

# THE ANTIQUITY OF MAN

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# INTRODUCTION

Throughout the ages, theology, philosophy and science have sought the answer to the age and origin of our universe. Biblical theology finds its answers in the omnipotent, eternal, sovereign God. Many in modern science choose another approach. Rather than trusting in the Creator God of the Bible, they choose to place their faith in random chance. Their desire to deny the reality of God has led them down a path that ultimately leads to a meaningless and purposeless universe.

The theory of evolution has captivated the sciences for almost 200 years. While this theory is filled with discrepancies, unreconciled difficulties, and logical inconsistencies, its proponents have infiltrated the upper echelon of science and have placed great peer pressure on the whole of modern culture, including theology. Numerous theologians seek to harmonize the theory of evolution with the creation account given in Scripture. Seminaries now debate over Theistic Evolution, the length of the six days of creation, and the unity and antiquity of man.

B. B. Warfield, in his classical work *Biblical and Theological Studies*, argues that the question of the antiquity of man has no theological significance. He writes, "It is to theology, as such, a matter of entire indifference how long man has existed on earth."<sup>1</sup> Later Warfield continues, "The question of the antiquity of man is accordingly a purely scientific one, in which the theologian as such has no concern."<sup>2</sup>

To Warfield's claim that the antiquity of man has no relevance to modern religious thought, I disagree. I believe that the question of man's antiquity has great relevance to the Christian, both theologically and in the area of Christian apologetics.

## RAMIFICATIONS IN THEOLOGY

Until the mid to late 1700's, the dominant view regarding the earth's history was based on a literal interpretation of the Genesis account. This was true both in religious and secular spheres. The church fathers, including Basil the Great, Augustine, Tertullian, and Calvin, have almost unanimously held to a young earth. Martin Luther was no exception. He stated, "We know from Moses that the world was not in existence before 6,000 years ago." Luther insisted that Moses wrote about Creation in normal, literal language. Luther wrote,

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<sup>1</sup> B.B. Warfield, *Biblical and Theological Studies*, Philadelphia, Presbyterian & Reformed Publishing Co., 1952, 238.

<sup>2</sup> B.B. Warfield, *Biblical and Theological Studies*, Philadelphia, Presbyterian & Reformed Publishing Co., 1952, 247

"He [Moses] calls 'a spade a spade' ... he employs the terms 'day' and 'evening' without allegory, just as we customarily do ... we assert that Moses spoke in the literal sense, not allegorically or figuratively, i.e., that the world, with all its creatures, was created within six days, as the words read. If we do not comprehend the reason for this, let us remain pupils and leave the job of teacher to the Holy Spirit."<sup>3</sup>

Luther and other reformed theologians believed that the Bible taught an early date for the creation and existence of man and the earth. They seemed to take the Bible at face-value.

However, due to the pressure placed upon the theologian from the scientific community, many theologians have abandoned all attempts to reconcile Scripture, Creationism and a young earth. In an effort to be viewed as "intellectual", many Bible-believing scholars have held tight to Scripture and Creationism, but have been willing to allow for an old earth. They seek to combine the concept that the while God created the earth, it is billions of years old, and man was created much later than the physical universe and earth. The result is that one can believe the earth to be billions of years old and still hold humans to only have existed for the last 6,000 to 50,000 years.

Since Warfield does not believe the *antiquity of man* to be an issue worth fighting for, he would see no problem with a believer holding this view as long as that believer held to the account of Creation as portrayed in Scripture.. But that is the point. This view does not mirror the history of the universe as taught in Scripture, and it leads to serious theological shortfalls.

Accepting the theory of an old earth unaccompanied by humans does great damage to the doctrine of the fall. For one to believe in an old earth without man, one would have to necessarily conclude that there were long ages of violence, death, bloodshed, and destruction before man was created and had sinned. This line of thinking puts the effects of the fall before the fall. It turns the whole redemptive Gospel upside down. No longer would the sin of Adam be the start and entrance of sin and its effects in this world. Death and destruction would have been on the earth before the creation of man, and this cannot be.

We know that after God created everything, it was good (Gen.1:31). The Westminster Confession states, "It pleased God the Father, Son and Holy Ghost, for the manifestation of the glory of His eternal power, wisdom and goodness, in the beginning, to create, or make of nothing, the world, and all things therein whether visible or invisible, in the space of six days; and all very good."<sup>4</sup>

To accept that death was present in the earth before the fall is to directly contradict Scripture. Romans 5:12 clearly teaches that all sin has entered the world through one man. Before Adam, there was no sin. In addition, consider

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<sup>3</sup> Jaroslav Pelikan, ed., *Luther's Works: Lectures on Genesis Chapters 1-5*, Vol. 1, St. Louis, Concordia Publishing House, 1958, p. 3-6.

<sup>4</sup> *The Westminster Confession of Faith*, Atlanta, Committee for Christian Education & Publications, 1990, 15.

Romans 8:18-25. In this passage we see that not only the soul of man was effected, but through Adam's sin, the entirety of the created world was effected.

Rom 8:18-25 I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us. The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed. For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God. We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what he already has? But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently.

Paul is teaching that the whole world is suffering and is in a changed or perverted state. It is groaning and waiting on the re-creation that is to come in the future. The Christian cannot separate the origin of the universe from the origin and creation of man. They belong together.

It is not the point of this paper to argue for a literal seven day creation period. However, these two concepts almost demand to be treated together. In Exodus 20, Moses teaches that the earth was created in six days and then God rested. The following command is for mankind to do the same. There is no hint of allusion or symbolism in this passage.

To separate the creation of man from the creation of the universe, in a sense, undermines the credibility and revelation of Jesus Christ. In Mark 10:6, Jesus states, "But from the beginning of creation, God made the male and female." God made man at the beginning of creation. In Luke 11:50-51, Jesus states, "Therefore this generation will be held responsible for the blood of all the prophets that has been shed since the beginning of the world, from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah, who was killed between the altar and the sanctuary..." Jesus, who we know to be the Creator of the world, states that the shedding of Abel's blood happened in the beginning of the world.

In the Epistles, Paul understands the creation of man to be at the beginning of time. He writes in Romans 1:20 that people have been able to clearly see God from the creation of the world. He does not say billions of years after creation, or from the beginning of mankind. Paul is stating that men were alive at the time of Creation.

Colossians 2:8 states, "See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ." It is my opinion that many theologians have been side-tracked by the science and philosophy of this world. There is no evidence for the separating the creation of man from the creation of the universe. And to seek to do so inflicts serious damage on the

Biblical understanding of the Creation and the Fall. The age and antiquity of man is worthy to be explored for it does have serious theological ramifications.

## RAMIFICATIONS IN CHRISTIAN APOLOGETICS

For the theory of evolution to be accepted, man must accept that the earth's age is to be calculated in the billions of years. Modern science can show forth much evidence that this earth and universe are relatively young.

Warfield feels that the antiquity of man or of the earth is of no importance to the Christian theologian. He seems content to allow for either a young or old earth. However, if a young earth can be proved, the theory of evolution has no leg to stand upon.

In a powerful book entitled, *Starlight and Time*, Dr. D. Russell Humphreys writes that a person can understand Scripture straightforwardly and couple this knowledge with astronomical observations, and still hold to a young earth.<sup>5</sup> There are dozens of scientific laws and facts which show the earth to be only about 6,000 to 10,000 years in age. As each of these proofs are expounded upon, one can hear the axe slicing through the tree of evolutionary thought.

Warfield has done much to advance Christian theory and doctrine, but he could have done more. Instead of yielding to modern scientific reasoning concerning the antiquity of man and the earth, he could have used his brilliant intellect in developing a Biblical theology for the antiquity of man accompanied by a necessary rebuttal to the theory of evolution. While Warfield holds firm regarding the Creation of the world by a sovereign God, he gives away too much ground in his desire to find harmony between "science" and the Scripture.

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<sup>5</sup> Dr. D. Russell Humphreys, *Starlight and Time*, Green Forest, Arkansas, Master Books, 1994.