth believer, Satan's fall must also be thrown into these very busy first five minutes of Adam's life!

### **The Strategy (Page 204)**

As Doug Craigen points out in his review of this book<sup>1</sup>, MacArthur inserts something into the Scriptures that is not there. At the bottom of page 204, he says "The serpent had deliberately confronted Eve when she was isolated from Adam and most vulnerable. He aimed his initial attack at her alone ("the weaker vessel"--I Peter 3:7)." There is nothing in Genesis 3, nor in I Peter 3 that would suggest that Eve was alone when she was tempted. Genesis 3:6 says "...*She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it.*" The text itself testifies that she is not alone when she partook of the fruit. For a fuller explanation, see the link below.<sup>1</sup>

There is not much else of interest for the age of the earth in this section.

### **The Seduction (Page 208)**

No issues for this section.

### **The Sin (Page 209)**

He says "Adam appears, from where we are not told, and discovering that his wife had already disobeyed the Lord's command, he partook with her." We had previously learned that Adam was already with Eve.

### **The Shame (Page 210)**

Nothing of significance for the age of the earth debate.

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.dctech.com/physics/features/1002.php>

## **Epilogue**

There are several issues MacArthur brings up in this final section. On page 216, he speaks of God cursing the ground, so that it will bring up thorns and thistles. Yes, this is true, however, if you will remember, MacArthur said there were no weeds, and all the earth was God's perfect creation. So where did these weeds come from? Did God do another creative act, and create weeds, after the six days of creation were over? No, it is clear that Scripture does not teach this. The weeds were already there, outside the Garden of Eden. Remember, the Garden was a separate place from the rest of the earth, signifying that it was different from the world around it. Adam would now be expelled from the Garden, and he would experience this firsthand.

Also in this curse, MacArthur adds "harmful germs and viruses, disease, disaster, and decay of all kinds." He goes on, adding floods, earthquakes, droughts, famines, and other natural disasters. Read Genesis 3:14-19 again...none of these features are mentioned in God's curse...MacArthur adds to Scripture. The curse was three-fold...the serpent

crawling, Eve's child-bearing pain increased, and Adam toiling with the soil. There is no mention of earthquakes or any other natural disaster.

He quickly glosses over Eve's child-bearing curse. This is typical of young earth proponents...they know this provides a problem for their beliefs, so they choose to ignore it. God said "I will greatly multiply your pain in childbirth." It says Eve's pain level in childbirth will increase. The pain of childbirth was already part of Eve before she sinned. Young earth creationists claim there was no pain prior to sin. They answer this verse by saying "Greatly multiply" can mean going from no pain to much pain. However, let's examine this mathematically. If the pain is "0", and you multiply this pain by 10, what do you get? Zero times ten equals zero. Is God that bad of a mathematician? I don't think so! God knew he could not multiply her pain if there was no pain to begin with, so Eve must have been able to experience pain prior to her sin.

### **The Assurance of Humanity's Survival (Page 217)**

MacArthur admits in the first part of this section that the words of God in Genesis 2:17 did indicate that they would die physically. He goes on to say they did die spiritually, but "their lives were graciously prolonged." He also claims that God's Word to Adam (in Genesis 2:17) was "perfectly fulfilled." How could this be if God backtracked on his proclamation of death in Genesis 2:17? This is a completely unworkable solution that MacArthur paints himself into.

### **The Guarantee of Satan's Destruction (Page 218)**

No issues for the age of the earth.

### **The First Promise of a Redeemer (Page 218)**

MacArthur uses this section mainly to tell of mankind's redemption through God's wonderful plan of salvation. It is a fitting end to the book, as it wraps it up emotionally for the young earth believer. Young earth believers, who take MacArthur at his word, without verifying the science or reasoning, are totally convinced the earth is young, and are ready to defend it. This is the purpose of this book, to shore up the defenses of young earth creationism against the advances of old earth creationism.

Even though MacArthur includes a challenge for the reader to examine his position in Christ, the book itself will not convince a non-believing evolutionist. There are way too many emotional "God of the Gaps" appeals for that to work. This book is for those who are already young earth believers, to keep them from slipping into old earth creationism. Since you can be a Christian, and an old earth believer, either with or without evolution, this book is completely unnecessary.