

Genesis 1:1-5

If we look closely at Genesis what we find is that there are two creation stories, so we have two revelations from God, designed to do two different but complementary things. I think this is a good reason to see Genesis as something more than merely a textbook on science. It is wrong to insist that everything in the first chapter of Genesis provide detailed explanation of how God did things. That is not the purpose of the book; that is not the emphasis it wants to make. I suppose though that it is equally wrong to view it as merely teaching religious truth. It does speak about nature and physical life, and it is accurate in those areas. We have two revelations ultimately brought together in clear understanding when humanity enters the life to come, and then we will see that there is absolutely no contradiction whatsoever.

Perhaps a further observation will help us a bit in resolving the many problems that arise over the supposed conflict between Genesis and science. In fact both scientists and Biblical scholars are continually proposing theories to explain and amplify the facts they observe in the realm they are studying, whether it be nature or revelation. In both cases some of these theories prove to be true; some are partially true and partially false, needing further understanding; and others prove to be utterly and completely false. For instance, we Christians are quick to point out that scientists have never really proved the theory of evolution. It remains but a theory and there are great gaps in the attempted proof for it.

There are many areas which scientists simply cannot explain as to what happens, why it happens, or how it happens. A considerable number of scientists today feel very uneasy about the theory of evolution because it does not explain many of the facts as they are being observed in the exploration of the world around us.

On the other hand, there are also theories in the study of the revelation of God, the Bible. One of these theories concerns the second verse of Genesis 1, to which we come today. Verses 2-5 say,

The earth was without form and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep; and the Spirit of God was moving over the face of the waters.

And God said, 'Let there be light'; and there was light. And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, one day. (Genesis 1:2-5 RSV)

In reading these verses certain questions need to be asked, and, in asking these questions, various theories have been proposed. One theory that has found considerable acceptance among many Christians is that between Verses 1 and 2 there occurs a great gap of time. Therefore, this theory has been called the *gap theory* because it imagines an unexplained and unrecorded catastrophe which happened somewhere between the creation, story in Verse 1, and a re-creation which begins in Verse 2. According to this theory, God created the heavens and the earth in an unrecorded period and filled it with inhabitants. Perhaps it was even placed under the authority of Lucifer (later Satan) who, at that time was an angel of light, the highest of the angels of God. It may have been inhabited by man-like animals, a pre-Adam race, the relics of which we find as fossils in the earth today - all this is part of the theory. But then something happened to that original universe, perhaps connected with the fall of Satan.

When because of his pride, Satan fell, the whole universe including the earth fell into chaos. It then becomes the calling out of chaos into an orderly arrangement which we have recorded in Genesis 1. God is re-creating the earth, in that sense, and the rest of the chapter is a record of the six 24-hour days in which God called it out of the chaos into which it had fallen and re-created the earth.

That is the theory and it is supported by certain claims. For instance, there is the claim that the word *was*, in Verse 2, should properly be translated became: "The earth became without form and void." It is true that this is a possible translation of the Hebrew word, though it is not translated that way very frequently in the Old Testament. There is also a verse in Isaiah 45:18 which says that God did not create the earth void as it says in Genesis 1:2 that it "became," or "was." This seemingly supports the gap theory so that some have regarded it as the explanation for all the geological ages. This was an imaginative attempt to kill two birds with one stone. It attempted to explain the signs of death and violence and other marks of sin in the primitive world before the fall of man, and, at the same time, to account for the long geologic ages that scientists insist the earth records.

There is something quite attractive about the gap theory. It seems at first glance to provide a means of solving many scientific problems; its greatest advantage is that it apparently solves two knotty problems which Christians face in conversations with the scientific world. But it perhaps it goes too far and becomes a kind of cosmic rubbish dump. It's useful to have such a place, somewhere where any problems with science you can simply dump in the gap, There is plenty room there for all the geologic ages and all fossil discoveries of whatever kind they may be. The trouble is, if we take this way out then we really have no way of ever coming to any kind of reconciliation between what science discovers and what the Bible says. It all gets left in the realm of imagination and inconclusion.

For that reason, I don't warm to the gaps theory. Others may disagree, but we must remember clearly one thing: It is at best just a theory. If we insist as religious people that science has not proved evolution as a fact, and so it remains unproved theory, so too we have to recognise that ideas like the gap theory are also unproved not facts. We cannot have it both ways.

All we really know from this verse in Genesis 1:2 is that the earth began as a planet covered by an uninterrupted ocean, which was itself wrapped in darkness. With that picture science fully agrees. Revelation says that it was "formless and empty," i.e., without life. There was no land, there were no mountains, nothing to catch the eye, it was simply one great vast area of water covering the whole world, with no life in it. It was empty. That is exactly what science says. The earth began in that fashion. But the Bible then adds a bit that many scientists stubbornly refuse to acknowledge... the bible says "the Spirit of God was moving over the face of the waters." God was at work in his universe, interacting with it. The presence of God at work in that original creation is in line with the great declaration of the entire Bible, that there is purpose and meaning behind the universe. It is not merely a great machine, clanking away, catching us up as victims of forces greater than we can control; it is under the control of the wisdom and power of God. God intends an end, and he moves to accomplish it. That basic fact is the explanation for all change that has occurred in past, present, or future history, and for all events in human lives: God is moving in history...

As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be.

But we cannot detect purpose and ultimate meaning in rocks and fossils and sand and stars. That is why science, studying these things, cannot explain life by observation alone. Its field is too limited, too narrow. It doesn't involve other great and powerful factors in our makeup which are as real as for us as anything physical. Therefore science, which limits itself completely to observation of events and processes, can never discover God. God moves in mysterious ways his wonders to perform. To find him through methods of science would be like looking for love with a telescope. You are using entirely the wrong instrument.

Occasionally a scientist comes up with the statement that there is no God. People laughed in 1961 at the Russian cosmonaut, Yuri Gagarin, after circling the earth, he came back to announce that he had not found God up there. Sadly, many learned, and otherwise highly intelligent people have made similar remarks since then. Someone pointed out that if Mr. Gagarin had simply stepped outside his capsule without a space suit he would have found God immediately! That fact rather highlights the ludicrousness of his announcement. The purpose of God is revealed in Genesis 1:2-5 in the direction events take. The verses say that there is a moving toward order out of disorder, and form out of formlessness, something comes out of nothing. The Spirit of God is moving to what? To bring light out of darkness, to bring shape out of shapelessness, form out of formlessness. The first step God took, according to the records, is to create light. "Let there be light," he said, and there was light.

Light, as we know now, is essential to any sort of life. Without light there can be no life. In the creation of light, it is important for us to remember that there is no mention of where this light comes from. Well, you might say, the sun and the moon were not yet created, that was day 4! but this is not the point that the bible is making. It is not trying to give a scientific explanation of where light comes from. It ignores completely. The writer of this Scripture is after something else; a way to underline the fact that light is from God. Light is a symbol of God.

This is why the moment God makes light, he pronounces it "good." What is it that makes it good rather than evil? At this point what even is goodness? Goodness has to be that which relates in some way to God himself. God is good, and only that which is of him, or from him, can be called good. That is why God said light is good, because it is from him and is characteristic of his nature. We read in First John, "God is light and in him is no darkness found," (1 John 1:5b). John does not say, "Light is God." We do not worship the light. But the Scripture says God is light, because the characteristics which we observe in light are also true of God.

Light can be viewed in three levels. There is first physical light, which is filling this room and by which we can see. There is a beam of light originating, the scientists tell us, in the atom. When electrons, performing their incredible dance up and down between various energy levels, drop from a higher level to a lower level, and emit a beam of light. We call it a beam though no one knows what it is, but it is light. That is the physical level of light. But there is also a psychic level of meaning for the term. For instance, we speak of light as knowledge, or truth. Someone says, "Could you shine a little light on this problem?" they don't mean, "Turn on a lamp." Rather they are asking for an explanation. We say, when

someone has explained something to us, "Oh, yes, I see." We use the same term a blind man would use if suddenly his eyes were opened -- "I see." So light occurs on the level of mental or emotional reaction. Moral knowledge is light, and God intended the term to be used in this way.

There is still a third level of meaning, the spiritual level, which deals with the nature and character of God himself. As I quoted to you, John says, "God is light and in him is no darkness at all," (1 John 1:5b). That light is equated also with the very life of God. When you open John's account of the years he spent with Jesus, and read the simple eyewitness account of what he saw and heard which reflects the opinions, attitudes, and conclusions to which he came about Jesus, these amazing words, "In him was life, and the life was the light of men," (John 1:4). Jesus said of himself, "I am the light of the world. If any man follows me he shall not walk in darkness but shall have the light of life," (John 8:12).

Whatever way you take the word *light*, it is equally true at any of these levels.

This understanding will help as we come explore the creation through Lent, and seek to better see our place in it as career and co-workers, as stewards entrusted to protect creation. We must understand that truth is not to be looked at only on the physical level. All of them have a depth of meaning. To limit them to the physical is to miss the major point of revelation. Paul uses the psychic meaning of light in 2 Corinthians 4, when he says, "For it is the God who said, 'Let light shine out of darkness,' who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ," (2 Corinthians 4:6 RSV). There is both the first and second level of meaning of light, clearly brought together with reference to the first day of creation.