

The third concern (and the main point of his article) is Dr Helweg's discussion of the use of the phrase 'evening and morning' in Daniel 8:26.^{3,4} He is absolutely correct that the phrase in Hebrew employs singular nouns rather than plural, yet he fails to note that this is normal Hebrew practice for these words. In fact, of the hundreds of occurrences of these two words (evening and morning), less than 5 per cent ever occur in the plural. Quite often in fact, when the context warrants, the singulars are used as collectives and translated as plurals. This appears to be the case contextually in Daniel 8:26. The same phrase (evening and morning) occurs in Daniel 8:14, which is the antecedent reference to Daniel 8:26. In Daniel 8:14, the singular phrase 'evening and morning' may legitimately be translated as plural terms, since the phrase includes the numerical modifier 2,300! Though many commentators deny the predictive element of Daniel's prophecies, I know of none who would deny that the author's intended meaning in '2,300 evenings and mornings' was 2,300 24-hour days. (In fact, the KJV translates the phrase 'evening and morning' here as 'days'.) Thus Daniel 8:26 mentions the vision of the 'evenings and mornings' (singular collective used as plurals), which refers back to the '2,300 evenings and mornings' (singular collective used as plurals) of Daniel 8:14 understood by the Hebrews to be 2,300 24-hour days. Daniel 8:26 therefore cannot be used to argue against the meaning of a 24-hour day for 'evening and morning' in Genesis 1. Instead, its use here actually supports 24 hour days elsewhere.

In conclusion, Dr Helweg's arguments are an unconvincing reason to deny the plain meaning of a 24-hour day in Genesis 1.

REFERENCES

1. Helweg, O. J., 1995. How long an evening and morning? **Facts and Faith**, 9(3): 8-9.
2. Helweg, Ref. 1, p. 8.
3. Helweg, Ref. 1, p. 9.
4. The transliterated phrase Dr Helweg offers there is misspelled. Daniel 8:26 in the most recent **Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia** at this point reads *hā'ereb w'habbōqer* (הָעֶרֶב וְהַבֹּקֶר). Allowing for printing difficulties in regard to diacritical markings, as near as I can tell, rather than writing 'evening and morning', Dr Helweg wrote 'the swarm (of flies) and the herd (of oxen)', assuming he meant *hā'arab w'habbaqar* (The article printed *ha'arow wahabaqar*. To give them the benefit of doubt, a softened b in Hebrew is pronounced as a v, but the published ' [aleph] incorrectly transliterated the ' ['ayin], and someone forgot to double the b of the correct *w'habbōqer*).

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REPLY — OTTO J. HELWEG

I understand the concern both responders have to defend the inspiration of the Bible; it is a concern I share. I can also understand the difficulty they have of believing I accept the Bible as God's Word when our hermeneutical approaches are so different. I do appreciate the editor, Dr Snelling, placing the disagreements into perspective by saying

'... we nonetheless accept and treat one another as brethren in the Lord, our salvation not being dependent on what we believe about the days of Genesis...'

There are so many people who need to hear the Gospel, that we need to be careful not to allow minor controversies to absorb too much of our time and effort. Of course, what one person may consider minor another may consider major.

Having said this, I will address some of the responses of Dr Shackelford. First, he believes I use 'liberal hermeneutical approaches to undermine Biblical authority'. Actually, I have attempted just the opposite. My aim is to use a Biblical hermeneutical approach that enhances the authority of the Bible, even though Dr Shackelford believes it does otherwise. The basic issue is how to interpret the

various passages of the Bible. I believe that we should look to the Bible as much as possible to see how it interprets itself.

Dr Shackelford believes both the **how** and the **who** are important in the creation narratives. I maintain there is **NO how** statement in Genesis 1. I would also argue that there is no **how** in Genesis 2-4, but to deal with that would go beyond the scope of this reply.

Dr Shackelford writes that my approach 'has the distinctive hollow ring of liberalism'. Depending on how one defines the theological spectrum, I would classify myself as 'Biblical'; others have called me 'conservative-evangelical'. 'Liberalism' is a pejorative term to many and might be classified as an *ad hominem* argument.

The accusation that I have 'succumbed to the temptation of seeking to retain the facade of an authoritative science at the expense of an authoritative Bible' depends, again, on one's hermeneutical approach. As I concluded in my article, I subscribe to the 'two book' hypothesis. That is, the Bible is the book of God's Word and the universe is the book of God's works. Both of these have the same Author and do

not contradict each other. I would argue that unless Dr Shackelford believes in a flat Earth, he also uses this approach. I believe the Bible itself hints at the possibility of creation interpreting the Word in Psalm 19:1 and Romans 1:20. This position also has the support of many throughout the history of Christianity.

We clearly disagree on how Augustine would treat this matter. Dr Shackelford writes, '*Augustine would never have supported a science that was hostile to the Biblical revelation*'. However, neither would he have supported an interpretation of a Biblical passage that was opposed to the obvious facts in science. For example, in Augustine's **The Literal Meaning of Genesis**¹ (certainly, as Dr Shackelford states, before the scientific era), he wrote:

*'Now it is a disgraceful and dangerous thing for an infidel to hear a Christian, presumably giving the meaning of Holy Scripture, talking nonsense on these topics [cosmological issues]; and we should take all means to prevent such an embarrassing situation, in which people show up vast ignorance in a Christian and laugh it to scorn.'*²

Moreover, Augustine explicitly rejected interpreting yôm (*yôm*) as meaning a 24-hour day in Genesis 1, though for different reasons than given in my article.

While Augustine, like most of us, would not leap into allegorising a passage, nor would he, like most of us, accept some 'fact' of physical science that was contrary to Scripture, he would interpret Scripture in the light of scientific facts where appropriate.³ In fact, this hermeneutic did not originate with Augustine, but he quotes Tertullian⁴ and is, in turn, quoted by Thomas Aquinas in **Summa**.⁵ Augustine shows a refreshing tentativeness in his interpretation of the whole creation narrative. It seems he is not dogmatic on any issue that is not central to salvation and faith.

What Dr Shackelford calls '*the plain sense of Scripture*' I would call '*superficial sense of challenging passages that require analysis in greater depth to fully grasp their meaning*'. Following Dr Kaiser and others,⁶ we should approach God's Word as a target where the Gospel is like the bull's eye, clear and not requiring any sophisticated analysis in any language. However, as we move toward Genesis and Revelation, the sense becomes less clear and the rules of hermeneutics more important.

My sense is that Dr Shackelford still believes I take the Daniel 8:26 passage out of context. I argue that I was explicitly quoting it in context as I had to use the whole vision of Daniel in order to show the singular nouns referring to a long period of time. The fact that they are also possibly used to refer to 24-hour days in verse 14 only strengthens my argument that the phrase ('evening and morning') refers to different periods of time in different contexts. In fact, it has been suggested that Daniel had the Genesis use of 'evening and morning' in mind when he wrote this pericope.

Dr Shackelford writes that
'these "modifications" to orthodox Christian

interpretations were never given credibility until Darwinism and the Age of Reason'.

This statement does not stand the test of historical analysis. The writings of Tertullian, Augustine, Aquinas, and others clearly demonstrate otherwise. Moreover, the misinterpretations of the Bible have been occurring since the writings of Paul (cf. II Peter 3:16).

Finally, I do not understand Dr Shackelford's concluding statement,

'There seems to be something about the prideful heart of a man that seeks to force reconciliation between the Bible and science ...'

Omitting the word 'force', the work of the Christian apologists consists (to a large extent) in doing just that. If the heavens do, indeed, tell of the glory of God (Psalm 19:1), we should use this truth to reach non-Christians for Christ. If God is **both** Creator of the world **and** giver of His Word, we should work to understand how they fit together. This is the calling God has given to Dr Hugh Ross and his organisation, 'Reasons to Believe'. Even if some articles do not exactly agree with our theology, we should not label this endeavour 'Reasons **not** to Believe'. I trust we all want to defend the Faith and the Bible. Just because I might disagree with some of the methods used by the Creation Science Foundation, I would not accuse it of undermining the Faith.

It is important for young-Earth creationists (those who support the young Earth and/or the 24-hour interpretation of yôm in Genesis 1) to understand that their discomfort with old-Earth creationists and progressive creationists (sometimes called 'theistic evolutionists') is matched by a reciprocal discomfort (embarrassment) on the part of those who take a high view of God's revelation of Himself in nature.

When some Christians embrace as 'science' interpretations of nature that are contradicted by the overwhelming majority of scientific data, it is more than embarrassing. It gives the anti-Christian scientific community ammunition to ridicule our faith (as Augustine warned). This plays right into the hands of the vocal popularisers of metaphysical naturalism who marginalise all Biblical faith as intellectually untenable. While these arguments may not change our hermeneutical approach to Scripture, it is my prayer that understanding these differences may enable us to disagree in love (John 17:21—23).

Dr Fouts' response is more technical, with the exception of his opening paragraph. In it he hypothesised that the editor of **Facts and Faith** did not publish his response to my article because it disagreed with my thesis. This is not the case. It is not the policy of **Facts and Faith** to decline articles just because they disagree with their beliefs. In fact, they have published articles by young-Earth creationists as well as others. The purpose of the publication is to reach a broad audience and highly technical articles or articles they do not believe informative are usually not accepted.

The first technical point of Dr Fouts is that the Genesis 1 narrative is not poetic. He did mention the NIV which does interpret it as poetic, so there obviously are many scholars who would disagree with Dr Fouts on this account. However, I would point to Egyptian poetry of that period and give examples of similar poetic structure.⁷ The repetition of phrases is a main characteristic of Egyptian poetry and it would be logical for Moses to use this, as not only was he trained in the literature of Egypt, but the people of Israel, who had lived in Egypt for centuries, would be familiar with it. Even then, I would not classify it as pure poetry, but narrative in a poetic structure. If this is correct, we cannot read the creation narratives as mere historical accounts. They are much more significant than that.

Concerning the interpretation of **וַיְהיֶיךָ** we will have to 'agree to disagree'. Dr Fouts claims the **בַּיּוֹם** construction 'often is simply translated idiomatically as "when"'. He then listed seven verses besides Genesis 2:4 as examples. I examined all seven references in 11 English translations⁸ plus the Septuagint and **not one** translated **בַּיּוֹם** as 'when'. **All of them** translated **בַּיּוֹם** as 'in the day'. According to Brown, Driver and Briggs,⁹ when the **וַ** is followed by an infinitive it may form a periphrasis for the gerund, though in English, it is commonly rendered by a verb and conjunction. They gave no instances of the **וַ** prefixed to a noun assuming temporal significance.¹⁰ We both can find scholars to support our respective translations. I would cite Gleason Archer for one who would support my exegesis.¹¹

The third technical point concerns the 'evening-morning' phrase. While Dr Fouts agrees it is in the singular (and I apologise for the mixed up transliteration of the Hebrew in my article, which he correctly pointed out), he disagrees that it can point to a long period of time. While I agree that the singular phrase is used as a collective, I fail to see why this precludes the phrase in Genesis 1 to refer to an indefinite period. I would further argue that my thesis is strengthened precisely because the Daniel 8:26 passage does refer to Daniel 8:14 where the phrase is prefixed by 2300. That is, the phrase may refer to 24-hour days **or** a long period of 24-hour days. Finally, while not offering Augustine as a Hebrew scholar, even he interprets the evening-morning phrase in Genesis 1 as other than referring to a 24-hour period.¹²

Both responders have referred to 'the simple meaning' of Scripture. The appeal to the 'simple meaning' argument has its place. However, we also need to reflect on what the Scripture has to say about Scriptural interpretation. In this regard consider Paul's admonition to Timothy to 'Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth' (II Timothy 2:15, KJV). Paul clearly thinks it necessary to go beyond 'simple meaning', otherwise study, workmanship (scholarship) and the possibility of being ashamed of the Worth of Truth if not correctly divided (handled) would be of no concern.

Having lived in the Middle East for over 10 years, I can

see, perhaps better than most, that we in the 'West' tend to read the Bible from our narrow cultural perspective. It is one thing to study the Greek and Hebrew languages, but it is quite another to understand the culture in which these words were given. I have seen many examples of Westerners (Americans, Europeans, etc.) come to the Middle East on business, know the language, but completely miss the meaning of conversations because they did not understand the cultural matrix underlying the communication. Again, while the Gospel is so clear that one does not have to know any Jewish culture nor original languages (unlike the Koran, for instance), when we deal with the more obscure or difficult passages, we must use the more powerful tools and insights. Even then, we must often be tentative in our interpretations and can ill afford to be dogmatic.

There is no doubt that God could have created the universe in one second, let alone six 24-hour days. But if He had, why would He not have made it obvious? To turn Dr Shackelford's argument around, would a righteous God paint a misleading picture of His actions across the entire spectrum of evidence embedded in His creation? The issue is, **did God create the universe in six 24-hour days, or does the Bible require that interpretation.** I believe the answer to both questions is 'No!'. Because God did not tell us how He did it, but gave that as part of our task (to subdue the Earth, Genesis 1:28), we look to science for the answer (God's works). This approach in no way weakens the inspiration and authority of God's Word, but, on the contrary, strengthens it.¹³

REFERENCES

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4. Tertullian, **De ieiunio**, 10.5 (CCL 2.1268: ML2.1017A).
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8. The translations examined were KJV, ASV, NAS, NAB, RSV, NRSV, NKJV, WEB, BDY, YLT, LXXE.
9. Brown, F, Driver, S. R. and Briggs, C. A., 1962. **A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament**, Oxford University Press, London, p. 91.
10. Brown *et al.*, Ref. 9. Brown, Driver and Briggs translate the infinitive verb **וַיִּבְרְאוּ** which precedes **בַּיּוֹם** in Genesis 2:4 'when they were created', rendering **וַ** as a temporal conjunction.
11. Archer, G.L., 1964. **A Survey of Old Testament Introductions**, Moody Press, Chicago, and personal communication.
12. Ref. 1, p. 135.
13. I am indebted to Dr Ide Trotter for reviewing my response and adding valuable suggestions which I have incorporated.