

THE PENTATEUCH I: GENESIS

WEEK 2

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July 10, 2015

OUTLINE

A TENSION BETWEEN GENESIS AND SCIENCE

Points of Tension

A Second Appraisal

DIFFICULTIES FOR EVOLUTION

Whence Life? Whence Mind?

Evolutionary Argument Against Naturalism

EXEGESIS OF GENESIS 1-2

Some Interpretive Options

A Closer Look at the Text

What we do and don't know

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PUZZLES FOR THE CREATION ACCOUNT

1. Length of Time
 - 1.1 Genesis suggests that the universe went from nothing to the existence of humans in one week.
 - 1.2 Modern cosmology suggests that this span of time was approximately 13.8 billion years.
2. Sequence of Events
 - 2.1 Genesis suggests the sun is created on the fourth day.
 - 2.2 Plants (third day) require photosynthesis; the earth (first day?) was formed by the gravitational activity of the sun.
3. Origin of Species
 - 3.1 The third through sixth days suggest unique creation of broad biological categories.
 - 3.2 According to current evolutionary theory, all life descends from single cell organisms.

PUZZLES FOR BIBLICAL GENEALOGIES

“New Earth” Chronology depends on Genesis genealogies:

1. Start with the following passages:

- ▶ Adam to Noah (Genesis 5)
- ▶ Noah to Abraham (Genesis 11:10-26)
- ▶ Time in Egypt (Genesis 15:13)
- ▶ Time in the Desert (Joshua 14:7,10)
- ▶ Exodus to Solomon’s Temple (1 Kings 6:1)

2. We can correlate Israel’s kings with external historical reference points.

3. Running backwards puts Adam’s creation at 4000 BC.

This is problematic for both the origin of humans ($\sim 2 \times 10^5$ years) and the origin of the universe ($\sim 1.4 \times 10^{10}$ years)

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SUPERFICIAL CONFLICT

It is tempting to feel cornered by these tensions. Here are some historical examples to slow us down.

- ▶ The heliocentrism of Copernicus, Galileo was considered at odds with verses implying the sun moved (Psalm 19:4-6) and the earth is fixed (Psalm 93:1). *Any geocentrists here?*
- ▶ Philo (1st C AD Jewish philosopher) and Augustine (4th-5th C AD) both believed that God created everything instantaneously; the days represent an ordering of nature
- ▶ Justin Martyr and Irenaeus believed that days represented long epochs citing 2 Peter 3:8, Psalm 90:4.

(See John Lennox's excellent *Seven Days That Divide the World*.)

DEEP CONCORD

Contrary to expectation, some evidence confirms Genesis:

BEFORE Modern Cosmologists for nearly a century believed that the universe existed forever.

NOW The Big Bang model fits the Biblical portrait of creation *ex nihilo*

BEFORE Evolutionary theory permits that humans could have developed in numerous places, from several genetic sources.

NOW Genetic studies indicate that there is one man and one woman from whom all current humans descend: “Y-Chromosomal Adam” and “Mitochondrial Eve”

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ABIOTGENESIS

Abiogenesis is the transition from non-living organic matter to some kind of functioning, self-sustaining organism.

There is no decisive evidence in favor of abiogenesis but there is an abundance of speculative hypotheses. Most versions involve some kind of roughly cumulative activity with some dramatic natural catalyst; i.e. proto-evolution.

DIFFICULTIES FOR ABIOGENESIS

- ▶ Any experiment used to demonstrate the viability of abiogenesis is conducted in a controlled environment with experimental design, intent and care; i.e. the researcher functions in this arrangement as a designer.
- ▶ DNA/RNA are essential to genetic mutation; there is no comparable information-theoretic molecule to explain the adaptation or mutation of these essential molecules.
- ▶ The formation of complex molecules like DNA/RNA requires considerable energy. This kind of energy would be hazardous to its "life" without further organismal protection.

Due to conceptual hurdles and the improbability of these outcomes within the limited geological timeline, some scientists deign to the preposterous thesis of extraterrestrial seeding.

APSYCHOGENESIS

Apsychogenesis is the transition from from unconscious to conscious life.

The current conceptual resources of experimental science cannot describe (access?) essential aspects of consciousness. Some historically important thought experiments:

- ▶ What Mary Knows
- ▶ What Its Like to Be a Bat
- ▶ Inverted “Qualia”

APSYCHOGENESIS

What has to be explained is not just the lacing of organic life with a tincture of qualia but the coming into existence of subjective individual points of view—a type of existence logically distinct from anything describable by the physical sciences alone. If evolutionary theory is a purely physical theory, then it might in principle provide the framework for a physical explanation of the appearance of behaviorally complex animal organisms with central nervous systems. But subjective consciousness, if it is not reducible to something physical, would not be a part of this story; it would be left completely unexplained by physical evolution—even if the physical evolution of such organisms is in fact a causally necessary and sufficient condition for consciousness. (Nagel, 44-5)

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PHILOSOPHICAL OPTIONS

Evolution as a bare scientific theory is compatible with numerous philosophical stand points:

- ▶ Panpsychism: Each part of the universe contains material and mental components; evolution has furnished highly complex manifestations of each in mankind
- ▶ Theism: there is an eternal, personal Creator; God has engineered evolution to deliver other personal beings.
- ▶ Naturalism: the natural world is all there is; by a magnificent accident, nature itself gave birth to all material, biological diversity.

A BIRD'S EYE OF PLANTINGA'S ARGUMENT

Claim: Assuming Naturalism+Evolution, we have an (undercutting) defeater for *all* of our beliefs. (Cf. Red Paper)

This argument has the structure of a *reductio ad absurdum*: if you want to show that something is false, assume it's true and show that it has absurd consequences.

We must reject either Naturalism or Evolution. No self-respecting naturalist will reject evolution. Hence, naturalism must go. How do we get there?

THE DEFEATER

1. Assume that Naturalism and Evolution are true.
 2. Under Evolution, survival drives natural selection.
 3. Under Naturalism, natural selection is *exclusively* responsible for the formation of our cognitive faculties (belief-forming mechanisms).
 4. Therefore, all cognitive faculties were selected for survival.
 5. But, cognitive faculties selected for survival are not guaranteed to yield true beliefs.
- ∴ All of our beliefs have an undercutting defeater; viz. their origin is in mechanisms shaped exclusively for survival.

THE AFTERMATH

Global skepticism is clearly unacceptable. Hence, the *reductio* argument yields the desired result: naturalism is false.

This argument leaves open the truth of evolution. We may chose to reject evolution anyway.

If we hold on to evolution, we may accept either theistic or panpsychic evolution. The latter seems automatically unacceptable.

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NEW EARTH

Thesis: Genesis 1-2:3 provides a chronological sequence of seven twenty-four hour periods.

Thoughts for consideration:

- ▶ This interpretation accepts a huge burden of proof as to why the Bible is so at odds with contemporary science.
- ▶ The word 'day' in Hebrew does not require twenty-four hour periods (e.g. Gen 2:4).
- ▶ The end of the passage on the seventh day passage does not contain the repeated idiom, "And there was evening, and there was morning."

THEISTIC EVOLUTION

Thesis: Contemporary scientific theory (evolution and physical cosmology) provides best description we have of a *scientific* cosmogeny.

Thoughts for consideration:

- ▶ Theistic Evolution takes the biblical text the least seriously, though the extent is a matter of degree
- ▶ There are significant hermeneutical hurdles for this view to clear. Here are some options (what's wrong with each?):
 - ▶ Openly deny Genesis. It's not scientific and that doesn't matter.
 - ▶ Speculate that there is a gap between Gen 1:1, 2 (next slide)
 - ▶ Genesis provides a very generic sequence of the history of earth (gaseous and volatile; life starts with aquatics, ends with humans)
- ▶ This view starts with science and forces Genesis into it

GAP BETWEEN GEN 1:1, 2

Thesis: There is a multi-billion year gap between "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth" (v.1) and the rest. The days are literal twenty-four hour days.

Thoughts for consideration:

- ▶ The earth "became" formless and void: the earth suffered a geophysical catastrophe during the judgment of Satan
- ▶ Unfortunately, there is not a shred of textual evidence to introduce a span of time between those verses.
- ▶ Case of *Obscurum Per Obscurius*: this level of detail on Satan is probably more exegetically subtle than Genesis 1.

DAY-AGE

Thesis: The word 'day' functions as a long geological age.

Thoughts for consideration:

- ▶ On the positive end, this does not badly stretch the text
 - ▶ Gen 2:4-This is the account of the heavens and the earth when they were created, in the day that the Lord God made earth and heaven.
 - ▶ Psalm 90:4-For a thousand years in Your sight Are like yesterday when it passes by, Or as a watch in the night. (This psalm is Mosaic!)
- ▶ This interpretation is less stable if we insist on the sequence of Genesis.

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CHRONOLOGY

There are *textual* reasons to cast doubt on treating Genesis 1 as a straightforward chronology of ordinary days:

- ▶ The definite article ‘the’ does not appear before the expression ‘*nth* day,’ contrary to some English translations. This means that it could be translated as ‘an *nth* day’ suggesting the days are “dischronologized” (Waltke et al., 62)
- ▶ God appoints the sun and moon to mark day and night *on the fourth day*. What was used for day one through three?
- ▶ The sequence of days exhibits a striking pattern (more below)

CHRONOLOGY

Textual Reasons for Avoiding Genealogies in Chronology:

- ▶ There are exactly ten generations from Adam to Noah and another ten from Noah to Terah. This kind of pattern cannot be serendipitous.
- ▶ The author stops at 7 from Seth and 7 from Cain to remark on the godliness of Enoch and the wickedness of Lamech.
- ▶ Biblical examples abound of gappy genealogies (Matt 1, Luke 3; 1 Chronicles 6, Ezra 7)
- ▶ We would be faced with the following embarrassments:
 - ▶ Adam, Enoch and Methusaleh would be contemporaries
 - ▶ Noah and Abraham would be contemporaries
 - ▶ Shem (Noah's son) would have survived Abraham by thirty-five years

CREATE VS MAKE

There are different expressions used to describe God's creative acts.

1. God created the heavens and the earth.
2. God made the expanse . . .
3. The earth brought forth vegetation . . . (!)
4. God made the two great lights . . .
5. God created the great sea monsters . . . and every winged bird after its kind
6. God made the beasts of the earth . . . God created man in His own image

(This is not as obviously illuminating, but the difference is worth note.)

FORMLESS AND VOID

The six days exhibit a remarkable structure that subverts the original chaos of Gen 1:2.

Formless		Void	
Day	Form	Day	Substance
1	Light	4	Sun, Moon Stars
2	Seas Sky	5	Fish Birds
3	Ground (and plants!)	6	Beasts Mankind
Day Seven: God Rests			

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WHAT SHOULD WE TAKE FROM GENESIS

1. God created absolutely everything: the sun, moon, sky, earth, animals.
 - ▶ Compare Ancient Near-Eastern (ANE) cosmogeny: many involve sexualized encounters between facets of nature
 - ▶ Waltke points out that the stars play a very tiny role in the text (“the stars also”). ANE religion highly valued stars.
2. Genesis 1 is written in a fashion so that it’s understandable for any people, culture or time.
 - ▶ What good would it be *to us* (let alone an illiterate shepherd!) if Genesis 1 were written in mathematical or bio-chemical language?
 - ▶ Lennox points out that if God had used the language of a “completed” science, no one would understand it

FINAL REFLECTIONS ON SCIENCE AND GENESIS

1. Don't buy into aspects of evolution that don't have credible evidence. (Wait for point 2!)
 - ▶ Unlike the naturalist, our world view does not require an answer to these questions
 - ▶ Not uncommon for scientific research programs that extrapolate far beyond of the actual evidence.
 - ▶ We should expect the results of science to agree with Scripture in the long run without ignoring noetic effects of sin. (Eph 4:18)
2. Don't get sucked into a God-of-the-gaps view either. I'm not claiming that when current science lacks a credible answer that means there was a miracle. Many of these could have straightforward natural explanations.
3. It's probably a mistake to expect a one-one correspondence between what we read in Genesis and what we find in science.

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