

The Biblical View of Scientific Knowledge

And its' Bearing on How to Interpret Genesis 1 and Noah's Flood Account

"The heavens declare the glory of God and the firmament proclaims His handiwork." (Psalm 19:1)

Although the word "science" wasn't coined until 1833 when William Whewell urged the "natural philosophers" in his day to find a more effective term to describe their investigations into nature, the Bible has broached the reality of nature from its very beginning. It isn't that Scripture *defines* nature or science. But the Bible does convey a positive view of them both by its' writers' lauding of nature with their positive observations of it in every aspect (Psalm 104:5-26), and also by the Apostle Paul's insistence that the testimony of *nature* is NOT to be suppressed (Romans 1:18-20). Now with respect to interpreting the first chapter of Genesis in terms of whether its' *six creation days* represent "24-hour days," or instead long and indefinite periods of time, Christian piety most often insists that the Bible (for the reason of it being "God's Word—which it is!) must have the final authority. Yet the central question this paper addresses is the following: In terms of the relationship between what we observe in nature on the one hand, and the creational texts which address (allegedly) *how* it was made, on the other, which of these two witnesses does the Bible *itself* affirm as the final authority?

To reformulate my above statement, the Bible simply nowhere contradicts its undeviating pattern of regarding the testimony of nature¹ as trustworthy. At the same time, St. Paul cannot be less ambivalent in his decrual of those who would suppress or ignore evidence from nature which contradicts their pet position concerning the question of creation. It is clear then that Scripture deems the witness of nature to have binding authority with respect to interpreting the first chapters of Genesis. It is of course true that scientists (as fallen human beings) are prone to potential error (which is why they endeavor to submit themselves to the scientific method) in their research of nature. Yet it is also true that interpreters of Genesis 1 are for the same reason also prone to potential error in arriving at their position.² In either case, the correct way to redress error is to revisit the data rather than decry it.

In other articles of mine I make the case **from the text** of Gen. 1:1-2:4a as to why the day-age view of the creation is exegetically³ more faithful to the text of Genesis than is the 24-hour day view.⁴ On the same grounds I also clarify why the Big Bang is far more faithful to the text of Gen. 1:1 than is the young-earth interpretation.⁵ On the same grounds I further make the case that the texts concerning Noah's flood clarify that, even though the deluge indeed happened, it was nonetheless **not** global in the way we understand the term today.⁶ To give but one example, the commonly used biblical phrase "*the whole world*," was in every case used in what it noted *within the very text* to be a limited sense.⁷ For these reasons then, **I hold to the day-age view that creation is ancient and that Noah's flood was local.**

People often say that scientific evidence has **nothing to say** to these concerns because God can do anything by either decreeing His word to be true on the basis of His own innate authority, or creating

¹ Although the Bible calls people to belief in the spiritual world above nature (2 Kings 6:15f.), it NEVER commands readers to reject the witness of **nature** as a test of one's faith in God.

² Martin Luther, for example, stated that this chapter is "*difficult to interpret*," Jaroslav Pelikan, ed. Luther's Works: Genesis, V, (Concordia, 1958), p. 3.

³ "Exegesis" (to take out from) is the careful study of the original text in Hebrew in terms of its vocabulary, grammar, and context.

⁴ "The Biblical Demand to Take Another Look: Ten 'Compelling' Exegetical Reasons the Creation Days of Genesis are Non-24-Hour" ** and its one-page version, "15 Clues in the Text of Genesis 1 Indicating that Creation is Ancient." Both of these can, together with all of my essays, be found at my website: www.christianityontheoffense.com.

⁵ See my paper, "How Genesis 1:1 Easily Accommodates the Big Bang," and "Biblical Answers to the 'Christian' Opposition to the Big Bang." Ibid.

⁶ See my paper, "The Biblical Extent of Noah's Flood Revisited." Op.cit. (4).

⁷ E.g. When "*all the earth came to Egypt*" at the time of a famine" (Gen. 41:57), it meant only peoples impacted by the famine (Gen. 42:5-6).

a 6,000 year-old world with only an appearance of age. Yet it is **only** correct to say God can do anything that is consistent with His holy and truth-laden nature and not conceptually-impossible (a square circle). For making a cosmos with only an *appearance* of age while demanding that we regard nature as a truthful pointer to His existence, is to draw even us into deception; a ploy that is utterly inconsistent with His nature (Num. 23:19)! The very notion of harmonizing these two aspects is a conceptual impossibility.

The *Old-cosmos interpretation* by contrast in *actuality* harmonizes with the entire array of scientific facts. That data, I repeat, demonstrates *scientifically* that the cosmos both had an absolute beginning out of nothing 13.7 billion years ago⁸ in a manner consistent with Gen. 1:1, and has also been expanding ever since⁹ (Isaiah 40:22b plus ten other Bible verses).¹⁰ In addition, the interpretation of Noah's flood that I embrace fully harmonizes with *geological* evidence since it assumes that numerous local floods occurred separately all over the world and across eons of time.¹¹ Young-earth creationists reply that the presence of fossils on the highest mountains all over the world¹² actually proves Noah's flood was a singular global one. If only it were that simple! In fact the fossil record renders this assertion absolutely impossible. To give but one example, it is the aspect of the *multiplicity* of the layers of sedimentation, each of which (if its' remains are to be preserved) must be dried in rock hardened **prior to** the next deposition on top of it. For this reason, the proposition that **Noah's flood** was a single global event lasting less than a year **cannot possibly account for the actual fossil record** which reveals in many places across the world multitudes of separate layers that each bear fully-preserved fossils.¹³ The "global-flood" view of Noah's flood simply cannot accommodate this reality due to the fact that it allows for no periods of time for the specimens to harden between each succeeding layer. Yet in view of the fact that the Hebrew text of Moses' flood¹⁴ fully allows for a local deluge, it can be fully reconciled with a standard geological history of the world that consists of multiple floods over eons of time.

How much better it is then to submit God's Word to the scrutiny of the facts of nature (instead of vice-versa) and thereby *show* that its declarations, in *actuality*, harmonize with the actual world of nature it purports to describe. It is this very procedure which alone fulfills the criteria that rationality requires in order for Scripture to qualify itself as truth statement. And I repeat, the Bible suggests **no other way** of doing so. For this reason, it isn't demeaning for Scripture to demonstrate its truthfulness by submitting to scrutiny (John 3:12; 14:11). Advocates of falsehood on the other hand cannot endure such testing. Yet in the final analysis, Scripture's declarations harmonize with the natural order to which they refer. For it really is the case that "*the heavens declare the glory of God,*" just as Psalm 19:1 states!

Although it may appear that the Bible is being subordinated to science in this paper science, I am instead treating it as the Word of God in the complete expectation that the truth will win in its favor.

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⁸ See my paper, "Was the Big Bang the Big Beginning?" Op.cit. (4).

⁹ "The Biblical Demand..." Op.cit. (4).

¹⁰ Ibid, p. 7.

¹¹ David Montgomery. *The Rocks Don't Lie*. (Norton, 2012), pp. 129, 135-141.

¹² This includes Mt. Everest (<http://mathisencorollary.blogspot.com/2012/03/crinoids-on-mount-everest.html>). A plausible means to account for such high altitude fossils is the process of plate tectonics in which the clash of continents causes land forms to buckle upwards. Note both Gen. 1:9-10 and Ps. 104:5-9.

¹³ "The Biblical Extent of Noah's Flood," Op.cit. (4).

¹⁴ It is entirely reasonable to expect that the original language in which any document is composed will have the greatest authority. Anyone lacking knowledge in this language can nevertheless consult an inter-linear Hebrew-English Old Testament on line. For example, you may consult: https://www.scripture4all.org/OnlineInterlinear/Hebrew_Index.htm