

Battle for the Beginning – Chapter 3
Light on Day One
By Greg Neyman
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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). 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.¹ 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).

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 we 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.

¹ 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.