

Did Moses Author Genesis?

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Expert Opinions

Some conservative evangelical scholars say things like, “As has often been pointed out, Gen. 1 is unmistakably reacting against prevailing Near Eastern cosmologies of the time [of the exodus]”. Hence, Moses is deduced to have been the author of Genesis. But is this a valid inference? Authorship and original audience *really matter* in deducing the author’s intended meaning of any passage. So this is an important issue. If experts have the author and audience wrong, they likely have inferred an incorrect meaning.

Among those scholars there are about ten theories of the author’s intended meaning of the Creation (and Making) Account (CMA), Genesis 1:1-2:4, that are asserted, believed, and promoted. Of these ten, each theory disagrees with each other theory in material ways. Logically, then, no two of them can be correct, just as two disagreeing religions cannot both be true.

Stated another way, at most one of the theories is the author’s intended meaning to his original audience. They might *all* be wrong! If we make the oversimplifying assumption that the same number of experts supports each theory, we see by simple logic that 90% or more of those scholars are wrong.

Now, the exact percentage is not the point. But distressingly, if the correct theory is currently not in vogue, an even larger percentage is wrong. In any case, it is clear that the experts cannot be trusted in this particular area, for there are Godly experts with great credentials in each camp.

So what is the layman to do? He must be like a Berean: “search the Scriptures to see if these things be true” (Acts 17:11) and think critically as he does so. He must especially identify and dispose of preconceptions, so he does not read things into the text (eisegesis) but allows the text to inform him: i.e., he must only read things out of the text (exegesis). Let’s do so in this area.

God’s Fingerprints

We can see “God’s fingerprints” on the CMA in the amazing foresight that it contains. Consider, for example, nineteen key elements in the way the CMA anticipates and refutes evolutionism, plus a twentieth important point not directly addressed in the CMA:

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| 1. In beginning, God ... | In the beginning of matter ... |
| 2. God created ... | Big bang resulted in ... |
| 3. “Clay” to start ... | Chaos to start ... |
| 4. To be molded into a habitat for humanity | Gradually to organize itself by ... |
| 5. God made, spoke, ... with ... | Chance and natural processes resulting in ... |
| 6. Purpose, intelligent design to make fit for life | Mistakes, false starts, dead ends, all pointless |
| 7. God finished ordered steps (“it was so”) | Nothing is ever finished; all is gradual |
| 8. Order: dry land and seas, then heavenly lights | Order: heavenly lights, then planet Earth |
| 9. Order: fish & birds, then animals, then man | Order: fish, then animals, then birds, then man |
| 10. God evaluated (“it is good”, “very good”) | Natural selection “evaluates”, keeps the fit |
| 11. Everything was initially fully fitted for life | First life was barely able to survive |
| 12. Perfection at the start (degradation came later) | Survival of the fittest made everything better |
| 13. No death (“very good” result: no fossils) | Death is integral, weeding out the unfit (fossils) |
| 14. Each after its kind ... | One kind mutates into other kinds ... |
| 15. Man after God’s kind (in His image) | Man is the current highest of animals |
| 16. Original (unfallen) man the point of it all | Looking forward to higher species to come |
| 17. Six-day creating and making process | Six-trillion-day random, natural processes |
| 18. All done | Still on-going |
| 19. Rest and worship on the seventh day | No rationale for a seven-day week; biological? |
| 20. Sin later brings death into the Paradise | No such thing as sin, just preferences |

Let us employ the logic of the experts as represented by the first quotation above. Adapting it, we get, “As has often been pointed out, Gen. 1 is unmistakably reacting against prevailing [Darwinian and Neo-Darwinian] cosmologies of the [nineteenth and twentieth centuries]”. Why, we could almost conclude that the CMA was written after Darwin published his book on origins!

Truth Automatically Refutes Error

The CMA also refutes Greek philosophies prominent in the times of Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, and Alexander the Great. Thus, we could wrongly conclude, based on that refutation, that it was written in ca. 400-300 B.C. And because it also refutes the “vain philosophies and imaginations” at the time of Israel’s exodus from Egypt, we could follow some experts and conclude that the CMA was written at ca. 1300 B.C. by Moses. But is this correct, critical reasoning?

No. “All Scripture is God-breathed and useful...” (2 Tim. 3:16). The CMA is a true account. It therefore automatically refutes any and all contrary “vain philosophies and imaginations” about our origins that we humans think up ourselves.

Thus, of course, it refutes the Hittites, the Egyptians, the Greeks, the Romans, the Darwinians, the Neo-Darwinians, and all future theories of our origins that are in conflict with what God said. But its refutation of any given theory does not mean it was written in the context of that theory for the purpose of refuting it. No, the CMA refutes all such imaginations because it is the truth and stands against falsehoods.

A Better Theory of Authorship?

Is there a superior theory of authorship that is corroborated by both internal and external evidence? I think so. And it has major implications about the proper interpretation of the CMA.

Hermeneutics 101: First Context, Then Content

Consider first the purpose of the Bible. It is generally agreed that it is God’s revelation of Himself via a history of His interactions with men. As a literary *genre* it is mostly narrative history (real history about real people and real places) with books of other *genre* inserted. The inserts are songs, psalms, proverbs, prophecies, letters to churches and people, etc., that are related to the real history and give it life.

Now consider the authorship of the books of the Bible, in reverse order. The recipient of the vision wrote Revelation. The actual apostles authored the letters to the New Testament churches and individual believers. Dr. Luke wrote Acts, being careful to indicate with “we” when he was an eyewitness and “they” when he was depending on a report by eyewitnesses. Matthew and John were eyewitnesses of most of what they reported in their gospels, Luke carefully reported accounts by eyewitnesses, and Mark may have gotten much of his information from eyewitness Peter.

The actual prophets wrote their books, or dictated them to scribes. Official historians for the kings and judges of Israel wrote 1&2 Samuel, Kings, & Chr., sometimes copying verbatim from prophets. The actual musicians wrote Psalms and Song of Solomon. Solomon and other proverbs makers wrote Proverbs. Most likely key characters wrote or dictated books like Job, Ester, Esra, Nehemiah, etc. And the very leader of Israel, Moses, wrote Deut.- Exodus: his historical account of those events with law interleaved.

What is the general pattern? God typically used eyewitnesses and careful contemporary historians as authors. That is a major part of what gives the Bible its life and authority. It is not myths or just moral teachings. It is real history of real people with real experiences and shortcomings, as carriers of the Message.

So Who Wrote Genesis? (Internal Evidence)

If God were true to form, who would have authored Genesis? Eyewitness and historians careful of their sources. Is there any internal evidence? Yes, there are 12 sections of Genesis: 10 end with a “*toledoth*” in the form of “These are the generations of ...” and 2 subsections start with such because each was included in the report about a brother of the key character of the subsection.

Historical Context (External Evidence)

Whole Hittite libraries have now been unearthed that contain cuneiform tablets that end with text like the *toledoths* of Genesis. Each indicates the author or owner of the tablet. The “Tablet Theory of Genesis Authorship” is that the eyewitness patriarchs indicated by the *toledoths* wrote the sections of Genesis, and that Moses compiled and edited that source material without making serious modifications. See <http://www.trueorigin.org/tablet.asp>.

So Who Wrote the CMA and to Whom?

There was only one eyewitness to the creating and making activities described in the CMA: God. Again if true to form, it would have been God who authored the CMA. And who would have been the original audi-

ence, but Adam & Eve? Does that make sense? Yes, for a few minutes after they came into existence, Adam and Eve would have been wondering how they got here and what it all meant. They might have looked around and intuitively recognized the apparent maturity of each other, of surrounding plants and animals, and of mountains and streams around them. So they might have wondered, "Why don't we remember anything?"

God would have wanted to answer their questions and pre-empt any faulty deductions. Hence, the CMA might very well have been the first Sabbath lesson! Perhaps God wrote it "with the finger of God" as He later did the Ten Commandments (Ex 31:18), or perhaps he dictated it to Adam & Eve who wrote it down as their first writing lesson. We do not know, but these are reasonable speculations based on a pattern.

Of course, God was the inspiring Author in any case, but if this theory is true, it means the CMA was written to an original audience who had no cultural baggage, no preconceptions, no experiences to get them off on a wrong track of misunderstanding, and certainly no knowledge of millions or billions of years. They only needed to know the truth of what God had just done to create them and their habitat for humanity.

The fact that the CMA refutes all of man's ideas, of all time, about origins attests to its truth and divine inspiration. Its refutation of a particular theory or myth of a particular time does not determine its authorship.

Why Do the Experts Make Such Errors?

Having been a university professor myself, I know all too well that the experts often lose sight of the forest due to being too close to the trees. They also get caught up in impressing each other, resulting in a herd or fad mentality. Sometimes common sense and perspective are lost in the process. In my academic years, I saw others do it and I found myself having done it. That is my best guess as to why it happens.

What Are Some of the Results?

Over the past 200 or so years there has been an especially vicious attack on the veracity of Scripture and our Lord, especially on the CMA and what Jesus said about the "last days". The attacks initially came from unbelievers, but liberal theologians quickly joined them. Those two groups had an agenda to discredit and dismiss the authority of the Bible. Unfortunately, they were soon unwittingly joined by conservatives with compromise re-interpretations of the CMA, on the one hand, and Jesus' words on the other.

In the case of the CMA, and in spite of the 20 contradictions listed above (and more), we now have re-interpretations such as the classical gap and day-age theories (invented in or about 1830), theistic evolution, progressive creation, an exponential day-age theory and a revised "star-life" gap theory (both invented in the 1990's), and other compromises that are at odds with the text. Recently, it seems that the re-interpretation of choice among conservative evangelical scholars is the framework hypothesis. It was imagined first by a Russian theologian in the 1920's, and was promoted by Meredith Kline in the 1960's and more recently by Bruce Waltke, both respected conservative evangelical scholars.

Isn't it amazing that it took 1900 years for Christians finally to figure out the meaning of the CMA! And poor Calvin, Luther, Ussher, ... and all but two of the Church Fathers who wrote on the subject misunderstood the CMA. (Origin and Augustine thought God created the cosmos recently but instantly.) And those who were Christians (most) among the founders of modern science were also "ignorant": Newton, Boyle, Bacon, Maxwell, Watt, etc.

But we, of course, are the enlightened generation. Now that materialists have invented and popularized a challenging atheistic concept of origins, we have seen the light. We think we can defeat their idea by incorporating it into Scripture, or at least by re-interpreting the CMA so that it does not seem to address the 20 contradictions listed above. Never mind hermeneutics, we'll invent some literary structure underneath the CMA text that supports our compromise. Let's let that literary structure override the plain sense of the text and tell us what God really had in mind. Forget the hermeneutic rule that literary structure always supports and even amplifies or focuses the plain sense. And forget the rule that, "When the plain sense makes sense, seek no other sense."

So What Is Wrong With the In-Vogue Framework Hypothesis (FH)?

I do not have space here to do a thorough refutation, but I will hit a couple of high points. For more, and a proper understanding of the literary structure and meaning of the CMA, wait for the book I am writing with two other Christian laymen with scientific degrees. In the mean time, a reasonable substitute is **Creation in Six Days: A Defense of the Traditional Understanding of Genesis One** by James B. Jordan, D.Litt.

(It is available at AmericanVision.org and Amazon.com.) I do not agree with Jordan on some points, but his is generally a good presentation and refutation of the FH. Here are two key issues.

First, the CMA is narrative history so it reports real events in real history. Indeed, more than 22% of the text consists of time words, phrases, and sentences. Obviously time is important to God in this text. Now, the CMA presents a sequence or chain of 12 Divine Actions that make up the account. One version of the FH asserts that Day 1 (“Let there be light”) and Day 4 (“Let there be lights”) are actually the same day, just described differently. But what happens if I take a chain and make a middle link the same as the first link? What do I get? I get a loop. In computer programming parlance, it is an infinite loop, for each event in the loop happens after the preceding event. Hence, although its proponents don’t notice the implication, the FH implies that God is stuck in a loop, still creating today as always.

Secondly, the discerned FH literary structure has some merit but is faulty. The FH views Genesis 1 as a parallelism. Specifically, it views days 1-3 as parallel to days 4-6:

Day 1: Light	Day 4: Lights
Day 2: Waters and sky	Day 5: Fish and birds
Day 3: Land	Day 6: Animals and man

This looks plausible at first. God fills waters and sky with fish and birds, respectively, and he fills land with animals and men. There seems to be a nice correspondence there. But lights do not fill light; they are sources of light. Worse, the lights are placed in the “sky” (really “the expanse of the heavens”) on Day 4 but the “sky” was made on Day 2, not Day 1, which corresponds to Day 4. Indeed, if Day 1 *is* Day 4, Day 2 *is* Day 5, and Day 3 *is* Day 6, then the “sky” has not yet been made when the lights need to be placed in it. Furthermore, the focus on Day 2 is “the expanse of the heavens”, where the lights are placed on Day 4. Hence, this “expanse” is outer space, not the inner atmosphere. Thus the “sky filled with birds” concept is also faulty, for the “sky” is really outer space, where the lights are placed, not air in which the birds fly. (v.20: the birds fly “in the face of the expanse of the heavens” – only the *face* is the atmosphere.)

What looked superficially to be great insight into the text simply doesn’t work out in the details. Jordan argues cogently that the actual literary structure underlying the CMA is not a parallelism, but a chiasm: Days 1, 2, 3 correspond to 7, 6, 5, respectively, and 4 is the focal point. I will not show that detail here, because it is available in his book and I am short of space.

To me, even this little bit of refutation shows the bankruptcy of the FH, no matter how many conservative evangelical scholars endorse it. Just as the older theories have been discovered to be faulty by all but their most ardent proponents, this more recent crop of ideas is also faulty. The ideas are indeed motivated by a desire to harmonize God’s Word with an atheistic, materialistic theory. Unfortunately, it is God’s Word that suffers in each of these re-interpretations.

Religion, Not Science

It is well acknowledged, even by evolutionists, that evolutionism is not just science. It is a general philosophical system meant to explain all of life materialistically, i.e. without God. Hence it is a religion with a false god and truth claims of its own, and it is certainly opposed to God in its every aspect. So, why are we working so hard to compromise with this idol?

Conclusion

Even conservative evangelical scholars cannot be trusted when it comes to the two aspects of Scripture that have been under relentless attack for the last 200 years. Compromise seems to be the name of the game. Deducing the authorship of the CMA based on its effectiveness at refuting vain philosophies is not a reliable method nor common sense.

Internal and external evidence better support the theory that God was the author of the CMA and that Adam & Eve were the original audience. This theory is the most likely and God honoring of the available theories. The CMA is truth and as such effectively refutes all men’s ideas about origins of all time, past, present, and future. And it refutes re-interpretations of it, such as the framework hypothesis.

So many people believe what they read in magazines and newspapers, and what they see on TV and in museums. Why can’t they just believe God’s Word? (John 3:12 “If I tell you of earthly things...”; Mt 11:25 “I thank you, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you hid these things from the wise...”)