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## Response to Davis Young and Hugh Ross

KURT P. WISE, Ph.D.

Dr. Davis Young seems to follow a long tradition popularized by Galileo, formalized by the Royal Society of London, and defended by most believers in the sciences today. Young implies that the error young-earthers make is attempting to draw any scientific conclusions at all from Scripture. He justifies this position by claiming Christians have a poor track record in that regard. Consistently, Young offers a few suggestions for understanding the creation account (scientific naivety of the writers of Scripture; polemic and artistic purposes for Genesis; use of literary conventions and numerology) — each of which would unlink the Genesis account from what it seems to be saying.

Advocates of Young's position commonly suggest that the *only* function of Scripture is spiritual instruction. First, unlike the historical examples Young provides, the young-earth position is neither a fleeting position, nor is it based on a few verses of Scripture. Jews and Christians held it almost universally until the middle of the 18th century, and it is based most explicitly on 11 chapters of the Book of Genesis, and implicitly on much more.

Second, the fact humans have derived nontruths from Scripture does not in any way imply that the Scripture lacks truth. Third, the fact there is an underlying polemic purpose in Genesis and that it was composed in an artistic and beautiful way does not in any way deny the straightforward understanding of the text.

Fourth, although written by the hand of man, the Holy Spirit of truth authored Scripture. It matters not how scientifically ignorant the writers of Scripture were; they were moved by the Holy Spirit to write truth, not error. If the numbers of the text are important, even though they are a minority of the text, and if the symmetry of the text is important, even though it is neither perfect nor a majority of the text, then how much more important is the historical sequence of events related in the text, which actually does make up most of the text.

Holy Spirit-inspired historical narrative must be true history. This would suggest that Scripture intends to convey actual truth about the physical world and can be relied on as a source of that truth.

In contrast to Young, Dr. Hugh Ross believes that scientific information can be derived from Scripture. Ross follows a more recent interpretive tradition that suggests that interpreting the days of Genesis as long periods of time will bring the biblical account into accord with science. This interpretation was popular in the early history of geology, but is uncommon now.

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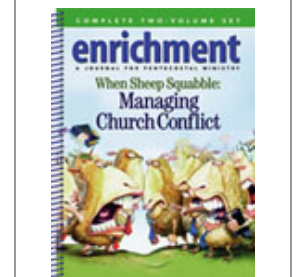
This interpretation lost popularity among scientists because as the field of geology developed, no one could maintain the correspondence between the accounts. Ross's model, for example, calls for an initially opaque atmosphere that becomes transparent after the origin of plants. He also claims that plants arose before sea creatures. Geological models, in contrast, are not consistent with such an atmosphere, and fossils of the kinds of plants mentioned on the third day of creation in no way predate the oldest fossils of sea creatures.

The claim that the days of creation are long periods of time has also fallen on disfavor among biblical scholars. Although it is true that the Hebrew word translated "day" has a wide semantic range, the meaning of the word in a particular passage is determined by context, just as in English for the same word. When the word is used in a construct relationship (such as "day of the Lord"), it can mean long periods of time. Such a construct relationship is *not* found in the creation account. The context of the word in Genesis 1 is consistent with the *definition* of the word given in that chapter (a light/dark cycle) *and* the use of the word as it describes the human work week in Exodus 20:11.

Numerous evidences indicate that the writer of Genesis 1 intended "day" to refer to the 24-hour day familiar to humans. Other biblical errors in Ross's article would include organisms reproducing "after their kind" (the Bible nowhere makes that claim), the present creation being "very good" (God made this assessment before the Fall, nowhere after the Fall), and the seventh day still ongoing (the seventh day is not equal to God's rest).

Ross also mischaracterizes the young-age creation model. Although young-age creationists do believe that organisms have changed rapidly, to my knowledge none of them believe that this happened "by natural processes alone" (as in the case of naturalistic evolution). Most of us believe that God *specialy designed* that ability — supernaturally placing it in organisms, allowing them to change rapidly. Also, although some have made the claim in the past, modern young-age creationists do not believe the second law of thermodynamics began at the Fall.

The old-earth position is not derived from Scripture. It is derived from science and used to distort the interpretation of the Bible. A proper exegesis of Scripture leads to a young-earth position.



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