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In the Beginning

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IN THE BEGINNING

**We can't know the mind of God, but we
can know the essentials.**

“**I**n the beginning God created the heavens and the earth” (Gen. 1:1, NKJV).

The Book of Genesis, along with many other of the 66 books of the Bible, brings into sharp focus one of the most important realities of religion—the origin of life—creation!

Genesis 1 is a battlefield for old-time controversies between Bible-believing Christians on the one hand, and scientists, skeptics, atheists, and various shades of rationalists on the other. Many of the latter, who seek in different ways and in different degrees to explain the universe, some with, some without God, argue that matter is eternal. Speaking contrary to this point, the *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary* says, “If this

be true, and if matter has the power to evolve, first into the simplest forms of life and then into the more complex, until man is reached, God is indeed unnecessary.”¹ But if God—a personal God—is unnecessary in creation or the origin of life, who is to take His place: an idol made of wood or stone or a man-made theory, such as evolution?

The biblical view is represented by the following comment by Ellen White: “God spoke, and His words created His works in the natural world. God’s creation is but a reservoir of means made ready for Him

**The late D. Arthur Delafield was executive secretary of the Ellen G. White Estate in Silver Spring, Maryland. He died in 1992.*

to employ instantly to do His pleasure. . . . Infinite love—how great it is! God made the world to enlarge heaven. He desires a larger family of created intelligences.”² This planet and humankind upon it are a necessity in order to reveal God’s creation plan, but “the work of creation cannot be explained by science. What science can explain the mystery of life?”³

Theories of Origin

Theories of origin of the Earth and of life on this planet are never held with any degree of satisfaction except by the Christian who finds security in Genesis 1 and the idea that life must come from a Life-giver, a heavenly Creator-God.

The Creator was not indebted to pre-existing matter in His marvelous work of creation. The

words of Genesis, “God said,” introduce the divine command responsible for the historic events of the six days of Creation (1: 3, 6, 9, 11, 14, 20, 24). Each command came charged with a creative energy that transformed a planet “without form, and void” (1:2, KJV) into a paradise. “He spoke, . . . and it stood fast” (Ps. 33:9, NKJV). Truly, “the worlds were framed by the word of God” (Heb. 11:3, NKJV). At times God did use pre-existing matter (e.g., Adam and the beasts were formed of the earth, and Eve was made from Adam’s rib [Gen. 2:7, 19, 22]).

Literal 24-Hour Days

The first day and all the other days of Creation week were literal 24-hour periods, not symbols of long time periods (Gen. 1:5, 8, 13, 19, 23, 31; 2:1-3). Morning



equals day; evening equals night. The two periods together equal a 24-hour day.

“The tenacity with which so many commentators cling to the idea that the days of creation were long periods of time, even thousands of years, largely finds its explanation in the fact that they attempt to make the inspired creation record agree with the theory of evolution. Geologists and biologists have taught men to believe that this earth’s early history covers millions of years, in which the geological formations were slowly taking shape and living species were evolving. Throughout its sacred pages the Bible contradicts this evolution theory. The belief in a divine and instantaneous creation as the result of words spoken by God stands in complete opposition to the theory held by the majority of scientists and many theologians today that the world and all upon it came into being through a slow process of evolution lasting for untold ages.”⁴

In his book, *A Brief History of Time*, the noted British physicist, Stephen Hawking, raises the question as to whether the worlds of science and religion are really at odds or are compatible over this question. He projects the thought that with new discoveries in physics, there is now reason to believe that religious tradition can be supported by science.

But science has come up short with its evaluation of life’s origins and development. Unaided by divine revelation, it must still theorize and guess, and its views are continually changing.

“Since the monumental ‘Conference on Macro-Evolution’ was held in Chicago in 1980, there has been a total re-evaluation of life’s origins and development. In regard to the Darwinian theory of evolution, the world-famous paleontologist of the American Museum of Natural History, Dr. Niles Eldridge, unequivocally declared, ‘The pattern that we were told to find for the last one hundred and twenty years does not exist. There is now overwhelmingly strong evidence, both statistical and paleontological, that life could not have been started on Earth by a series of random chemical reactions. Today’s best mathematical estimates state that there simply was not enough time for random reactions to get life going as fast as the fossil record shows that it did. The reactions were either directed by some, as of yet unknown, physical force or a metaphysical guide, or life arrived here from elsewhere. But the “elsewhere” answer merely pushes the start of life into an even more unlikely time constraint.”⁵

“Random reactions,” indeed! “Directed by some . . . metaphysical guide.” Why not say “God,” as in the Book of Genesis?

God Himself made the earth, and God still lives.

He was more than the active party in creation. He and the angels were obviously eyewitnesses—the only eyewitnesses to Creation who live today. His testimony is needed, and it is recorded by Moses in Genesis.

Stephen Hawking's book makes reference to God repeatedly. From the outset of the volume, he appears as one who sincerely is attempting a "wedding," though he is not yet a real creationist. He wishes to unite the bride and groom; science and religion. He attempts in his own way to reconcile the discoveries in the fields of physics and mathematics, etc., with the age-long pronouncements of religion in the field of creation. His attempts at reconciliation, while noble and scholarly, leave much to be desired. Only by accepting a literal reading of Genesis 1 can the quest for truth about time and matter, the world and space, humans and their creation be positively understood.

The Creator as Eyewitness

God Himself made the Earth, and God still lives. He was more than the active party in creation. He and the angels were obviously eyewitnesses—the only eyewitnesses to Creation who live today. His testimony is needed, and it is recorded by Moses in Genesis. A subject as

important as time and creation requires that a good God-Creator reveal the facts to the human race. Thus Moses tells us what happened when the earth came forth *ex nihilo*. Moses' record has no ifs or ands about it. In the Book of Genesis, there are no such words as "seemed" or "implies" or "take for granted" or "it appears." The word of God about creation is certain and sure. He speaks as One having authority.

The Week and the Sabbath

In the beginning, there was a seven-day week. There, as we have said, we have time encapsuled into 24-hour days and into a week of 168 hours. The Hebrew word translated "day" in Genesis 1 is *yom*. When *yom* is accompanied by a definite number, it always means a literal, 24-hour day (e.g., Gen. 7:11; Ex. 16:1)—another indication that the Creation account speaks of literal, 24-hour days.

So we have the seventh-day Sabbath recurring every seventh day to remind humans in every generation that God created the Earth and all

The healing of a wound, the restoring of health to the sick, requires the life-giving restorative and creative energy of God. In Jesus Christ, creation and salvation and healing meet and embrace each other. The event of Creation resulted in a majestic and beautiful Earth spread abroad with the creatures of God's loving thought and care.

that is in it.

In the first angel's message, the Creator-God calls upon the whole world—standing on the brink of eternity—to worship “Him who made heaven and earth” (Rev. 14:7, NKJV; see also verses 9-12). The Lord God invites all to observe the downtrodden seventh-day Sabbath, engraved by the finger of God in the heart and on tables of stone of His Ten Commandments. This is God's call to the last generation of humanity. Will we respond?

“God established the seventh-day Sabbath so that we would have a weekly reminder that we are creatures of His making. The Sabbath was a gift of grace, speaking not of what we did, but of what God has done. He especially blessed this day and sanctified it so that we would never forget that, besides work, life should include communion with the Creator, rest, and celebration of God's marvelous creative works (Gen. 2:2, 3). To emphasize its importance, the Creator placed the

injunction to remember this sacred memorial of His creative power in the center of the moral law as an everlasting sign and symbol of Creation (Ex. 20:8-11; 31:13-17; Eze. 20:20).”⁶

Illuminated by the Spirit of God

To the secular mind, the Bible story of Creation and redemption through Jesus Christ is foolishness (see 1 Corinthians 1:17-21; 2:10-16). To the mind illuminated by the Spirit of God, it is received humbly as the one certain truth on the matter.

When He was upon Earth, Jesus Christ expressed His belief in the Creation story as recorded by Moses. He certainly knew what He was talking about because He Himself was the Creator-God, active in creation. “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. And the Word became flesh and

dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth” (John 1:1-3, 14, NKJV).

Sustaining Power of God

That same creative energy exercised by Jesus Christ in the creation of this world and people—males and females—is daily exercised in sustaining life on this world—all life. There is no inherent power in the Earth or in the universe by which all things remain alive, by which movement and existence is possible. God the Creator preserves and sustains them. He “covers the heavens with clouds, . . . prepares rain for the earth, . . . [and] makes grass to grow on the mountains. He gives to the beast its food, and to the young ravens that cry” (Ps. 147:8, 9, NKJV). He upholds all things by His power, and “in Him all things consist” (Col. 1:17, NKJV).

What would we do without God? We’re dependent upon Him for the function of every cell of our bodies. Every breath, every heartbeat, every blink of the eye speaks of the care of a loving Creator. “In Him we live and move and have our being” (Acts 17:28, NKJV).

But that’s not all. Creative power, as exercised in creation, is also active in the miracle of spiritual rebirth. “God’s creative power is involved not only in creation, but in redemption and restoration. God re-creates

hearts (Isa. 44:21-28; Ps. 51:10). ‘We are His workmanship,’ Paul said, ‘created in Christ Jesus for good works’ (Eph. 2:10). ‘If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation’ (2 Cor. 5:17). God, who hurled the many galaxies across the cosmos, uses that same power to re-create the most degraded sinner into His own image.

“This redeeming, restoring power is not limited to changing human lives. The same power that originally created the heavens and the earth will, after the final judgment, re-create them—make of them a new and magnificent creation, a new heavens and a new earth (Isa. 65:17-19; Rev. 21, 22).”⁷

The healing of a wound, the restoring of health to the sick, requires the life-giving restorative and creative energy of God. In Jesus Christ, creation and salvation and healing meet and embrace each other. The event of Creation resulted in a majestic and beautiful Earth spread abroad with the creatures of God’s loving thought and care.

Years ago, a Quaker missionary entertained a wise old Indian chief in his home in New England. “Let me tell you about the best rule by which to live,” said the Quaker.

“You must let me decide that question,” said the wise old chief, “but tell me, what is that rule?”

The missionary said, “We call it the golden rule: ‘Therefore all things

Evolution teaches progression, but the facts of life itself, whether the flora, the fauna, or human life, inform us pathetically that there is no progression; we only live and die. The transition of one form into another form, of one species into another species, that is, the missing link, is still the great conundrum of evolutionary scientists.

whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them.”

The Native American rose to his feet and walked back and forth for at least three or four minutes, then sat down and exclaimed, “It is impossible! There is no man who can fulfill this rule unless,” and then he paused and said, “unless the Great Spirit should create in him a clean and a new heart. Then it might be possible—only then.”

The Indian chief had penetrated the truth of creation. God made the world; He made humans upon the world; He is able to re-create fallen humanity into His own image.

“Both the contrasts and the parallels between Creation and salvation are significant. . . . At Creation Christ commanded, and it was instantly accomplished. Rather than vast periods of metamorphosis, His powerful word was responsible for Creation. In six days He created all. Yet why did it take even six days? Could not He have spoken just once

and brought everything into existence in a moment?

“Perhaps He took delight in the unfolding of our planet in those six days. Or perhaps this ‘extended’ time has more to do with the value He placed on each created thing or with His desire to reveal the seven-day week as a model for the cycle of activity and rest He intended for man.

“But Christ does not just speak salvation into existence. The process of saving people stretches over millenniums. It involves the old and new covenants, Christ’s 33 1/2 years on earth and His nearly 2,000 years of subsequent heavenly intercession. Here is a vast span of time—according to Scripture chronology, about 6,000 years since Creation—and people still have not been returned to the garden of Eden.”⁸

Antediluvian Giants

Speaking of persons who lived just before the Flood but long after Creation week, Moses wrote, “There

were giants on the earth in those days, and also afterward, when the sons of God came in to the daughters of men and they bore children to them. Those were the mighty men who were of old, men of renown” (Gen. 6:4, NKJV).

And long after the Flood, the Earth, in places, could boast people of great stature, the sons of Anak, for example, who dwelt in the south of Canaan. The two spies who returned from their 40-day searching out of the land testified: “There we saw the giants (the descendants of Anak came from the giants); and we were like grasshoppers in our own sight, and so we were in their sight” (Num. 13:33, NKJV). Real Goliaths!

Adam and Eve were of giant size, nearly twice as large as the average human today. Weight measures logarithmically as size increases. Accordingly, they must have been 800 pounds or more. Eve was shorter than Adam, beautifully formed and loveliest of all God’s creation.

Degeneration, rather than progression, is the testimony of the Earth’s creatures. The life of a human being itself teaches us that. There is a time in our existence when nature is building us up all the time. Then there is the stage when decline, loss of energy, the inroads of disease, and old age take place. Why is there this transition from a building-up process to a degenerative process? Certainly this never would

have existed in Adam and Eve had they not sinned, because with sin came degeneration and death. This points up the vital truth that the fall of humankind as recorded in Scripture is to be blamed for the degenerative processes in the living creation.

On the other hand, evolution teaches progression, but the facts of life itself, whether the flora, the fauna, or human life, inform us pathetically that there is no progression; we only live and die. The transition of one form into another form, of one species into another species, that is, the missing link, is still the great conundrum of evolutionary scientists. Where is the convincing paleontological evidence that the species has changed? The names arbitrarily attached to skeletons, or parts of skeletons, project links in a man-made theory but no coercive evidence.

Discover a Complete Theory?

Steven Hawking is considered by many the most brilliant theoretical physicist since Einstein, and his book confronts the question of the nature of time in the universe. Was there a beginning of time? Will there be an end? Is the universe infinite, or does it have boundaries? When confronting these overwhelming issues, like many scientists, he must theorize because he does not have the infallible Book to guide him.

Hawking asks the question, “Why

does the universe go to all the bother of existing? Is the unified theory so compelling that it brings about its own existence? Or does it need a creator, and, if so, does he have any other effect on the universe? And who created him?"⁹

He concludes his book by saying, "If we do discover a complete theory, it should in time be understandable in broad principle by everyone, not just a few scientists. Then we shall all, philosophers, scientists and just ordinary people, be able to take part in the discussion of the question of why it is that we and the universe exist. If we find the answer to that, it would be the ultimate triumph of human reason—for then we would know the mind of God."¹⁰

But we do know the mind of God and the reason why the universe exists. "This is what the Lord says—he who created the heavens, he is God; he who fashioned and made the earth, he founded it; he did not create it to be empty, but formed it to be inhabited—he says: 'I am the Lord, and there is no other'" (Isa. 45:18, NIV).

Again, John the apostle informs us: "You are worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power; for You created all things, and by Your will they exist and were cre-

ated" (Rev. 4:11, NKJV).

Do we know the mind of God? Not in everything, but in all essential things! God delights in sharing His life and truth with rational creatures. It brought great pleasure to Him to make Adam and Eve in the beginning. It brought enormous pleasure to Him to make Adam and Eve procreators with Himself—to be able to reproduce and have children of their own. Indeed, from their posterity came the Savior of the world, the Son of God, who came into the world to teach humanity what God is like, to show something of His love and wisdom and power, and to re-enact by His miracles the creative work of God. □

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- ⁴ Ellen G. White Comments, *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 1, p. 211.
- ⁵ Gerald L. Schroeder, *Genesis and the Big Bang* (New York: Bantam Books, 1992), p. 25.
- ⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 74.
- ⁷ *Seventh-day Adventists Believe. . .*, p. 76.
- ⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 76, 77.
- ⁹ Steven Hawking, *A Brief History of Time* (New York: Bantam, 1998), p. 174.
- ¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 175.



MORE TO THE POINT

“If we are to listen to many expositors of no mean authority, we must believe that what seems so clearly defined in Genesis—as if very great pains had been taken that there should be no possibility of mistake—is not the meaning of the text at all. The account is divided into periods that we may make just as long or as short as convenience requires. . . . A person who is not a Hebrew scholar can only stand aside and admire the marvelous flexibility of a language which admits of such diverse interpretations” (Thomas Huxley).

“It would be much easier to discuss how life didn’t originate than how it did” (J. D. Bernal).

“The theory of the evolution of man is based on suppositions and inferences. As an example, the first chapter of Charles Darwin’s book, *The Descent of Man*, contains within a few pages 20 expressions of uncertainty such as ‘seemed,’ ‘it appears,’ ‘take for granted,’ ‘may,’ and ‘implies.’ The concluding chapter of 14 pages

has more than 50 such expressions. Within 30 years after publication the book was changed in 87 places” (Elizabeth A. Schroeter).

“[There is an] important role, today, of science-based evangelism. By providing non-believers with accurate and intriguing information about the created order, evangelism efforts gain credibility. They help the nonbeliever navigate to the next level in the search for truth, asking profound worldview questions about the Creator, the meaning of life, and the resurrection, just as Paul did” (Krista Bontrager).

“The opening statement in the Bible is significant both for what it affirms and for what it denies. The words ‘In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth’ clearly declare that the God of Creation is pre-existent, sovereign, personal, beneficent, and that He provides purpose and meaning to all reality” (Arthur J. Ferch).